

## Neighborhood Watch

For this month we discuss 2 specific incidents and how to minimize the risks to you from similar events.

### Woman attacked on Dover 8/31

Most of us probably heard that a woman was attacked while jogging at 5:30AM on Dover drive. While street crime like this is very rare in the residential parts of Newport, it obviously can and does occur. I believe the health benefits of walking our neighborhoods is far better than living fearfully behind locked doors and closed cars but there are always some risks. How should you protect yourself?

There are a variety of weapons and emergency devices that you can carry along with training but the most important thing you need is situational awareness. Anyone who has lived in an urban setting for a while can tell you that you are far more likely to get mugged if you look oblivious or fearful than if you have the *don't mess with me* look. It's a little hard to describe but basically it involves making subtle eye contact with people on the street in a way that is neither friendly nor hostile but projects: *I'm alert, on guard and ready to put up a fight if I have to.*

To put some substance behind that implied threat, I highly recommend that everyone take a self-defense class. You don't have to be a Kung-Fu master to get significant benefits. Learning a few simple blocks and kicks can make you much better prepared. I was mugged once in college and know that the psychological impact of being attacked can be much greater than the physical. You feel violated and vulnerable for a long time afterwards. A major benefit of a self-defense class is that you learn what it feels like to be hit so it's not so shocking and disorienting if it happens on the street. I took a class after I was mugged and felt much better.

I included an article in the attachment that repeats some of these same ideas but also includes some weapons you can use. The original article is [here](#). I edited out some parts of the original that I consider fear mongering and bad ideas like carrying a knife, which I think is more likely to escalate the situation than make you safer. Note also that most police will tell you that if you are attacked by someone with a weapon like a knife or gun your safest option is to cooperate but that is a call you may have to make on the spot. In terms of your own weapons, your best option is probably [pepper spray](#) though I was surprised to learn that Taser-like shockers are quite inexpensive ([\\$23.98 on Amazon](#)).

### Burglary at 1518 Galaxy

This house was robbed while the people were away. The Nixle report is [here](#). They had no alarm system. Everyone in Dover Shores should have an alarm system. We recently replaced our old Honeywell system with a [Concord 4](#) system supported by [Post Security](#) and are very happy with the new system. In addition to window and door sensors, we have interior motion sensors in the master bedroom, home office and main hall.

The people reported there was no sign of forced entry but the cleaning lady reported a patio door ajar so it is likely the thieves entered through the patio door which are notoriously easy to break through. An article in the attachment describes some ways to project these such as the old dowel in the track method. We use a metal pin drilled so that it penetrates both halves of the door. The article suggest a method that I hadn't heard of before which is reinforcing the glass with a layer of protective film that protects the door even if the glass is broken and also provide thermal insulating benefits.

## CERT

We discussed some new aspects of disaster preparedness, illustrated in the attachment.

## Lessons from Harvey

Many of us followed the terrible effects of hurricane Harvey on the Houston area. I thought it would be useful to review what happened there from a disaster preparedness perspective. It's clear that much of what we have been taught in the CERT classes is directly applicable to the events in Houston, things like having a "go bag", having extra water and food, and learning urban search and rescue. There were also a few new wrinkles.

One thing that struck me was the slow-motion pace of the disaster. In SoCal we tend to focus on earthquakes even though we too are vulnerable to floods, fires and other wide-spread disasters. We fixate on the shaking that happens in a few seconds and then assume recovery begins right away in the first few hours, which is generally true for modest earthquakes. But for other disasters like fires and floods, things happen at a slower pace and the recovery takes much longer. Even for earthquakes there may be secondary effects that roll out over a longer period like subsequent fires and the extended loss of water and power that necessitate evacuation even when our own home damage is not that severe.

- Emergency Communications - The Houston 911 system was completely overwhelmed by the volume of calls as ours would be in any widespread disaster. People began using social media as an alternative, particularly Snapchat because of it's geofilters and mapping features that show where a post originated. As residents, we should learn to use those tools and as responders, we should to monitor them for neighbors in distress.
- Shortages - Lack of water quickly became a major issue in Beaumont and Port Arthur after their water systems were knocked out. FEMA and other agencies tried to fill the gap but people were clearly in distress quickly. Gasoline shortages kept people from evacuating even if they wanted to.

- Evacuation - Sometimes people need to leave in a hurry hence the go bag, but often there is significant time to prepare ranging from hours to even days. If you had time to plan an extended evacuation what would you take? Valuables? Papers? Computers? It seems prudent to create a prioritized list of what we would take if we had to evacuate. What could be done to the house if it were to be abandoned for a while? Inevitably critters like ants, mice, rats, raccoons etc would sneak in to feast on the spoils that could create a huge mess when you return. An earthquake or other disaster might also create gaps like roof and wall cracks, broken windows etc that would let water in over time, creating Houston-like problems. A little spare silicon caulk, for example, might be very helpful and possibly not available immediately after a disaster.
- Shelter Operations - Tens of thousands of people are currently living in shelters in Texas. If you had to be a resident of a shelter for an extended period and you have the opportunity, what would you take? Computers? Books? More clothes, shoes etc? Is there anything you could do to keep your business going? If you are on the responder side, how can you help with shelter operations? There are some YouTube Red Cross videos such as [here](#) and the Red Cross offers a formal course.
- Social Media - Has become an important part of any disaster response. As noted above Snapchat proved very useful in Houston but people also used all the standard platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. We should become familiar with these platforms in case we need help and when helping others. Dover Shores has a Twitter account @dovershorescert and a Facebook account at: <https://www.facebook.com/dovershorescert>. Note that all of these platforms except Twitter require internet access. Hopefully the Dover Shores satellite system will keep us connected no matter what else happens. Note that cell towers typically have backup power for about 8 hours. If the power is out longer than that, they will start to go dead. I'm not sure about Spectrum, ATT and the other ISPs.

I read an interesting suggestion recently that if you have an uninterruptable power supply such as this [CyberPower \(Amazon \\$146.99\)](#), you may be able to stay connected to the Internet for several hours even after power goes out. These devices are normally designed to provide just a few minutes power to a desk-top computer to allow it to shut down cleanly. But your cable modem and home router typically use much less power so if you quickly turn off any desktops but leave the router etc connected to the UPS, you will be able to continue to use phones and laptops for several hours as long as the ISP is operating. These devices also protect your equipment from wonky power surges etc while SoCal Edison is trying to get things restored.

## Zello

[Zello](#) is an app that you install on your phone or PC that makes them operate like a push-to-talk radio. It uses internet protocols so it doesn't consume any phone minutes and allows many people to listen and talk like an old-fashioned party line or our GPS radios. It was widely used in Houston in place of radios by informal emergency responders as described in [this](#) article (included in the attachment). You can talk to a single person by creating a *contact* or you can talk to multiple people using a *channel*. I've created a channel for Dover Shores under the name "Dover Shores CERT". It will ask for a password so enter "dovershorespassword".

Note that this isn't a replacement for our GPS or ham radios because it depends in WiFi or cellular service to operate and these might be down but if internet service is available it's very convenient and includes the ability to send pictures and text messages to the group. There is also a way to connect it to a GPS radio so that any talk that appears on our Zello channel goes out on the radio and vice versa.

I'm thinking of distributing a flyer to the neighborhood so that any Dover Shore resident can use our channel in an emergency to contact us.

## Helping the Disabled in a Disaster

We had a discussion about what we in Dover Shores can do to help disabled people prepare for a disaster and what we could do during and after. In the attachment I included a few pages from a FEMA presentation on this topic. FEMA defines disability very broadly to include impairments in hearing, vision, life activities, thinking, body functions etc and in many places this includes a substantial fraction of the population. Our conclusion is that we in Dover Shores can't really do much for this population besides what we are already doing for everyone else. We're not really in a position to provide any kind of specialized medical care. About the best we can do is to be sensitive to their needs and facilitate access to the specialized care they might need.

All the things that everyone else should do such as creating a plan, go bag, contacts etc are doubly important for the disabled but we have the same problems proselytizing them as we do everyone else. We have, in the past, made several attempts to inventory at-risk people in the neighborhood but this is very difficult. People are generally unwilling to share this kind of information so our information is anecdotal at best.

There is more information on this topic at [ready.gov](#), [CDC](#) and [FEMA](#).