

# Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

September 2006

## Be Prepared for an Emergency!

By Shana Montesol Johnson

The Manila Women's Forum gathered at Studio 116 in Legazpi Village on a rainy Tuesday night for its August meeting – a jam-packed, informative, hands-on, and challenging session on emergency preparedness led by staff and volunteers of the Emergency Research Center, Inc. (ERC).

ERC is a nongovernmental organization founded in 2000 to teach Filipinos to be prepared for any emergency situation. It offers low-cost short courses on a variety of topics, from what to do during earthquakes and fire incidents, to more specialized training such as cabin crew defense for flight attendants and tactical medicine for soldiers engaged in combat. The session for MWF was based on their Safety Awareness for Everyone!™ or SAFE!™, which promotes emergency preparedness through experiential education.

### Pack Your Bucket

MWF members split into two teams and were instructed to pool their resources (whatever they had in purses, backpacks, or on their person) and build a survival kit. This is based on the premise that only the things you normally carry may be available when caught in an emergency situation. Then the ERC volunteer showed everyone the contents of her evacuation “balde” a large plastic bucket with a lid that is meant to help the owner survive and help her/himself for at least 72 hours in case of an evacuation from home. ERC

*MWF member Mathilda van Weerden applying first aid to a volunteer “victim” during the emergency preparedness training.*



recommends that each family member have such a balde prepared, so that in case of an emergency evacuation (caused by typhoon, flood, volcano, pandemic, you name it), everyone can simply grab his/her balde and go. Each person's balde should be tailored to his/her needs. The ERC volunteer's balde included:

- Self-powered (crank/squeezed)

flashlight (can be purchased at Metro department store in Market! Market! in Fort Bonifacio or Blade88 store)

- Self-powered (crank) radio (can be purchased as a combination radio and flashlight at True Value Hardware stores)

- First aid materials (e.g., Band-Aids, medicine, sanitary napkins which can

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**Next MWF Meeting** When: 6:30 p.m., Monday September 18 2006. What: Maria Lourdes Arcenas, Advisor-Sustainable Development to the Mindanao Business Council will speak about her work in Mindanao, including building stakeholder partnerships for Sustainable Mindanao at Peace. Where: Linda Panlilio's house, 1607 Cypress Street, Dasmariñas Village, Makati City Bring: Something to share for the potluck dinner (for about 30 people) **October meeting:** Monday, September 16, 2006.

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Emergency preparedness. Here's how to "shelter-in-place," from the American Red Cross.

## KaWoMeNaN

Selected and edited by  
Beulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo

### Shelter-in-Place in an Emergency

#### What Shelter-in-Place Means:

One of the instructions you may be given in an emergency where hazardous materials may have been released into the atmosphere is to shelter-in-place. This is a precaution aimed to keep you safe while remaining indoors. (This is not the same thing as going to a shelter in case of a storm.) Shelter-in-place means selecting a small, interior room, with no or few windows, and taking refuge there. It does not mean sealing off your entire home or office building. If you are told to shelter-in-place, follow the instructions provided in this Fact Sheet.

#### Why You Might Need to Shelter-in-Place:

Chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants may be released accidentally or intentionally into the environment. Should this occur, information will be provided by local authorities on television and radio stations on how to protect you and your family. Because information will most likely be provided on television and radio, it is important to keep a TV or radio on, even during the workday. The important thing is for you to follow instructions of local authorities and know what to do if they advise you to shelter-in-place.

#### How to Shelter-in-Place

##### At Home:

Close and lock all windows and exterior doors.

If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains.

Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.

Close the fireplace damper.

Get your family disaster supplies kit and make sure the radio is working.

Go to an interior room without windows that's above ground level. In the case of a chemical threat, an above-ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air, and may seep into basements even if the windows are closed.

Bring your pets with you, and be sure to bring additional food and water supplies for them.

It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room you select. Call your emergency contact and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.

Use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around the door and any vents into the room.

Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

##### At Work:

Close the business.

If there are customers, clients, or visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay – not leave. When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps now, where they are, and not drive or walk outdoors.

Unless there is an imminent threat, ask employees, customers, clients, and visitors to call their emergency contact to let them know where they are and that they are safe.

Turn on call-forwarding or alternative telephone answering systems or services. If the business has voice mail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the business is closed, and that staff and visitors are remaining in the building until authorities advise it is safe to leave.

Close and lock all windows, exterior doors, and any other openings to the outside.

If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains.

Have employees familiar with your building's mechanical systems turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Some systems automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air – these systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed, or disabled.

Gather essential disaster supplies, such as nonperishable food, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, duct tape, plastic sheeting, and plastic garbage bags.

Select interior room(s) above the ground floor, with the fewest windows or vents. The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit in. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary. Large storage closets, utility rooms, pantries, copy and conference rooms without exterior windows will work well. Avoid selecting a room with mechanical equipment like ventilation blowers or pipes, because this equipment may not be able to be sealed from the outdoors.

It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room(s) you select. Call emergency contacts and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.

Use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around the door(s) and any vents into the room.

Bring everyone into the room(s). Shut and lock the door(s).

Write down the names of everyone in the room, and call your business' designated emergency contact to report who is in the room with you, and their affiliation with your business (employee, visitor, client, customer.)

Keep listening to the radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

##### At School:

Close the school. Activate the school's emergency plan. Follow reverse evacuation procedures to bring students, faculty, and staff indoors.

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***(Be Prepared... from page 1)***

be used to stop excessive bleeding)

- Condoms (may be used as gloves or small water container that can hold 1.5-2.5 liters)
- Waterproof matches
- Aluminum foil
- Canned food (with an easy open lid) and back-up can opener
- Bottled water
- Povidone iodine, 10% solution (use to purify water by placing 4 drops in 1 liter of water, leave for 30 minutes)
- Flotation device (the inflatable kind that can be used in a pool)
- Brightly colored shirt (for increased visibility)
- Disposable underwear (available at Watsons)
- Large trash bags (can be used as rain ponchos; also, if confined to an evacuation center, can be placed as a liner inside the balde to create a personal toilet to prevent the spread of disease)
- Items for entertainment/distraction – deck of cards, toys for children, reading materials (useful to take someone’s mind of her injuries while waiting for help. Place in plastic Ziploc

bag to keep from getting wet)

MWF members also shared ideas about emergency preparedness items – one idea is to keep the following items under your bed in case of earthquake during the night: slippers, bottle of water, handkerchief (to cover one’s mouth/nose), flashlight. Another person suggested having this kit in each room in case you are trapped in that room following an earthquake. In that vein, someone suggested keeping a few large bottles of water in each room’s closet and replacing them every few months. It would also be wise to keep such a kit and extra water in your office if you work.

Louie Domingo, Director of ERC, showed the group his mini survival kit that he carries in his bag. It contains dental floss, sewing kit, 10% povidone iodine, fishing line, fish hooks, and sugar (mix with the iodine for wounds).

**Where There’s Smoke, There’s Fire**

Many of us have fire extinguishers in our homes or workplaces, but how many of us have actually used one? The problem is, there are some fire extinguishers that once discharged,

cannot be used again. ERC gave participants the opportunity to use a real extinguisher, and shared the following tip – remember P.A.S.S., which stands for Pull the pin, Aim the hose at the base of the fire, Squeeze the handle, and Sweep across the base of the fire from side to side. ERC experts also explained that not all extinguishers work on all fires. The most common office or home extinguishers are marked ABC which means they work on wood, cloth, paper, flammable liquids, gasoline, grease and electrical equipment. One would not want to use a water-filled extinguisher (like the one MWF members tried out) on a grease fire as this would only make the flames bigger. If you have an electrical fire, turn off the power using the main breaker before trying to put out the fire. Be sure the helpers in your house know how to do this.

**No (Blood and) Guts, No Glory**

The most memorable – and graphic – part of the evening was the “first aid/ mass-casualty simulation,” in which  
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***(Shelter-in-Place... from page 2)***

If there are visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay – not leave. When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps now, where they are, and not drive or walk outdoors.

Provide for answering telephone inquiries from concerned parents by having at least one telephone with the school’s listed telephone number available in the room selected to provide shelter for the school secretary, or person designated to answer these calls. This room should also be sealed. There should be a way to communicate among all rooms where people are sheltering-in-place in the school.

Ideally, provide for a way to make announcements over the school-wide public address system from the room where the top school official takes shelter.

If children have cell phones, allow them to use them to call a parent or guardian to let them know that they have been asked to remain in school until further notice, and that they are safe.

If the school has voice mail or an automated attendant, change the

recording to indicate that the school is closed, students and staff are remaining in the building until authorities advise that it is safe to leave.

Provide directions to close and lock all windows, exterior doors, and any other openings to the outside.

If you are told there is danger of explosion, direct that window shades, blinds, or curtains be closed.

Have employees familiar with your building’s mechanical systems turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Some systems automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air – these systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed, or disabled.

[More on this section In School at <http://www.redcross.org/services/>]

***In Your Vehicle:***

If you are driving a vehicle and hear advice to “shelter-in-place” on the radio, take these steps:

If you are very close to home, your office, or a public building, go there immediately and go inside. Follow the shelter-in-place recommendations for the place you pick described above.

If you are unable to get to a home or building quickly and safely, then pull

over to the side of the road. Stop your vehicle in the safest place possible. If it is sunny outside, it is preferable to stop under a bridge or in a shady spot, to avoid being overheated.

Turn off the engine. Close windows and vents.

If possible, seal the heating/air conditioning vents with duct tape.

Listen to the radio regularly for updated advice and instructions.

Stay where you are until you are told it is safe to get back on the road. Be aware that some roads may be closed or traffic detoured. Follow the directions of law enforcement officials.

Local officials on the scene are the best source of information for your particular situation. Following their instructions during and after emergencies regarding sheltering, food, water, and clean up methods is your safest choice.

Remember that instructions to shelter-in-place are usually provided for durations of a few hours, not days or weeks. There is little danger that the room in which you are taking shelter will run out of oxygen and you will suffocate.

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*(Be Prepared... from page 2)*

participants were instructed that they would have five minutes to do whatever they could, using whatever was readily available to them, to assist the individuals awaiting in the adjoining room. Participants were then led into a small area where three men (volunteers recruited from Lisa Lumbao's office) lay on the floor next to a pool of what looked remarkably like blood. Each "victim" was suffering from major (simulated) injuries and all actively bleeding – one man had a large gash on his leg, another had a bloody wound on his chest, and another seemed to have his intestine protruding through his clothing. It was not a scene for the faint-hearted, as fake blood would periodically spurt from time to time from each of the victims, thanks to a clever set-up of clear tubes underneath the men's clothing.

Participants reacted in a variety of ways. Those who had some training in first aid (or some clue as to what to do) assessed the situation and began applying direct pressure to the wounds and devising tourniquets from strips of cloth and twine that lay conveniently next to the victims. Some, sickened by the gory sight, simply removed themselves from the situation. Others, not knowing what to do, just watched and tried to provide encouragement.

Once the five minutes were up, an ERC volunteer, who is trained in first aid and emergency response, debriefed the experience with participants. He explained that in a situation like this,

the best course of action is to:

**Call for help.** The emergency phone number to call, throughout the Philippines, is **117**. It works from cell phones (no need to dial 02) as well as land lines, and will route calls to the appropriate local emergency response team.

**Cover the wound.** The volunteer said he actually carries sanitary napkins in his first aid kit, rather than gauze bandages, because they are more absorbent and cheap. They are also easily accessed in the field from bystanders (a much more common thing to carry than gauze!). For the victim with the protruding organs, they should be covered with a wet cloth but do not attempt to push them back in.

**Manage the bleeding by applying pressure, elevate, and put pressure on the supplying artery.** If you don't have any gloves and are concerned about being exposed to the blood, use a plastic bag. Pressure should be applied directly on the wound. In the case of a punctured lung, use a laminated ID card or credit card (or any occlusive dressing) and press against the wound to keep air from entering the wound when the victim inhales. Leave a small space for air to exit when the victim exhales (if possible, tape the card on just three sides leaving the lowest portion without tape for air to escape and blood to drain out). The advantage of using a plastic card is that it won't let air in and won't stick to the wound.

The first aid/mass-casualty incident simulation seemed to be everyone's most memorable learning experience of

the evening. Participants, including those who had completed first aid certification, remarked that they had never been exposed to anything like this. The "real world" experience of seeing the blood and wounds was an extremely effective learning tool, if only to show some of us our extreme discomfort with such a scene.

If you missed the session, or are interested in having ERC arrange a training for your workplace, please contact Louie Domingo at readyph@gmail.com or (+63919) 613-8210. ■

### **The Manila Women's Forum**

The Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Cecilia Leung**, Programs. **Beulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

Visit our website – a work in progress  
[www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum](http://www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum)

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