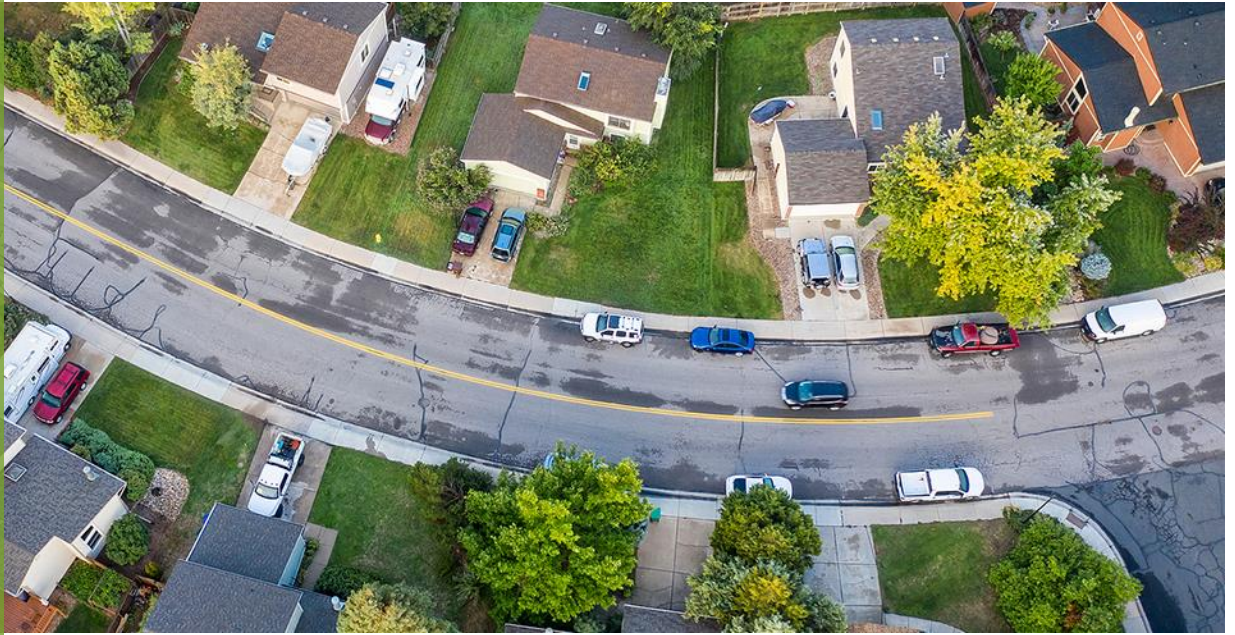


Regional Adaptation Priority Theme Summary: Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness



The Rural Climate Adaptation Capacity Building Project, led by the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, at Selkirk College, works in partnership with nine local governments in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region to advance climate adaptation through regional-scale action and collaborative learning. This series of knowledge briefs summarizes key themes addressed in activities and training undertaken by the project's regional network of local government-based adaptation practitioners.

Emergency preparedness has been identified as a climate change adaptation priority for Columbia Basin-Boundary local governments, with data showing that only about a third of households maintain a 72-hour emergency kit¹⁻⁶. While having necessary supplies and infrastructure is imperative in emergencies, research shows that resilience is strengthened by building place-based social connections with neighbours⁷. In other words, it matters *who* is in your emergency kit, not just *what* is in your emergency kit. Residents of the Basin-Boundary region generally have a strong foundation of social connections that contribute to community resilience—72% of residents regularly chat with their neighbours⁸. With Columbia Basin-Boundary communities facing an increasingly uncertain future, however, ensuring these connections remain strong and continue to grow is more vital than ever before.

Using a Resilience Lens

Resilience is the ability to proactively respond and adapt to change, stress and uncertainty. Traditional government-led emergency preparedness initiatives plan for short time frames and focus on the risks and outcomes of known threats. Approaching emergency preparedness with a resilience lens involves building long-term capacity to respond to change by engaging citizens

and working collaboratively across sectors to promote stronger relationships and pro-active responses to risk⁹. Using a resilience lens allows communities to be stronger in the face of both acute shocks and chronic stressors and to prepare for both expected and unexpected disasters by creating a strong social network.

Building Resilient Communities

Resilient communities have a strong sense of connection to place, a can-do attitude, and a spirit of mutual assistance. Neighbours are connected and are welcoming and encouraging of diversity. These community attributes can be developed by fostering social connections.

A program called Connect and Prepare¹⁰ has been developed in Victoria with the intention of connecting neighbours with each other to increase emergency preparedness while strengthening place-based social connections. The program empowers neighbourhood champions to organize a group that participates in three facilitated resilience building workshops and then implements preparedness-related team projects (e.g., block parties, shared emergency kits, etc.). Following the program, neighbours felt more connected with each other; had a better understanding of their collective strengths, assets and vulnerabilities; and took action to be better prepared for emergencies. The Connect and Prepare program works toward four main goals:

1. Neighbours reach out and get to know each other;
2. Neighbours share resources like space, tools, and equipment;
3. Neighbours help each other in little and big ways;
4. Neighbours cooperate around issues that affect their neighbourhood.

Further Reading

¹⁻⁶Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute: State of Climate Adaptation reports for [Regional District of Central Kootenay Area H](#), [Regional District of Kootenay Boundary Area A](#), [Golden, Cranbrook, Silvertown](#), and [Nelson](#) (2020)

⁷Aldrich, Daniel: Recovering From Disasters: [Social Networks Matter More Than Bottled Water and Batteries](#) (2017)

⁸Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute: [State of Basin Subjective Well Being Report](#) (2019)

⁹Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria: Strengthening Neighbourhood Resilience: [Opportunities for Communities & Local Government](#) (2013)

¹⁰Building Resilient Neighbourhoods: [The Connect and Prepare Program](#) (2021)