

### OVERVIEW

Nearly 7.3 million American households live in mobile homes or manufactured housing according to the 2005 American Community Survey. Of all households, these families face the largest risk of damage to their homes during a natural disaster. Residents of mobile homes face greater risks of damage from high winds -- homes may be damaged in Category 1 hurricanes and are subject to complete destruction in a Category 3 storm.

Mobile home residents are twice as likely to die in a fire compared to residents of other structures because fires spread faster in mobile homes.



*A natural disaster can destroy mobile homes.*

*Source: Dave Gattley for FEMA*

A number of factors, including structural and non-structural issues, combine to make mobile home residents particularly vulnerable to natural disasters.

- α During high wind conditions, mobile homes have been known to collapse, crushing the residents, and can be blown off of their foundations. Community buildings in mobile home parks are also often structurally vulnerable.
- α Risk of injury from severe winds and fatality from fire are greater. [Sheltering-in-place](#) during a disaster is not an effective strategy for mobile home residents, due to lower structural quality of mobile homes and higher risk of damage and injury. Mobile home residents face lower [evacuation](#) thresholds than residents of non-manufactured housing. These residents may need to evacuate their homes in less severe conditions than their neighbors in more traditional housing.
- α Mobile home residents are more likely to be [low-income](#), [elderly](#), have low-English proficiency, or have [pets](#). Any of these factors could make mobile home residents more vulnerable during a disaster.

Home replacement is usually the most cost-effective strategy when a mobile home has been damaged, but due to the low-income status of many mobile home residents, replacing a unit at market value is not usually an option.

Many mobile home residents do not own the land on which their residence sits. Compared to landowners, tenants have less incentive to invest in measures that would reduce their vulnerability to disasters. Mobile

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home park owners, rather than residents, are often held liable for injuries sustained to tenants on the property caused by third parties.<sup>1</sup> In many states, mobile home park owners may resist legislation that mandates implementation of certain disaster-resistant changes or measures.<sup>2</sup>

Regulations for distribution of relief funds for housing repair may discriminate against mobile home owners who do not own the land on which their unit is located. Recent federal regulations allow for funding for mobile home owners whose property is damaged, even if they do not own the land.<sup>3</sup>

### RELATED TOPICS

[low-income](#)

[elderly](#)

[family preparedness](#)

[pets](#)

[evacuation](#)

[community outreach](#)

### REDUCING VULNERABILITY TO DISASTERS

A number of strategies exist to reduce the vulnerability of mobile home residents to disasters. Approaches include household education and awareness as well as preparedness and mitigation activities on the part of park owners. The following sections outline strategies for reducing disaster vulnerability among mobile home residents and communities.

#### PREPAREDNESS

Mobile home residents should be informed about how to improve their readiness for disasters. Education and outreach programs should identify physical hazards in the community and the risks specific to residents of manufactured housing. Education programs should also discuss the importance of early [evacuation](#), including preparing a household plan that identifies a friend or family nearby with a more structurally resilient home to go to if a disaster warning is issued.

Outreach should provide information on evacuation routes; the location, capacity, and capability of shelters; whether the shelters accept [pets](#) or can accommodate people with [special medical needs](#); and transportation options for those without cars or with mobility impairments. Finally, mobile home residents should be informed about the disaster-related legal rights and responsibilities of residents and mobile park owners.

Communities should develop incentives and adopt regulations to discourage or prohibit the construction of mobile homes in hazard-prone areas such as floodplains. Officials should encourage owners to invest in measures to improve the structural integrity of mobile or manufactured homes. Local governments should encourage structural reinforcement beyond what is required by building codes, such as

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strengthening a structure's foundation or installing tie-downs.

Mobile home owners should ensure that at least one employee will be available to respond in a timely manner to an emergency. They should also provide residents with information about emergency procedures, such as when and where to evacuate during a disaster. Each mobile home park should develop and test an emergency and evacuation plan. Residents should be directly involved in developing the plan and conducting trial runs. Owners should develop a structurally reinforced community building in which park residents can seek shelter during storms and disasters.

Emergency management and evacuation plans for mobile home parks should not be developed in isolation. Rather, such plans should be incorporated into community-wide evacuation planning in consultation with local government.

### RESPONSE

Given the risks of weathering a storm in place, mobile home residents should [evacuate](#) early in response to hurricane, tornado, and flood warnings. Emergency responders should ensure good communication with mobile home parks and manufactured housing residents to alert them early in the likelihood of an emergency.

Due to the particular vulnerability of mobile homes to disasters, access to [temporary shelters](#) may be necessary. Mobile home residents may also need access to transportation.

### RECOVERY

During the recovery phase, mobile home residents may need access to housing because of the high likelihood of damage to mobile homes. Emergency management coordinators should accommodate residents with [special needs](#), such as accessibility for those with physical mobility limitations, in the provision of temporary housing.

Since mobile home residents may overlap with other vulnerable population categories such as the [elderly](#) and [low-income](#), it is important for emergency managers to assist these residents in understanding the financial and other long-term relief services available and the criteria for accessing funds.

Also, during the recovery phase it may be valuable to incorporate mobile home residents in the rebuilding and redevelopment process via participatory planning techniques and processes. In cases in which a mobile home park is damaged or destroyed by a disaster such as flooding, relocation of the park may be an option considered during creation of land-use plans that integrate hazard mitigation.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### **2007 Disaster Legal Assistance Manual of the Florida Bar Association**

*Section 10 gives guidance to the Florida legal community about the legal rights of mobile home owners after a disaster.*

Published by: Florida Bar Association

Accessible at: <http://www.flabarfndn.org/disaster-manual/2007/Section%20XIII%20Disaster%20Recovery%20for%20Mobile%20Home%20Residents.pdf>

#### **Mobile Home Disaster Preparedness Factsheet**

*Provides a one page summary of earthquake preparation information for mobile home residents.*

Prepared by: Escondido Fire Department

Accessible at: <http://www.escondido.org/fire/safety/emergency/mobilehomes.pdf>  
<http://www.ci.encinitas.ca.us/NR/rdonlyres/1E7A38F6-94F6-4300-BD23-B156147337E5/0/MobileHomeDisasterPrep.pdf>

#### **Legal Issues for Mobile Home Parks**

*Advice for mobile park managers and residents in preparing for and responding to natural disasters, from a legal perspective.*

Prepared by: Ron Coldren of *Hart, King & Coldren*, a law firm in Santa Ana, California

Accessible at: <http://www.hkclaw.com/pdfs/JournalDec07Coldren.pdf>

#### **Disaster Preparedness for Mobile Homes Interactive Website**

*Expert and reader-contributed advice on preparing for a range of natural disasters if you are a mobile home resident.*

Published by: WhatHappensNow.com

Accessible at: [http://www.whathappensnow.com/articles\\_show.cfm?id=237&cat=4&sub=6](http://www.whathappensnow.com/articles_show.cfm?id=237&cat=4&sub=6)



### PROFILE: PREPAREDNESS

<b>Program</b>	Hurricane Preparedness for Mobile Home Residents
<b>Organization</b>	Pinellas County, FL Communications Department.
<b>Keywords</b>	emergency preparedness, mobile homes, printed information
<b>Source</b>	<a href="http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/PDF/Mobile_Homes.pdf">www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/PDF/Mobile_Homes.pdf</a>
<b>Brief Summary</b>	This printable, tri-fold brochure contains a simple checklist of disaster preparedness steps that mobile home residents should take in cases of hurricanes and tornados..

“Surviving the Storm: Hurricane Preparedness for Mobile Home Residents” is a single-sheet, printable tri-fold brochure with tips for mobile home residents on disaster preparedness and response measures.

The brochure focuses on the dangers associated with hurricanes and tornados and emphasizes the importance of early evacuation. It offers a checklist of activities to complete for preparedness, including deciding where to go if an evacuation is ordered, structural precautions to take to reinforce the home, a list of items to bring during an evacuation, people to contact, information about pets, how special-needs patients can acquire assistance from local emergency responders, and a reminder about checking for information on open shelters.

Provided on just one page, the information is simple and easy to grasp, covering the basics of disaster-response for mobile home residents.



### PROFILE: ADVOCACY

<b>Program</b>	CERT Mobile Home Community Training
<b>Organization</b>	Lee County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
<b>Keywords</b>	emergency response, volunteer training, mobile home residents, community partnership
<b>Source</b>	“The Connection: America’s Bridge to Preparedness” newsletter: <a href="http://www.naem.com/connection/7/lee51.html">www.naem.com/connection/7/lee51.html</a>  Lee County Volunteer Programs: <a href="http://www.leeecoc.com/volunteers/beavolunteer.aspx">www.leeecoc.com/volunteers/beavolunteer.aspx</a>
<b>Brief Summary</b>	Residents of Buccaneer Estates Mobile Home in Florida rehearsed their disaster preparedness plan with members of the Lee County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), inviting other residents to observe the exercise.

In April of 2003, Buccaneer Estates Mobile Home Community and local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members rehearsed the community’s disaster preparedness plan. Other mobile home communities were invited to observe the exercise. The scenario educated residents and CERT members about their respective roles during a disaster event. Buccaneer Estates CERT members received training from a nearby fire rescue division.

CERT is a nation-wide training program begun in 1985 in Los Angeles that prepares people to help themselves, their families, and their neighbors in the event of a disaster in their community.

CERT members apply their classroom training to assist in emergency response when professionals are not immediately available. CERT members are also encouraged to take an active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community. Many support the community year-round by participating in activities like distributing materials on disaster preparedness and education.

The mobile home community preparedness exercise in Lee County is a good example of a targeted outreach and community partnership approach that helps to improve the resiliency of vulnerable communities.

### REFERENCES:

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<sup>1</sup> Coldren, R. (2007). "Legal Issues for Mobile Home Parks Regarding Disaster Preparedness." Hart, King & Coldren Law Firm Journal, Santa Ana, California.

<sup>2</sup> Wachtendoft, T. et. Al. (2002). Disaster resistant communities initiative: Assessment of 10 non-pilot communities. Report to FEMA, August 30, 2002. University of Delaware Disaster Research Center.

<sup>3</sup> Housing and Urban Development. (2006). "The Road Home: Affordable Rental Housing and Eligibility of Mobile Home Owners Action Plan Amendment for Disaster Recovery Funds." Department of Defense Appropriations Act, Federal Register Volume 71, No. 29.