Great ShakeOut Message 10 – Communication

Communication has changed astonishingly fast in the last 50 years. In 1965 American TV brought us the original “Smart Phone” (Agent 86’s Shoe Phone). While very funny, it did usher in the concept of a mobile phone. The first car mobile phone was created in Sweden in the 70’s, weighed 40 pounds and required an operator to make calls. The first phone call made on a hand-held device was made in 1973 and was the size and weight of a heavy work boot. The first commercially available hand-held phone was launched in 1984 – at 2 pounds, 30 minutes of talk time (max!) and cost $4,000! And, it only made phone calls.

Communication is critical during emergencies, so you need to consider every option available. In a major earthquake, either the cell phone towers may go down (literally), or the networks may be jammed with everyone checking on their friends and family. Here are some ideas to enhance your communication ability and give you some peace of mind when your loved ones “can’t hear you now.”

1. Text Messaging. Voice messages may not be able to transmit, but text messages often can. If you don’t know how to text message, ask someone who does, which would be any student on campus.

2. Phone Number List. Write the phone numbers of persons you want to contact outside the Southern California area. Often we can connect with phones outside our area, when local calls cannot. Every member of your family should have the same list and what to tell them: “I am safe and in location X.”

3. Land Lines. Keep a land line in your home and a phone that does not require electricity. Remember those days when there was only ONE phone in the house and the fancy ones had a long cord so you could move all the way to the refrigerator? OK, maybe this requires you to be a certain age to remember this, but a land line does not require cell phone towers and may continue to work after an earthquake.

4. IMPORTANT: Register and keep updated your cell and home phone numbers at CSUF and your city. Go to: http://emergencypreparedness.fullerton.edu/EmergNotif2.htm. There you will find instructions on how to input your phone numbers so that you will be notified by the campus and your city’s emergency services network (coordinated by Orange County Emergency Services). DO THIS NOW because this is how messages are sent to every student, staff and faculty in the event of an emergency.

There are other more visually beautiful methods of communication, such as semaphore, but it requires line of sight, cool flags, full shoulder flexibility and a recipient who can read “flag.” The important thing is that you have as many communications tools as possible. Emergencies naturally create anxiety, so if you can at least know your loved ones are OK, would you believe, that’s worth a lot!

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