

Ready from A1

have seen a resurrection of the program in the Creswell area.

SLCFR and the City of Creswell began a Teen CERT pilot program in 2016, encouraging young people in the Creswell area from ages 14 to 20 to learn disaster readiness skills.

Along with disaster training, teens were able to fulfill some of their required community service hours through the program.

Due to its popularity, an adult version of the program opened up in Cottage Grove last November. “We just graduated our first adult class,” said Smith, who is the program director for the district’s CERT program.

Eighteen adults and eight new teen CERT members have been added to the roster, bringing the total members in the fire district to 36.

The program, which is free to join, is delivered in nine units over nine weeks covering topics such as disaster preparedness, medical operations and light search and rescue. The program finishes with a disaster simulation in which members are deployed and try to put their skills to use.

Through the course, participants are expected to learn skills such as how to identify hazards, set up treatment areas, work as a team to apply basic



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The Feb. 24, 2019 “Snowmageddon” storm dumped more than a foot of snow in some areas, crippling traffic in and around Cottage Grove, as well as downing trees and power lines throughout the city.

fire suppression strategies, employ basic medical treatments, learn CPR First Aid and perform other duties as needed under the CERT organizational structure.

With a few dozen community members trained in basic-level emergency response, professional emergency responders are thus provided with reduced strain during large-scale incident responses.

“You’re always undermanned,” said Smith. “So it’ll expedite. It’ll make

things more efficient.”

Asked if the area was more prepared since last year, Smith was quick to answer.

“Absolutely, with these CERT members,” he said. “It’s improving the community all over.”

CERT training is on schedule to be offered in the area again near the end of the year.

The City of Cottage Grove, too, has made headway in emergency preparedness efforts.

“We’re more prepared

than last year,” said City Manager Richard Meyers. “I think from the emergency preparedness contest we did during Emergency Preparedness Month, we got more citizens prepared.”

The contest awarded homes in the city with emergency preparedness kits and is slated to be run again this year.

The city’s Emergency Preparedness Fair last August, too, had a bigger turnout than previous years by many accounts.

Besides information and material distributed to the public, the city has moved toward improving infrastructure and resources.

“We’re working on some improvements on some of our buildings to make them a little more resilient,” said Meyers. “And we’ve wired in connections for our sewer pumps.”

The latter proved a useful feature during a city-wide power outage on Feb. 14.

The city is also looking at getting a generator

for the Community Center, which will enable the building to serve as a shelter during emergencies.

“We’ll continue to look for new things and new ideas,” said Meyers.

While the city’s emergency agreements with the county and state have been revisited and renewed, a project launched last fall by Lane County, the Lane Regional Resiliency Collaborative, aims to create a model of partnership among agencies and jurisdictions as well.

The project focuses on risk reduction and identifying opportunities where joint efforts can be made across the region, projected to make its next steps toward coalescing by early summer.

In light of collaborative efforts, Smith praised the marriage of city, fire district and county attempts to increase awareness and efficiency.

“Everyone is playing so nice together,” said Smith. “That’s not the case everywhere.”

However prepared local entities are, though, lessons from last year’s disasters made evident the need for resilience at individual, neighborhood and governmental levels.

“I think the thing people need to realize is we’ll still get damage whether it’s a snowstorm, windstorm, earthquake or fire,” Meyers said. “It’s how we bounce back. Are we in a mode where we can recover from it?”

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