

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Master Preparedness Program teaches skills for Idaho residents to be prepared

AT A GLANCE

The master preparedness class taught essential life preserving skills and the information needed to prepare a household for potential emergencies and unforeseen circumstances.

The Situation

As national crisis events arise and disrupt normal life from day to day, it is more evident than ever that the mindset of, “it will never happen to me,” is not realistic. It may be a mass shooting at a crowded event, a devastating flood, a contaminated water supply or an unexpected loss of income. Each of these events as well as thousands of other scenarios impact the lives of those involved as well as the community and region. While there are too many scenarios that could occur to list, there are many ways to gain needed skills ahead of time and prepare in case an emergency or unexpected life event occurs.

Our Response

University of Idaho Extension in Fremont County created and launched the Master Preparedness Program. In this program, we teach skills and provide information to prepare a person and their household (and be a resource to others) for unforeseen events. A variety of class topics were offered and involved presenters from multiple government agencies including the Fremont County Sheriff, Idaho State Parks and Recreation, Fremont County Medical Services and Fremont County Emergency Management. The first class taught was on winter travel safety and camping in the back



Students learned how to make rocket stoves with cinder blocks for outdoor cooking and warmth. Photo credit: Lance Ellis.

country. Class attendees used backcountry equipment such as an inflatable avalanche backpack lifesaver, multiple types of portable heat sources and proper clothing for severe cold weather. The second and third classes covered basic first aid and class members received a six-hour first aid course certificate. They learned basic CPR and lifesaving skills critical for anyone to know in case of a medical emergency. The next class was about responding to an active shooter where students learned how to react, defend and protect themselves and others. Two classes in this program covered how to prepare households for natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, loss of power, fires and other large-scale emergencies that would affect an entire community or region. Home handgun and rifle safety were included, and participants learned to

handle firearms correctly and safely. The “Basic Handgun Course” was taught by the Fremont County Sheriff, and attendees received classroom instruction and then practiced shooting on the county shooting range. Another eight-hour class on firearms, “Personal Protection in the Home,” provided more in-depth information on how to handle a firearm and what to do in a home intrusion scenario, was also taught by the Fremont County Sheriff. Students then practiced handling and shooting firearms on the county shooting range for an increased amount of time, and upon completion were eligible to receive the Idaho Enhanced Concealed Carry Permit.

Financial preparedness is an essential aspect of preparing a household for any scenario. An UI Extension educator taught “How to be Financially Prepared When Life Happens.” Participants learned to prepare financially for possible events such as job loss, inability to access funds due to a power outage, and purchasing goods or services without electricity. Another class was taught on how to build a reliable 72-hour kit containing the critical supplies necessary for human life and basic comfort in the event of an evacuation. Classes were taught aimed at improving household food security in case of food shortages, an inability to purchase food and food price spikes. These two classes taught attendees how to grow vegetables, large and small fruits, basic gardening techniques and skills for saving seeds. Participants also received information on how to properly store and preserve what they grow. An Extension educator taught the basics of home food preservation including canning, dehydration and freezing foods. Program attendees also learned how to cook with cast iron, Dutch Ovens and received basic

recipes for cooking outdoors. The participants learned to safely cook with heat sources other than electricity.

Program Outcomes

At the end of the program, a qualitative evaluation was given to attendees asking them for written narratives of what they learned from attending this program. Overall, they reported learning a great deal of information from attending this program. A few quotes from attendees after the completion of the program include the following:

- “I now have an emergency alert app. and I’m planning on getting a weather alert radio.”
- “I know what resources in the county are available for a natural disaster and how to prepare our home and families.”
- “Each of our family cars will be better equipped for an emergency during the winter.”
- “I know how to use Artificial External Defibrillator now.”

The Future

The Master Preparedness Program will be offered in the future again, but in a different format. Based on clientele feedback received from the pilot program, it will be divided into three topic sections that students can sign up for individually. One section will cover all topics related to medical emergencies and natural disasters, the second section will cover all aspects of firearm ownership and self-protection, and the third section will teach skills on food security and self-reliance in an emergency.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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