

Total Disaster Risk Management - Public Education and Community Outreach Programmes by the Singapore Civil Defence Force

Singapore

Introduction

1. The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), whose mission is to protect and save lives and property for a safe and secure Singapore, recognizes the need to increase its effort in strengthening the nation's resilience and preparedness through proactive engagement and partnership with the community. SCDF takes a holistic and long-term view of preparing the nation for emergencies; it recognizes that even the best of plans will fail unless each citizen is familiar with emergency procedures and pitches in to do his or her part. It is around this belief that the SCDF's community involvement and education efforts are built.

2. To engage and involve the community in preparing for emergencies, SCDF has adopted a multi-pronged approach aimed at different target groups – the residential sector, the commercial and industrial workplace community, and the school population. In addition, SCDF partners the National Fire Prevention Council (NFPC) and Civil Defence Executive Committee (CDEC) to promote greater fire safety and prevention awareness among the public.

Public Education and Community Outreach Programmes

3. In order to sensitize the population to the new security environment, 72 community exercises, termed Emergency Preparedness (EP) Days, are held annually in both the residential estates and commercial / industrial workplaces. The participants prepare against unconventional threats such as practising In-Place Protection (IPP) measures to safeguard oneself and families / co-workers against chemical incidents.



In-Place Protection

4. The sustained drive to educate the public on emergency preparedness skills was further reinforced through the Community Emergency Preparedness Programme (CEPP) available 7 days a week. The CEPP packages essential Civil Defence skills and knowledge such as First Aid, Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), Fire Safety and Casualty Evacuation, Emergency Preparedness for War and Unconventional Threats into five individual training modules. Conducted by the four CD Divisions of SCDF, each module comprises both theory and practical lessons aimed at equipping residents and workplace employees in essential life-saving knowledge and skills.

5. Going one step further, SCDF embarked on a systematic effort to reach out to the pool of regular officers and national servicemen serving full-time in the Singapore Armed Forces and Singapore Police

Force. Through this training programme, the SCDF will train intakes of about 25,000 SAF and SPF officers on an annual basis. The components of CEPP will be taught to these regular officers and national servicemen as part of their Basic Military Training at Basic Military Training Centre, Basic Police Training at Home Team Academy and on-going in-service training at various SAF and Police units. A total of 220,590 participants have benefited from this programme since it was launched on 22 September 2003.



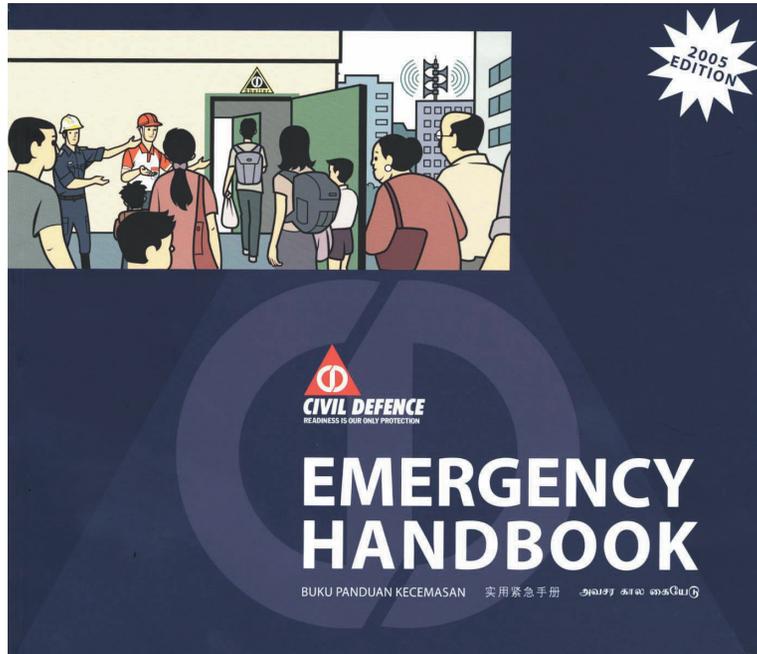
CEPP Training on First Aid

6. SCDF has also reached out to commercial and industrial workplace communities through national-level organizations representing specific interest groups such as the National Fire Prevention Council (NFPC), Singapore Hotel Association (SHA), Singapore Manufacturers' Federation (SMA) and the Fire Safety Managers Association of Singapore (FSMAS). In particular, the SCDF works closely with FSMs in individual companies as well as Safety & Security Watch Groups (SSWGs) in various Business and Industrial Parks to enhance their ability to attend to emergencies before the arrival of emergency responders. This is done through the formation of Company Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). Made up of key staff of the companies, the members of the CERTs are trained by SCDF and are ready to deal with initial emergencies such as incipient fires and chemical incidents, evacuation, identification of hazards and recognition of suspicious items amongst others. To overcome scarce resources, companies within Business and Industrial Parks are also encouraged to pool their resources and expertise to complement that of the SCDF. These efforts are exemplified through the various industrial / commercial mutual-aid schemes such as the Jurong Island mutual-aid scheme, which sectorises the island into various clusters to facilitate the sharing of resources and expertise in tackling chemical incidents.

7. In recent years, SCDF has also expanded its roles in strengthening of measures to heighten the emergency preparedness of commercial buildings in the fight against terrorism. Many commercial buildings, in particular, highrise premises have put in place the Arson Prevention Plan (APP) and In-Place Protection (IPP) to enhance the building management's resilience against any sabotage on the fire safety systems or in dealing with external chemical incidents. The frequency of the conduct of fire drills to help the building managements and occupants to practise the emergency plans and procedures have also been intensified; highrise premises are required to have two fire drills being conducted per year to assist in preparing occupants for fire emergency so that their evacuation and movements within or outside a building can be accomplished in a safe, rapid and orderly manner.

8. To provide the population with basic preparedness information, SCDF released the 5th edition of its Civil Defence Emergency Handbook in April 2005. This Handbook incorporated new emergency preparedness measures such as how the public should behave in the event of a non-conventional attack and when undergoing decontamination. A softcopy of the Handbook is also available for download in the SCDF Internet website. In order to provide the public with the knowledge to recognize unconventional

threats and carry out proper self-help measures during emergencies, SCDF's Emergency Advisories were included in the community pages of the Yellow Pages Buying Guides 06/07 which were distributed door-to-door to approximately 1.4 million homes and business in 2006. SCDF is also leveraging on technology to enhance readiness through the launch of the "Ready Mobile" in February 2007. Members of public will be able to download bite-sized public education animation clips or text midlets into their mobile phones. This will provide users with easy access to the information for learning on the go.



9. The student population is also not neglected in the effort to prepare them for emergencies. Dedicated Liaison Officers from nearby fire stations are assigned to 177 primary schools to conduct awareness talks, support exhibitions and demonstrations, facilitate visits to fire stations, as well as assist in school emergency planning and exercises. As part of SCDF's collaboration with the NFPC in promoting fire safety education in schools, the Fire Safety Puppet Show for primary students and Fire Safety Drama for secondary students are held in addition to providing CD-ROM on fire safety and large-size picture story-book to be used during story-telling time at the school library. About 35,000 Secondary 3 students are also trained in CEPP every year. Since the introduction of the National Civil Defence Cadet Corp (NCDCC), 25 secondary schools have participated in the scheme. Students in uniformed groups such as the Boys' Brigade, St John's Ambulance Brigade, Red Cross etc are also taught emergency procedures.



Fire Safety Puppet Show

10. In April 2006, the Civil Defence Auxiliary Unit (CDAU) scheme was officially launched to provide another avenue for the public to be involved in civil defence. Donning SCDF uniforms and possessing the same status and powers of SCDF regulars, CDAU members perform frontline duties alongside regular officers. They contribute in the areas of fire, rescue, emergency ambulance service, community involvement, public education and other specialist subject matters. There are currently 79 CDAU members and the aim is to achieve the target of 300 by 2009.

Conclusion

11. SCDF is pro-actively coming up with new public education programmes in emergency preparedness and procedures for selected target groups as well as the general public with respect to the new security landscape in Singapore. The challenge for SCDF is to strategise and make the PE programmes interesting and yet meet the needs of the community. In this way, we can engage and equip them with the knowledge and tools that they will need to survive an emergency.

Contact details

12. Any queries or clarifications should be directed to MAJ Md Zulkifli bin Kassim, Assistant Director Public Affairs Department (Community Preparedness) (Md_Zulkifli_Kassim@scdf.gov.sg).