

Skinner brings disaster program to hometown

FORMIDABLE FOOTPRINT TO BE OFFERED FOR STURBRIDGE GROUPS OCT. 29

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STURBRIDGE — Community volunteers, neighborhood groups and faith-based organizations will soon have an opportunity to participate in an exercise that allows them to work together during an online disaster simulation.

The Stoneybrook Group, a

Sturbridge-based company owned by Ric Skinner, has co-developed a national series of unique online disaster exercises with the Disaster Resistant Communities Group, of Tallahassee, Fla. This non-commercial exercise series is known as Formidable Footprint, and it is free to participants.

On Saturday, Oct. 29, a Formidable Footprint tornado exercise will be available for various groups and organizations in Sturbridge.

"This exercise will allow teams to assess their skills and capabilities and identify where there are strengths that need to be maintained and weaknesses that need to be strengthened," Skinner

said.

The exercise is designed to be completed within three hours, and it can be started by individual teams anytime between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Oct. 29. The exercise should be completed by 4 p.m., and all registered participants will receive a certificate of participation, an after-action report summa-

ry, and important information to use in developing an improvement plan for their team and community.

The June 1 tornadoes and Tropical Storm Irene have caused an emphasis to be placed on emergency preparedness, and this is just one of many tools the town

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is using to be ready for the next disaster, whether it be weather-related, a health scare or a manmade incident.

Organizations interested in taking part in this exercise should register by visiting www.formidablefootprint.org. After registering, they will receive emails to help prepare them for the exercise, including a mock warning issued two or three days before the exercise indicating that a storm has been forecasted to arrive on Oct. 29 that may produce conditions favorable for the formation of tornadoes (this will only be a practice warning — no actual threatening storms are expected on or around that day).

"Over the past year, Formidable Footprint exercises have been presented approximately monthly to over 1,500 preparedness and response teams from throughout the United States and several foreign countries who want to assess their disaster planning and response capabilities in a meaningful Internet-based exercise opportunity," Skinner added.

The Formidable Footprint exercise series currently includes such scenarios as earth-

quakes, floods, hurricanes, health pandemics, tornadoes and wildfires. The Formidable Footprint series was developed in accordance with Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program guidelines. The objective of the exercise series is for neighborhood watch programs, neighborhood associations, community and faith-based organizations, citizen corps, fire corps, police personnel and others to work as teams to become better prepared for the next disaster their community may face.

For more information about Formidable Footprint, or to read testimonials and comments pertaining to the program, visit www.formidablefootprint.org. The website also includes a list of completed projects, a photo gallery of past Formidable Footprint preparedness exercises, and a description of current projects.

Skinner's company is located at 12 Stoneybrook Drive in Sturbridge. For more information about his services, call (508) 347-1139.

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