



# INTRODUCTION TO THE SERT NEIGHBOR HELPING NEIGHBOR BUDDY SYSTEM

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I was asked to briefly describe my game plan for engaging my neighbors into a SERT Neighbor Helping Neighbor Buddy System.

I'll start by describing why this system was created - Initially, when I volunteered to encourage my neighbors to become aware of and hopefully become part of SERT, I contacted eight neighbors by email. This didn't get much of a response. When I spoke to one of these individuals face-to-face, he candidly explained why he thought there wasn't much engagement. In his opinion, there was confusion as to whether we wanted a medical history from everyone, resulting in a lack of privacy. He also felt we were pushing joining the SERT Club along with its membership fee, even though it is a relatively small expense. Based on his comments, I decided to take a new approach which follows.

This, as such, is one of various possible approaches to promote SERT with the neighbors on your street.

# Steps involved in setting up the SERT four-step neighbor Buddy System

*As much as possible, make it a friendly, supportive and uplifting experience for yourself and your neighbors.*

- 1- Stroll your street and list the addresses of all of your neighbors.
- 2- Arrange these addresses into groups of 4 if possible (depending on the number of homes on your individual street).
- 3- Try to arrange the homes closest to one another, into four member groups. They might be adjacent to each other, if possible, or across the street from one another. The goal is that they can, in the event of an emergency, quickly look in on each other.
- 4- Now go to the OHCC Directory - copy and paste all the names and contact information of your neighbors who are part of each of these buddy groups.

# First set up a buddy group that includes you and your adjacent neighbors

Personally contact three of your nearest neighbors and tell them about SERT *and* that you are a representative of the OHCC SERT club.

We agreed to check up on one another in the event of a disaster and shared our contact info. As part of this process, they were also sent attachments with more information about SERT, the Vial of Life document, and the SERT Voluntary Information Form. (also available to you here on the website)

They were encouraged to enter each other's contact info in their cell phones, computer, and perhaps even print it out.

The above process will give you experience for working with the other neighbors, who will be more likely to become part of a buddy group, hearing that you have already created one for yourself and your own adjacent neighbors.

# Establishing SERT buddy groups on your street

1- Now repeat the same process with the next four neighbors. You expedite the process by personally asking only one of the four if they would become part of a SERT neighbor helping neighbor buddy group.

It helps if you already know that neighbor, but it isn't required.

2- Call and if possible, meet that neighbor face to face to introduce SERT's goals. Mention you have already set up a group of your own adjacent neighbors, and now wish to set up a SERT buddy group with that person's adjacent neighbors. Generally, I've found they agree to do so. During the above meeting, I often gifted this neighbor a green/red OK/HELP sign.

3- Emphasize that there are some neighbors who are elderly, who might well be on their own, and this Buddy System attempts to leave no neighbor left behind during an emergency/disaster. It is an inspiring idea.

# Establishing SERT buddy groups on your street

4- Once you have that first neighbor who agrees, a group email is sent to all four neighbors with their contact info from the OHCC Directory. This email states the name of the neighbor who has already agreed to be part of the group, and all that is asked is that all four neighbors record the contact information of their neighbors on their cell phone, computer, perhaps even print it out.

5- Let them know it is voluntary: they are given the option not to be part of this neighbor helping neighbor Buddy System. If someone is not interested, another neighbor would be added to replace them. However, by already including the name of one of their close-by neighbors who agreed to be part of the group, and by sharing the contacts for all four neighbors in one quick and easy to engage with process, neighbors on our street have signed on.

# Establishing SERT buddy groups

6- They are also encouraged to update or correct their contact information and share that information with their SERT NHN Safety Coordinator and with the other neighbors in their buddy group.

7- Suggest that when they get the chance, they seek out their neighbors and acknowledge they are now part of the same SERT buddy group.

So far this system has been well accepted.

Future communications with our neighbors are now based on the premise that everyone is somewhat familiar with SERT.

# Overview of the SERT four-step neighbor Buddy System

1- An Initial Letter is sent to neighbors which explains the SERT four neighbor Buddy System and includes these residents as members of a buddy group with their adjacent neighbors.

This Initial Letter is accompanied by these 3 other attachments.

**A** - Introduction Letter that gives a fuller description of the goals of SERT.

It includes a link to the SERT website and info about obtaining the OK/HELP SIGN.

**B** - NHN Resident Info Form

**C** - VIAL OF LIFE Form

Once all neighbors have been included into buddy groups, a CONGRATULATORY email should be sent, updating them on their fine “group” achievement

Possibly combine the above email with a block party announcement – where green/red signs could be gifted to neighbors who haven't obtained one yet.

During this block party, SERT's goals will be further discussed in a casual way and SERT's President or VP would make a brief safety preparedness presentation. Neighbors might enjoy taking part in a Potluck with socializing.

As mentioned prior, in addition to this slide show the various emails are available to you on this website. If anyone has questions, I would be delighted to speak with you!

Best Regards, *Stan Katz*