**Neighborhood Safety Net**

A couple of years ago the Board of Health was working on getting the town organized into neighborhoods that would be more or less self-sufficient in an emergency, and able to report to the Emergency Management Team if there were serious problems. We had limited success, but a few neighborhoods were formed, and those neighbors are probably updating their contact lists and telephone trees right now. Some of these neighborhoods have private groups on Nextdoor Shutesbury for communication among themselves; some use e-mail lists.

What is it?

Neighborhood Safety Net is a way of making normal neighborly behavior a little more organized and systematic.  At its most basic, the idea is to have a communication tree, or web, and one or two point people who can communicate with the fire station in an emergency and report any problems that need attention (need an ambulance, road blocked, whatever). Beyond that, it’s whatever the neighbors want it to be, possibly for sharing resources like tools or skills or information – whatever you can imagine.  In the present emergency, for example, the people most vulnerable to complications from the disease may need someone to run errands for them so they themselves can remain safe from exposure at home.

When we started working on this we were thinking of something like the great ice storm of 2008. People were focusing on power outages, road blockages, downed phone lines. The main concerns were things like having no heat. Those are still concerns for when a big storm comes, but the big storm now is of a very different sort, and will need a different kind of response.

The Board of Health divided the town into about 40 neighborhoods – boundaries subject to your input, of course. If you want to do a little organizing along these lines, contact us at [boardhealth@shutesbury.org](mailto:boardhealth@shutesbury.org) (best way) or 413 259 2122.