

## STATEMENT OF MISSION

The mission of the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) is reduce the impact of disasters through research-based education.

This mission is carried out through:

- Networking EDEN delegates and other Extension professionals
- Providing timely, credible information
- Connecting with federal, state, and local agencies; and organizations
- Anticipating future disaster education needs
- Serving communities in times of disaster

## BACKGROUND

Disasters have become a prominent issue in many American lives in recent years. Typically, it is the immediate impact and response that have attracted attention. However, for disaster reduction programs to be effective, they must also have significant research, education, mitigation, planning, recovery, and review components. The Extension System has a long standing commitment to disaster preparedness and recovery through the USDA Emergency Programs and the Federal Response Plan.

The potential scope of Extension in disaster education is far greater than its formal responsibilities during federally-declared disasters. This is because most disasters are small and local, and do not involve state or federal agencies. For example, the Federal Emergency Management Agency estimates that 2-3 million Americans are affected by disasters every year. In the category of home fires, The American Red Cross alone helps over 50,000 individual families each year following the destruction of their homes by fires. Most of these disasters are handled within the victim's community and, therefore, depend on local resources. As a local resource, Extension's investment in long-term community recovery and redevelopment allows it to bridge immediate response, recovery and mitigation efforts.

Most Extension educators/agents act locally and have access to materials and expertise that can address typical decisions and issues that disaster victims face. Extension is an obvious, but often underutilized, resource in disaster education. Involvement and experience in dealing with local disasters is the best preparation for responding realistically and effectively to large-scale disasters.

EDEN was formed originally as a North Central Region committee with the coordinating function located with Illinois Cooperative Extension. At its October 1997 annual meeting the EDEN membership announced their desire to expand to a national network; Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service was invited to join the network and assumed the leadership role in February, 1998. Membership stood at thirty-one states plus Puerto Rico and USDA when the coordinating role was assumed by Missouri in October 2000. The website, developed originally by Dr. Aaron Ebata at the University of Illinois, now currently resides on an Extension Foundation server with oversight being administered as part of the USDA EDEN FADI grant.

## MARKETING EXTENSION THROUGH DISASTER EDUCATION

Strengthening Extension's role in disaster education presents the opportunity for Extension educators/agents to broaden their audiences and to gain recognition as specialists in times of great need and critical exposure. Establishing formal linkages with public agencies and private organizations affords similar opportunities at state, regional, and federal levels of Extension. Effective collaboration is a critical component of public accountability for Extension.

## THE EDEN WEBSITE

EDEN is a collaborative multi-state effort by Extension Services across the country to improve the delivery of services to citizens affected by disasters. Its Web site is designed to provide Extension agents and educators with access to resources on disaster preparedness, recovery, and mitigation that will enhance their short- and long-term programming efforts. On its Web site EDEN maintains a shared database of disaster-related resources that are available from member states. This database is designed for use by extension agents and educators, but is open to the general public. **Each institution takes responsibility for entering and maintaining information on its own resources.**

## EDEN MEMBERSHIP

Institutions are invited to join EDEN by submitting a Cooperative Agreement, signed by the director or administrator of the Extension Service program; the agreement is sent with a letter introducing the institution's representative(s) for EDEN activities and designating one as point of contact for EDEN correspondence.