

Achievement

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Helping Families Recover from Disaster

With an unseasonably early and unusually harsh ice storm bearing down across North Carolina on December 4, 2002, North Carolina Cooperative Extension agents across the state responded quickly with recommendations on heating homes, preparing food safely without power and repairing widespread landscape damage.

The efforts of Suzzette Goldman, a family and consumer education agent in Durham County, were exemplary. Through local TV and radio stations, newspapers and Web sites, she provided citizens in her hard-hit county — and 38 surrounding counties — with information on safe food preparation. In addition, the county Extension center provided specific advice from more than 150 people who called with questions about what foods to cook, eat or discard. That's significant because improperly prepared foods can lead to foodborne illness, which causes more than \$3 billion in hospitalization costs annually in the United States.

In responding to the storm, Goldman and specialists and agents in other counties built upon Cooperative Extension's national- and state-award-winning disaster education efforts before and after the hurricanes and tropical storms of the 1990s. Using lessons learned in those disasters and tapping into the experiences of the national Extension Disaster Education Network, Extension fine-tuned its related educational programs, resulting in better training programs for agents and new educational materials for citizens. Those materials include a comprehensive Web site at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/disaster>.

Over the past 20 years, North Carolina has had more billion-dollar weather and climate disasters than any state other than Texas. In addition to weather-related disasters, Cooperative Extension works to address biosecurity issues, such as foot-and-mouth disease, and bioterrorism, which have emerged as significant threats to our economy and our supply of safe and affordable food and fiber.



Suzzette Goldman is a North Carolina Cooperative Extension family and consumer education agent in Durham County.

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<http://achieve.ncsu.edu/>