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Disaster News

MAKE SEPTEMBER YOUR MONTH TO GET READY: IT'S NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

HARRISBURG, Pa. – Each September, a nationwide effort is made to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and schools. During National Preparedness Month, federal, state, and local governments, as well as non-profit organizations and voluntary agencies implement information tools to educate the public about the importance of individual and family preparedness.

A recent survey conducted by The Ad Council found that 91 percent of respondents said it was very important or somewhat important for all Americans to be prepared for emergencies, but only half of respondents said they had an emergency supply kit. During the 2006 National Preparedness Month, over 1,000 national, regional, and local organizations will be working to ensure that 100 percent of Americans are ready.

With the threat of flooding from possible hurricanes and storms during the remainder of this hurricane season, residents should take this time to form a plan and make sure they are prepared for future emergency and disaster situations. There are multiple resources available to individuals, families and businesses from federal and state agencies. The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) provides preparedness information online at www.pema.state.pa.us and www.paflooding.state.pa.us. The PEMA web sites provide updated local disaster news, links to local, state, and federal Internet resources, and printable preparedness guides for your family or business.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has developed the web site www.ready.gov. The Ready web site provides helpful information about disaster preparedness. It is a valuable resource that places the tools and knowledge in a central location, accessible to all Americans. Residents without Internet access can call **1-800-BE-READY (237-3239)**.

National Preparedness Month is a great opportunity to get your whole family and community involved. DHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have free brochures and booklets available that cover different aspects of disaster preparedness. Some of these materials can be printed from the www.fema.gov web site. You can also order free copies of the materials by calling **1-800-480-2520**. There are several materials to choose from that give detailed information about how to prepare for emergencies. Below are two publications that give thorough information and can help you on your path to preparedness:

- IS-22 Are You Ready: An In-Depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness
- Preparing Makes Sense: Get Ready Now

Get your kids involved in your preparation. DHS and FEMA have both developed children-specific websites to help teach children of all ages about being ready, by using games, age-specific activity guides, and other school or family activities. On DHS's www.ready.gov/kids, you can follow Rex the Mountain Lion and his family as they prepare themselves and their friends for disasters. FEMA's www.fema.gov/kids has games and activities, and

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kids can read about the experiences of other children that have been affected by disasters. Both websites have links and resources for parents and teachers, including printed materials that can be used at home or in schools.

Encourage your kids to take information to school, or volunteer your time at the school, your community center, or a civic club to do a short presentation about preparedness that can help your community. A valuable resource that can help you reach out to your neighbors is Citizen Corps. Citizen Corps helps people prepare, train, and volunteer in their communities. Visit www.citizencorps.gov for more information.

Remember, there are a few simple steps you can take that will help you be prepared:

➤ Prepare a Disaster Kit:

- A disaster kit should have essential supplies needed to sustain yourself and your family during and after a disaster; preferably for a 72-hour time period. The most essential supplies for a kit are water, non-perishable food, a radio, a first aid kit, extra batteries, and unique family needs such as prescription medications and important family documents. You may need to sustain yourself for multiple days, so make sure to have at least three gallons of water per person and plenty of non-perishable food items.

➤ Make a Plan:

- Essential components should include a communication plan, an out-of-town contact, an evacuation plan, a shelter-in-place plan, and knowledge of emergency plans at work, school, and other areas of your community. It's also very important to have an established meeting place in case you are separated before or during a disaster.

The communication plan is essential, especially in the event of evacuations, and should include emergency numbers such as 9-1-1, cellular and land-line phone numbers for in-town and out-of-town family and friends, and contact information for shelters and hotels.

➤ Be Informed:

- Pay attention to updates from your local emergency management agencies and news media. In the event of a disaster, listen to the advice of these agencies. Stay tuned to local weather reports and keep abreast of road closures and suspended government services such as school and government agency closings.

Keep informed about all the different types of disasters that could affect your home and community. Remember, some of the things you do to prepare are the same for both natural and man-made disasters. To become more familiar with how to react in an emergency, go to www.ready.gov or call 1-800-BE-READY (1-800-237-3239).

By making September your month to get ready, you can help yourself, your family, and your neighbors be aware, be safe, and be prepared.

FEMA manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.

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More disaster information is available on the Internet at www.fema.gov, www.paflooding.state.pa.us, or www.sba.gov. Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability or economic status. Anyone who believes he or she has been discriminated against should contact the federal or commonwealth coordinating officer.