

# Emergency Preparedness

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## September Is National Preparedness Month

This September, organizations and the public will come together for the seventh annual National Preparedness Month event, designed to encourage Americans to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and communities.

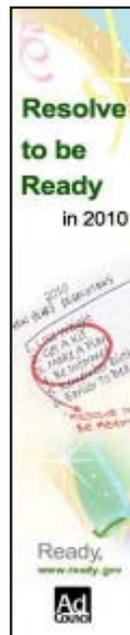
Emergency preparedness officials are asking organizations to consider joining the National Preparedness Month (NPM) Coalition and to send a message to your customers, employees, members and stakeholders about the importance of being prepared for emergencies, whether that emergency be three days without electricity or a major disaster striking your community and damaging your home or workplace.

Last year, 2,700 organizations took part in the coalition. Organizations can register online at <http://ready.adcouncil.org>.

To learn more about NPM, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) and click on the NPM banner.

If you have any questions about the effort, contact the *Ready* Campaign at [NPM@dhs.gov](mailto:NPM@dhs.gov).

For more on emergency preparedness, contact the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management at 571-350-1000, TTY 711.



*“FEMA is only one part of the nation’s emergency management team. All levels of government, the private sector, non-profits and the public need to be on the same page. The U.S. private sector is a critical part of the team.”*

*FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate*

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# Are You Ready for the Summer Heat?

As the days get longer and warmer, emergency management officials warn that extreme heat can be very dangerous and in some instances even fatal, so it is important to be ready.

When the air temperature or humidity rises above optimal range for comfort, evaporation is slowed and the body must work harder to maintain a normal temperature. Exposure to extreme heat can cause physical problems and may cause heat disorders or illnesses. Older adults, young children and those who are sick or overweight are most vulnerable to extreme heat.

Conditions that can induce heat-related illnesses include stagnant atmospheric conditions and poor air quality. Consequently, people living in urban areas may be at greater risk from the effects of a prolonged heat wave than those living in rural areas.

## Precautions

During extremely hot weather, you should take the following precautions:

- Stay indoors as much as you can, on lower floors if possible.
- Limit exposure to the sun and use sunblock with a high sun protector factor rating (at least 15 spf) if you must be outdoors.
- If your home does not have air conditioning, spend the hottest part of the day in public buildings such as libraries, schools, movie theaters, shopping malls and other community facilities.
- Use fans. Circulating air can cool the body by increasing the perspiration rate of evaporation.
- If you have window air conditioning, eliminate any holes or gaps around the installation.
- Check air-conditioning ducts for proper insulation.
- Eat well-balanced, light and regular meals. Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.
- Drink plenty of water. Persons who have epilepsy or heart, kidney or liver disease; are on fluid-restricted diets; or have a problem with fluid retention should consult a doctor before increasing liquid intake.



Fairfax County, Va., publication.

To request this information in an alternate format, call 571-350-1000, TTY 711.

- Limit intake of alcoholic beverages.
- Dress in loose-fitting, lightweight and light-colored clothes that cover as much skin as possible.
- Protect your face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat.
- Check on family, friends and neighbors who do not have air conditioning and who spend much of their time alone.
- Never leave children or pets alone in closed vehicles.
- Avoid strenuous work during the warmest part of the day, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Have a buddy system when working in extreme heat, and take frequent breaks.
- Exercise should be done in the early morning hours between 4-7 a.m.
- Make sure there is enough food and water for pets.

## Heat-Induced Illnesses

Exposure to extreme heat can cause serious illness.

- **Sunburn** is a common summer problem. In severe cases it can cause swelling, blisters, fever and headaches. Take a shower using soap to remove oils that may block pores, preventing the body from cooling naturally. Apply dry, sterile dressings to any blisters and, if they persist, see a doctor.
- **Heat cramps** are painful spasms, usually in leg and abdominal muscles, and may be accompanied by heavy sweating.
- **Heat exhaustion** can be serious. Symptoms include heavy sweating, but skin may be cool, pale or flushed. Fainting or dizziness, weak pulse, nausea, vomiting, exhaustion and headaches may occur. If you experience any of these symptoms, sit or lie down in a cool place, loosen your clothing and sip half a glass of water every 15 minutes. Discontinue drinking water if you become nauseous, and seek immediate medical attention if vomiting occurs.
- **Heat stroke** is a severe medical emergency and can be life-threatening. Symptoms include a high body temperature, as much as 105 degrees; hot, red, dry skin; rapid, weak pulse; rapid shallow breathing; and possible loss of consciousness. If you suspect you have heat stroke, seek immediate medical assistance or call 9-1-1.

For more information visit: [www.fema.gov/hazard/heat/](http://www.fema.gov/hazard/heat/). Additional summer safety tips are online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/prepare/summer](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/prepare/summer).

## Making Your Home Accessible and Safe

By Bonnie O'Leary

When we talk about a safe and accessible home, we want to be sure we have the right things in place. Options include smoke and fire detectors; carbon monoxide and gas detectors; burglary systems; NOAA weather emergency alerts; water leak detection; distress signaling; and medical alerts. Smoke detectors with built-in strobes are popular; some local fire departments sometimes provide free smoke detectors with strobe. You could also use a stand-alone strobe. The strobes can often be tied into NOAA and community alerts. Security systems include those for burglary, weather emergency, water leak detection, panic button, door entry and proximity sensors.

Specialized design for accessibility is critical. The carbon monoxide detector, gas detector and visual strobe are all important security components. And there are every day alerts to be considered too: the doorbell, telephone, video phone, baby crying, alarm clocks, apartment building intercom and even timers. The newest trend in what are called "Smart Homes" is home automation. The systems can be programmed to monitor and control just about anything in the home and can be programmed for accessibility purposes. They can be set so that all the lights in the house will blink to alert occupants to an emergency condition, and they can even shut down all audio and video (TV, etc.) to alert the user to a possible fire or other warning.

*Bonnie O'Leary is with the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons (NVRC). The above article was edited from NVRC's July 9 e-mail newsletter and stemmed from a workshop presented by Joe Duarte, Fairfax, Va., who has a profound hearing loss and received his first hearing aid at the age of four.*

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management is available to deliver emergency preparedness presentations to community organizations and homeowners associations. If interested, contact Marcelo Ferreira at 571-350-1013, TTY 711, or via e-mail at [marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov).

## Marcelo's Minute

### Information or Misinformation?



Marcelo Ferreira

Information during an emergency is essential for situational awareness. It can determine whether you should evacuate or shelter-in-place. The advent of the Internet has allowed for information to spread very quickly, but it has also increased the flow of rumors and misinformation.

So, where should you go for current updates?

The most up-to-date information that you will find during an emergency is from Fairfax County Government and its Office of Emergency Management, which uses several communication methods, including:

- Community Emergency Alert Network, CEAN.
- The Fairfax County website, [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov), as well as the emergency information page, [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency) and the OEM Web page, [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem).
- Emergency Information Hotline (703-817-7771, TTY 711).
- Scrolling messages on Channel 16.
- 1670 AM, emergency radio for Fairfax County.
- Local media broadcasts.

The CEAN is a great way to stay up-to-date about weather alerts, local hazards and even traffic conditions. By signing up, you will receive a free e-mail and/or text message with important information. Go to [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean) to register!

Even with these redundancies, always remember to keep a battery-powered radio and additional batteries in case of power and phone failure.

If you or your organization are in need of a presentation about emergency preparedness or other emergency-related topics, let me know at 571-350-1013, TTY 711 or by e-mail at [marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov).

# DHS Standards for Private Sector Preparedness

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano recently announced the adoption of the final standards for the Voluntary Private Sector Preparedness Accreditation and Certification Program (PS-Prep) — a major milestone in DHS's implementation of a program recommended by the 9/11 Commission to improve private sector preparedness for disasters and emergencies.

"Private organizations across the country — from businesses to universities to non-profit organizations — have a vital role to play in bolstering our disaster preparedness and response capabilities," said Secretary Napolitano. "These new standards will provide our private sector partners with the tools they need to enhance the readiness and resiliency of our nation."

PS-Prep is a partnership between DHS and the private sector that enables private entities to receive emergency

preparedness certification from a DHS accreditation system created in coordination with the private sector.

The standards — developed by the National Fire Protection Association, the British Standards Institution and ASIS International — were published for public comment in the Federal Register in October 2009. The adoption of the final standards was published in a Federal Register notice following a series of regional public meetings and the incorporation of public comments.

DHS will continue to accept comments on PS-Prep, the three adopted standards, and/or proposals to adopt any other similar standard that satisfies the target criteria of the December 2008 Federal Register notice that announced the program. Comments may be submitted to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) or [FEMA-POLICY@dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-POLICY@dhs.gov).

For more information, visit [www.fema.gov/privatesectorpreparedness/](http://www.fema.gov/privatesectorpreparedness/).

## Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)

Three representatives and members of the SE Virginia Regional VOAD are working with the Coast Guard Sector Hampton Roads on the Virginia and Coastal Maryland Area Committee Volunteer Workgroup. The goals are to develop management and oversight capability for unaffiliated volunteers in the event Virginia requires oil spill clean up. The group is also trying to determine non-hazardous tasks for unaffiliated volunteers; develop and conduct training for volunteer organizations and training requirements for volunteer tasks.

On June 16, the SE Virginia Regional VOAD representatives attended the Virginia and Coastal Maryland Area Committee Volunteer Workgroup meeting to review the final draft of the Oil Spill Volunteer Plan for Non-Wildlife Volunteers. Following approvals by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the captain of the Port of Hampton Roads, it will be included as an annex to the Virginia and Coastal Maryland Area Contingency Plan. A tabletop exercise for this volunteer plan will be conducted at a future, unspecified date.

## Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale

All hurricanes are dangerous, but some are more so than others. The way storm surge, wind and other factors combine determines the hurricane's destructive power.

To make comparisons easier and to make the predicted hazards of approaching hurricanes clearer to emergency managers, NOAA's hurricane forecasters use a disaster-potential scale that assigns storms to five categories. This can be used to give an estimate of the potential property damage and the flooding expected along the coast with a hurricane.

The scale was formulated in 1969 by Herbert Saffir, a consulting engineer, and Dr. Bob Simpson, director of the National Hurricane Center. The National Hurricane Center decided this year to exclude flood ranges and storm surge estimations from the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale and update the scale's numbers. A separate flood range and storm surge scale is now available. To see the current Saffir-Simpson Scale summary table and the storm surge scales, visit [www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshs.shtml](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshs.shtml).

## Summer Preparedness

By Donald E. White

Summer is here . . . and storms, too! Got lights? You will need them when thunderstorms zap trees and transformers. Power outages can knock out your electricity for hours. Solution? Flashlights and lanterns. Avoid candles. Why? Candles and matches cause nearly 70,000 fires that burn down houses and apartments each year in the U.S.

What works for me? Hands-free lighting, using battery-operated tabletop-style lanterns often available for \$10 at discount and camping stores. They have one-button operation and use 4 D-cell batteries readily available at your neighborhood food and drug stores. And these lanterns also come with a hanging loop for outdoor camping as needed.

How many to get? Experience has taught me to get one lantern per room, for the kitchen, dining room, living room, bathroom and each bedroom. Best \$50 I ever spent! During one 6-hour power outage in the Lincolnia area, neighbors saw my lit-up home and kept knocking on my door to see where I got my electricity. You can cook, eat, read magazines and even study homework by those lanterns.

How long do they last? You can count on two days' use before changing the batteries. Here's why from this hospital safety director who has to plan for emergencies. New D-cell alkaline batteries usually work for at least 12 hours, sometimes up to 20 hours. Electrical engineers and battery manufacturers debate the actual duration time, depending on how the battery is made, how much power it consumes, etc. When you are at home, most folks would use a lantern at most six hours an evening, from suppertime to bedtime. Count on two evenings of use, before you need to change the batteries. Now you know!

*Chief Donald E. White, CHSP, CHCM, CHEP, is a Fairfax City resident and director of Safety and Security at the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute in Falls Church. White is a volunteer firefighter/rescuer, CERT member, American Red Cross disaster instructor and former USDOT federal safety investigator.*

FAIRFAX COUNTY



The Fairfax County Citizen Corps harnesses the power of individuals through education, training and volunteer service to make communities safe, stronger and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues and disasters of all kinds. There are five core programs:

### Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)

Provides support for the police department by incorporating volunteers so that law enforcement professionals have more time for frontline duty. VIPS includes auxiliary police officers, administrative volunteers, chaplains and the Citizen's Police Academy.



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/vips.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/vips.htm)

### Neighborhood Watch

Brings private citizens and law enforcement together to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. It brings to life the simple concept of neighbors watching out for neighbors. Volunteers may join an existing group or establish one in their neighborhood.



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/nw.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/nw.htm)

### Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

Operated by the Health Department, MRC is composed of medical and non-medical volunteers trained to assist the community in dispensing medication during public health emergencies.



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mrc/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mrc/)

### Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Trains people in neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools in basic disaster response skills, such as fire suppression and search and rescue, and helps them take a more active role in emergency preparedness.



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/cert.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/cert.htm)

### Fire Corps

Volunteers are trained to perform non-operational administrative duties at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Headquarters and at volunteer fire stations.



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/firecorps.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/firecorps.htm)

## Protect Your Home From Future Disasters

**B**y taking some common-sense steps now, you can reduce damage to your home and property from high winds, flooding and fire, say state and federal emergency management officials.

Some steps are fairly simple and inexpensive, while others may require a professional contractor. You can protect your home and possessions by taking the following actions:

- Make sure that you have adequate insurance, that covers damage from fires, for your home and personal property. You should also have flood insurance, which is available through approximately 85 insurance companies in more than 20,800 participating communities nationwide.
- Make an inventory of your possessions to help claim reimbursement in the event of loss or damage. Store this information in a safe deposit box or other secure location to ensure the records survive a disaster. Include photographs or videos of your home's interior and exterior, and cars, boats and other recreational vehicles. Get professional appraisals of jewelry, collectibles, artwork or other items that may be difficult to evaluate. Make copies of receipts and canceled checks showing the cost of valuable items.
- Store vital family records and other important documents such as birth and marriage certificates, Social Security card, passports, wills, deeds and financial, insurance and immunization records in a safe deposit box or other safe location.
- Make certain to back-up and secure computer data and information files and store them on a separate disk.
- Know how and when to turn off water, gas and electricity at the main switches or valves. Share this information with your family and/or caregivers.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on each level of your home, especially near the bedrooms.
- Be sure everyone knows how to use your fire extinguishers and where they are kept.

You can further reduce the risk of injury and damage by taking the next steps:

- Hang pictures and mirrors away from beds.
- Place large, heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Repair cracks in ceilings and foundations.
- Store weedkillers, pesticides and flammable products away from heat sources.

- Use straps or other restraints to secure tall cabinets, bookshelves, large appliances (especially water heater, furnace and refrigerator), mirrors, shelves, large picture frames to wall studs.
- Place oily rags or waste in covered metal cans and dispose of them according to regulations.
- Have a professional repair defective electrical wiring and leaky gas connections.
- Have a professional clean and repair chimneys, flue pipes, connectors and gas vents.

For more information and help preparing for an emergency, visit [www.fema.gov/plan/index.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/plan/index.shtm).

### Volunteers Needed for Emergency Preparedness Exercise

Fairfax County residents are needed Saturday, Sept. 25, to act as mock emergency volunteers. Volunteer Fairfax, the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management and the Fairfax County Health Department will be testing Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) plans, which assign volunteers to the needs of emergency response and recovery specialists. By simply walking through the VRC, you will help improve the ability to direct volunteers in future emergencies.

No prior training is needed and there are no physical limitations prohibiting participation. You will be asked to provide general feedback and suggestions after exiting the VRC. The event will take place locally throughout the morning and early afternoon, although your commitment will not last the length of the exercise. There will also be additional information and resources on hand to help you better prepare your family, business and property for an emergency.

If you are interested in acting as an emergency volunteer for this event, e-mail Volunteer Fairfax at [ERexercise@volunteerfairfax.org](mailto:ERexercise@volunteerfairfax.org).

If you plan on volunteering with a group, include the number of individuals that will be joining you at the exercise. Volunteer Fairfax will e-mail more detailed information as the event gets closer.

Bruce McFarlane, emergency planning and outreach analyst with the Office of Emergency Management,



attended a recent Emergency Response, Security and Safety open house at the North County Human Services Building in Reston.

Contributed photo

## Preparedness Information in Other Languages

Ready.gov offers disaster preparedness information in six languages: Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, French, English and Spanish.

Ready is a national public service advertising (PSA) campaign designed to educate and empower residents to prepare for and respond to emergencies including natural and man-made disasters.

The goal is to get the public involved and ultimately to increase the level of basic preparedness across the nation. Ready asks individuals to do three key things: (1) get an emergency supply kit, (2) make a family emergency plan, and (3) be informed about the different types of emergencies that could occur and their appropriate responses.

The Ready.gov translations page has more information.  
[www.ready.gov/america/translations/index.html](http://www.ready.gov/america/translations/index.html)

## National Preparedness Month Widget

Add a FEMA widget about National Preparedness Month to your website or blog to help promote the readiness of your workforce. The widget can be found online at [www.fema.gov/help/widgets/](http://www.fema.gov/help/widgets/).



# Families Who Are Ready Recover Faster

By Laura Southard

Although meteorologists can't predict exactly how tropical systems and hurricanes will affect Virginia this year, there is one prediction that will come true: *families who are ready will recover much better and faster than those who are not.*

Everyone should be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least the first 72 hours – or three days – after a storm hits. Every home should have at least four basic items:

- A family emergency plan.
- Three days of bottled water (one gallon /person /day).
- Three days of non-perishable food.
- A hand-crank or battery-powered radio with extra batteries for listening to emergency information from local media and officials.

Once you have these basics, store them in waterproof containers that have wheels or in containers that you can lift easily, carry, or roll in case you need to leave your home quickly.

Other items are useful in an emergency supply kit, such as flashlights with extra batteries, a first-aid kit, a list of prescriptions and doctors, special items for young children and disabled or older family members, and food and water for your pets.

To see a short Ready Virginia video about getting ready for hurricane season and making a family emergency plan, go to [www.youtube.com/vaemergency#p/u](http://www.youtube.com/vaemergency#p/u). You also can request a new publication, Virginia's Hurricane Evacuation Guide, by writing to [pio@vdem.virginia.gov](mailto:pio@vdem.virginia.gov) or by calling 1-866-782-3470.

To learn more about getting ready for tropical storms, hurricanes and flooding, go to [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov). For information in Spanish, visit [www.ListoVirginia.gov](http://www.ListoVirginia.gov).

Getting ready for hurricane and flood season is everyone's responsibility. Make your plan now.

*Laura L. Southard is public outreach coordinator with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.*