Emergency Preparedness
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August 2011

September Is National Preparedness Month

National Preparedness Month September 2011
A Time to Remember, A Time to Prepare.

National Preparedness Month (NPM), sponsored by the Ready Campaign and Citizen Corps, kicks off next month. There is still time for you to sign up as a coalition member at *http://community.fema.gov*.

By joining the coalition, individuals or organizations agree to promote emergency preparedness during September.

Once registered, members have access to a toolkit that includes suggestions for activities and events, templates, articles, banners and customizable materials.

Coalition members also have access to an events calendar allowing them to post and promote preparedness events, share success stories and participate in national and regional discussion forums.

The Ready Campaign's websites (ready.gov and listo.gov) and toll-free numbers (1-800-BE-READY and 1-888-SE-LISTO) provide free emergency preparedness information and resources in English and Spanish. Ready is a national campaign, in partnership with The Advertising Council, designed to educate and empower residents to prepare for and respond to all types of emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks.

NPM is held each September to encourage everyone to take steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and communities.

This year's slogan is: **A Time to Remember, A Time to Prepare**.

This year also marks the 10-year anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"By doing what we can to ensure that our communities, and our nation, are prepared to respond

Continued on Page 2

In This Issue

National Preparedness Month
Page 1

SBA and Red Cross Help Families/Businesses Prepare
Page 2

Safety Tips for Summer Heat | Marcelo's Minute
Page 3

Travel Safety | Pets and Heat
Page 4

Heat Safety for Older Adults
Page 5

Children Can Help with Hurricane Preparedness
Page 6

Social Engineering Attacks | Disasters and the Elderly
Page 7

Social Media in Emergencies
Page 8

Get involved with an Aug. 31 emergency exercise. See below for your opportunity to be an "actor" in the fire and rescue emergency exercise.

SBA and Red Cross Join to Help Family and Businesses Prepare

The U.S. Small Business Administration and the American Red Cross have joined forces to intensify outreach efforts to educate the public about the importance of having a disaster recovery plan in place.

"Studies show that between 15 percent to 40 percent of businesses fail following a natural or man-made disaster," said Gail McGovern, president and CEO of the American Red Cross. "By partnering with the SBA to get more families and businesses prepared for emergencies, we hope to save both lives and livelihoods."

The core of the SBA-Red Cross agreement is a plan to work with SBA district offices and its resource partners such as SCORE, the Small Business Development Centers and the Women's Business Development Centers to promote and, along with local Red Cross chapters, sponsor preparedness training workshops.

The two agencies will also work to increase awareness in the business community about the Red Cross Ready Rating program. Ready Rating (*www.readyrating.org*) is a free, self-paced, Web-based membership program that helps a business measure its ability to deal with emergencies, and gives customized feedback on how to improve those efforts. Materials on the Ready Rating program and other disaster preparedness tips will be disseminated to the public virtually and via printed materials. Recent disasters have served as a reminder for individuals and businesses to make a plan.

Disaster preparedness for homes and businesses should include a review of your property insurance to make sure you understand what is and isn't covered. Make backup copies of important documents and store them at an off-site location. Put together an emergency kit, which contains first-aid supplies, cash, bottled water, non-perishable food, a flashlight and plastic garbage bags.

For more preparedness tips for homes and businesses, visit *www.sba.gov/disasterassistance*.

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 email at *marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov*.

Opportunity for Actors

On Aug. 31, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department is conducting a shooter scenario incident and is looking for victim/actors of all ages (youngsters too). Parent involvement for the younger "victims" is encouraged, so this can be a family affair.

The drill will be from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will be held at Walt Whitman Middle School, 2500 Parkers Lane, Alexandria.

This exercise will involve EMS and firefighters. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Jessica Spear by email at *Jessica.Spear@fairfaxcounty.gov* to sign up and find out the details.

Reprinted from the Fairfax County CERT blog, *http://fairfaxcountycert.blogspot.com/2011/07/opportunity-for-actors.html*.

National Preparedness Month

continued from Page 1

and recover from all types of disasters and hazards, we honor the memory of those who were lost that day," said FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate.

Copy this code for the National Preparedness Month Widget:

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<a href="http://www.ready.gov/community"><img
src="http://www.fema.gov/graphics/widgets/npm_a_2011.gif"
border="0" alt="National Preparedness Month - September
2011 Graphic" /></a>
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Copy this code for the National Preparedness Month Widget:

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<a href="http://www.ready.gov/community"><img
src="http://www.fema.gov/graphics/widgets/npm_b_2011.gif"
border="0" alt="National Preparedness Month - September
2011 Graphic" /></a>
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Add the National Preparedness Month widget to your website or blog. Get the code at www.fema.gov/help/widgets/.

Tips for Staying Cool and Safe During Extreme Heat

Summer is here, and much of the U.S. continues to deal with abnormally hot weather. Having a plan to stay cool is important for both you and your pets. Here are some tips on staying cool and safe during extreme heat:

• Be familiar with your local weather forecast by visiting *www.weather.gov* or *mobile.weather.gov* on your phone.
• Cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun with drapes, shades, awnings or louvers. (Outdoor awnings or louvers can reduce the heat that enters a home by up to 80 percent.)
• Eat well-balanced, light and regular meals. Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.
• Drink plenty of water and limit intake of alcoholic beverages. Those 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.
• 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. Use a buddy system when working in extreme heat, and take frequent breaks.

A search and rescue dog cools off in a wading pool.
Picture courtesy of FEMA

Hotter weather also affects pets, so remember to give them plenty of water and keep them inside. Check out *Ready.gov* for more tips on getting prepared, for any emergency.

Reprinted from the FEMA Blog:
http://blog.fema.gov/2011/07/tips-for-staying-safe-cool-during.html

Marcelo's Minute

National Preparedness Month

Marcelo Ferreira

If a disaster strikes Fairfax County, will you be ready?

September is National Preparedness Month, which is a great time to ensure that you and your family are prepared for an emergency. Disasters can strike at any time, which is why the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management encourages everyone to put together an emergency preparedness kit for your home, office and vehicle (*www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/prepare/kit.htm*). If you have been proactive and have a kit, take this time to ensure that all of the items in your kit haven't expired.

As you're developing a kit, think about:
• How you will communicate with friends/family?
• Where you will go if you have to evacuate?
• If you have the means to shelter-in-place at your home and workplace.
• What are the emergency plans for your office?
• What are the emergency plans for your children's day cares/schools?

ReadyNOVA.org provides a template for individuals and businesses to easily develop a plan.

Want to learn more about emergency preparedness initiatives in Fairfax County? Visit the Get Ready Fairfax! Fair. It will be held at Tysons Corner Center (1961 Chain Bridge Road, Tysons Corner, Fairfax) on Sept. 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Representatives from local agencies and organizations will be there to answer your questions and to provide useful emergency preparedness information.

If you need additional information, contact me at 571-350-1013, TTY 711, or email *marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov*.

Marcelo Ferriera, OEM community liaison, holds the Associate Emergency Manager (AEM) credential from the Virginia Emergency Management Association (VEMA).

Pack local maps, food and cellphone chargers in your summer travel emergency kit. www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html

Travel Smarter and Safer this Summer

Summer is here, which often means vacations and more time on the road visiting the beach, national parks, amusement parks or campgrounds. While checking off items on your packing list, such as sunscreen, shorts, towels and gear, don't forget a few tips to be safe and prepared while you're on the go.

1. Pack your smartphone with safety info – Keep tabs on your latest local forecast at *mobile.weather.gov*, and visit *m.fema.gov* for safety and preparedness information on your phone. And if you're flying to your destination, you can check airport status, travel tips and even the security waiting times at *www.tsa.gov/mobile*.

2. If you're driving, add an emergency kit to your vehicle – When you're on the road, your vehicle is an extension of your home, so having an emergency kit can prove vital to keeping your family safe if an emergency occurs. Adding items such as a blanket, protein bars, bandages and a solar-powered cellphone charger are great to add to your vehicle's kit.

3. If you're flying, check out the Transportation Security Administration's summer travel checklist – The TSA checklist is a great guide for air travel, with tips on what you can bring on the plane, the best ways to pack your bag and more.

Make sure to plan for your pets, too – whether they're making the trip with you, staying home or spending time at a boarding facility. And as temperatures rise in the summer months, remember you can take steps to get prepared at *www.ready.gov/*.

ReadyNOVA
Family & Business Preparedness Planners

Do you know how to respond if disaster strikes where you live or where you work? If your business is directly impacted by a disaster, do you have a plan to re-establish business operations at another location? If you haven't thought about the answers to these questions, take action now by making an emergency plan. Visit *ReadyNOVA.org* today and make your plans!

OEM Coordinator David McKernan was featured on a recent video production by Fairfax County government Channel 16, "Ways to Stay Informed," that provided details on all the ways county residents can stay in touch with emergency information. The video is on YouTube at http://youtu.be/LbV39UZfumA.

Hot Weather Tips for Pets

Heat stroke is a common issue for pets during summer. Some signs your pet may be developing heat stroke include heavy panting and being unable to calm down, even when lying down. Their gum color may be brick red, their pulse rate may be fast or they may not be able to get up. If you believe your pet has heat stroke, bring it to the veterinarian immediately as heat stroke can lead to severe organ damage.

Follow these important steps from the American Red Cross to keep your pets healthy and happy this summer:

- Know what is normal for your pet – their gum color, heart/pulse rate, body temperature and breathing rate – so you can recognize when something is wrong.
- Never leave a pet in a locked car.
- Give your pet plenty of exercise. Regular exercise will help your pet feel better and live longer.
- Make sure your pet has plenty of fresh, cool water.
- Make sure your pet has yearly checkups and is up to date on vaccines, especially rabies.
- Get your pet spayed or neutered.
- Keep dogs on leashes outside – another animal may be too much temptation.
- Know how to perform CPR and provide basic first-aid until veterinary care is available.

Additional tips can be found in the Pets and Disaster Safety Checklist provided by the American Red Cross at *www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents/pdf/Preparedness/checklists/PetSafety.pdf*.

Tips for Older Adults to Beat the Heat

Risk of heat-related problems increases with age. As people age, their bodies lose some ability to adapt to heat. They may have medical conditions that are worsened by heat. And their medications could reduce their ability to respond to heat.

The National Institute on Aging (NIA), part of the National Institutes of Health, has some advice to help older people avoid heat-related illnesses, known collectively as hyperthermia.

Hyperthermia occurs when the body overheats. Conditions involving hyperthermia have different names, including heat stroke, heat fatigue, heat syncope (lightheadedness or fainting in the heat), heat cramps and heat exhaustion.

Health-related factors that may increase the risk of hyperthermia include:

- Pre-existing diseases such as congestive heart failure, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
- Decreased ability to move around.
- Dementia or cognitive impairment.
- Certain medications that may cause dehydration or that may affect the responses to heat by the heart, blood vessels or sweat glands.
- Being substantially overweight.
- Drinking alcoholic beverages.
- Being dehydrated.
- Age-related changes in the skin, such as decreased functioning of small blood vessels and sweat glands.

Lifestyle factors that can also increase the risk of hyperthermia include hot living quarters, lack of transportation, overdressing, visiting overcrowded places and not understanding how to respond to weather conditions.

Older people, particularly those at special risk, should pay attention to any air pollution alert in effect. People without fans or air conditioners should go to shopping malls, movie theaters, libraries or other places with air conditioning. In addition, they can visit cooling centers which are often provided by government agencies,

Continued on Page 8

FAIRFAX COUNTY citizen corps

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps

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, and the Citizen's Police Academy.
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

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/

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

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

Children Can Help Prepare for Hurricane and Flood Season

By Laura Southard

Hurricane and flooding season is here. That means every family needs an emergency plan. If you have children, let them help.

Here's what to do:

1. Children can help put an emergency kit together. Let them help choose supplies that will last your family for at least three days. Start with these essential items:
• Food that won't spoil – canned goods and packaged foods. Children like granola bars, peanut butter crackers and juice boxes.
• Water, one gallon per person per day.
• A battery-powered/hand-crank radio and extra batteries
• Other useful items: flashlights with batteries, first-aid kit, special items for babies and children.

2. Store your kit in waterproof containers that you can carry or roll in case you need to leave your home quickly. Old suitcases or backpacks also can hold supplies.

3. Make a family emergency plan together. Get a worksheet at *www.ReadyVirginia.gov*. Click on Make a Plan.

4. Kids will like **"Ready Kids,"** a website with games, quizzes and information on how to prepare families for emergencies. Find Ready Kids at *www.ready.gov/kids*.

5. To see a short video from Ready Virginia about families getting ready for hurricane season, go to *www.youtube.com/vaemergency#p/u*.

Get Prepared

September is National Preparedness Month, but it's always the right time to put together an emergency supply kit and get prepared. Contact OEM for more info; 571-350-1000.

Don't forget your pets! Children can make a pet emergency supply kit with food, water, dishes, toys, leash and collar with identification.

Experience shows that when children are involved in planning, it calms their fears. Get started today.

Visit *www.ReadyVirginia.gov* to learn more about how to prepare for hurricane and flood season.

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

Are You Prepared?

Disasters and emergencies can affect anyone at anytime. Do you have the plans and supplies in place to help withstand the first three to five days after a disaster?

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management suggests three steps that each individual and family should take to prepare for an emergency:

1. **Make a Plan** – Determine how you will contact your family, and get back together, if you are separated during an emergency. Be sure to identify what you will do in various situations. More information is available at *www.ReadyVirginia.gov* and *www.MakeaPlan.org*.

2. **Assemble a Kit** – An emergency kit should contain basic supplies to help you withstand a disaster. It's best to think first about the basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth.

3. **Stay Informed** – The most convenient way to stay up-to-date about local emergencies is to register for the Community Emergency Alert Network (CEAN), which delivers important emergency alerts, notifications and updates during a major emergency, in addition to regular weather and traffic alerts. Register at *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean*.

Protect Yourself Against Social Engineering Attacks

Recently there's been a reported rise in the number of cyber incidents suspected to be the result of social engineering, a tactic that involves approaching an individual, either online or in person, and manipulating them into providing personal information that can be used to break into a computer network or assume someone's identity.

Such schemes can be as brazen as tricking you into handing over a password or as seemingly harmless as asking what kind of software you use or the name of the person responsible for maintaining your computer network. Perpetrators may pose as co-workers, repair people, IT staff or other outsiders with an apparent legitimate need to know such information.

To avoid becoming a victim of a social engineering attack:
• Be suspicious of unsolicited contact from individuals seeking internal organizational data or personal information.
• Do not provide personal information or passwords over email or on the phone.
• Do not provide information about your organization.
• Pay attention to website URLs that use a variation in spelling or a different domain (e.g., .com vs. .net).
• Verify a request's authenticity by contacting the company directly.
• Install and maintain anti-virus software, firewalls and email filters.

If you think you are a victim of an attack:
• Report the incident immediately.
• Contact your financial institution and monitor your account activity.
• Immediately change all of your passwords.
• Report the attack to the police and file a report with the Federal Trade Commission (*http://ftc.gov*) and US-CERT (*http://www.us-cert.gov/*).

Stop. Think. Connect. Protect yourself and help keep the Web a safer place for everyone. For more information on the Stop. Think. Connect. campaign, visit *www.dhs.gov/stopthinkconnect*.

Reprinted from The Blog @ Homeland Security by the Homeland Security Blog Team.

Disasters Can Severely Impact the Elderly

According to a FEMA press release, the losses following a disaster may be magnified for the elderly.

Seniors previously living on their own may find they have to depend on others for food, shelter and the necessities of daily living. Those used to assisted living may face upheaval in their normal routines or a change in their usual caregivers.

Add to that the stress of the disaster itself, and the elderly may be facing very difficult times.

Symptoms of stress unique to the elderly include:
• Reliving events in their lives when they were traumatized or suffered severe losses.
• Fear of losing their independence or lack of self-sufficiency.
• Worry about limited financial resources and time to rebuild.
• Fear of being put in an institution.
• Fear of a decline in health and limitations on mobility and ability to rebuild.
• Withdrawal and isolation from family and friends.

When working with older adults after a disaster, it is important to:
• Provide consistent verbal reassurance.
• Assist them in recovering their physical possessions.
• Return them to familiar surroundings with friends and acquaintances as soon as possible.
• Make sure they have needed medical and financial assistance.
• Help them re-establish social networks.
• Monitor their nutritional and medication needs.

www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=56627

Fairfax County, Va., publication.

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

Fairfax County will host a 9/11 ceremony at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 11, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks. The ceremony will be at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax.

Survey Says Residents Relying More on Social Media, Texting in Natural Disasters

"Get Ready, America!" – The National Hurricane Survival Initiative released last month shows that social media and text messaging are fast becoming the leading ways Americans will communicate or get information in a disaster.

The Sachs/Mason-Dixon Poll commissioned by the initiative found that 72 percent of Americans are members of a social network, such as Facebook, Twitter or MySpace and 45 percent said they would rely on it to communicate with friends and loved ones in the event of a natural disaster; another 24 percent said they might.

Social media use is more prevalent among younger Americans, with 91 percent of those 18-34 years old active on a social media platform and 63 percent saying they will use those platforms to communicate in a disaster.

Even among those ages 35-59, 75 percent say they are on a social media platform and 44 percent say they will use them to communicate in a disaster.

Women are more likely to use these platforms than men, with 75 percent of women saying they use a platform compared to 68 percent of men, and 51 percent of women saying they will turn to these platforms to communicate in a disaster compared to 39 percent of men.

Still, there is room to educate Americans about how to use new technology to protect themselves or seek help in a disaster. More than 50 percent of Americans said they would rely on a cellphone or home phone to communicate with family members in a disaster, although these tools often are not operational in the immediate aftermath of a storm.

Only 8 percent said they would rely on text messaging, although this has proven to be one of the most reliable forms of communication in a disaster.

http://hurricanesafety.org/2011/06/22/%e2%80%9cget-ready-america%e2%80%9d-survey-residents-relying-more-on-social-media-texting-in-natural-disasters/

FEMA's U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) has released two special reports: "Residential Building Fires Involving Individuals with Mental Disabilities" and "Residential Building Fires Involving Individuals with Physical Disabilities."

According to the reports, the majority of the residential building fires involving individuals with mental (62 percent) and physical (63 percent) disabilities occur in one- and two-family dwellings. Cooking (22 percent) is the leading cause of residential fires where a physical disability is reported as a human factor. Fire incidents involving individuals with disabilities occur most often in January and December. In addition, these fires tend to peak in late afternoon to early evening.

The reports are online: *www.usfa.fema.gov/statistics/*.

Heat and Older Adults

continued from Page 5

religious groups and social service organizations in many communities.

Heat stroke is an advanced form of hyperthermia. It occurs when the body is overwhelmed by heat and unable to control its temperature. In heat stroke, the body temperature is at least 104 degrees Fahrenheit. Someone with heat stroke may have a strong rapid pulse, lack of sweating, dry flushed skin, faintness, staggering and mental status changes such as confusion, combativeness, disorientation or even coma. Seek immediate medical attention for a person with any of these symptoms, especially an older adult.

If you suspect that someone is suffering from a heat-related illness:

- Move them into an air-conditioned or other cool place.
- Urge them to lie down and rest.
- Remove or loosen tight-fitting or heavy clothing
- Encourage them to drink water or juices if they are able to drink without choking, but avoid alcohol and caffeine.
- Apply cold water, ice packs or cold wet cloths to the skin.
- Get medical assistance as soon as possible.

Courtesy of the National Institutes of Health.
www.nih.gov/news/health/jul2011/nia-18.htm