Emergency Preparedness
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February 2011

Register Now for March 15 Statewide Tornado Drill

The next Statewide Tornado Drill will take place Tuesday, March 15, at 9:45 a.m. The date also is Tornado Preparedness Day. (If widespread severe weather threatens the state on that date, the drill will be rescheduled for Wednesday, March 16, at 9:45 a.m.)

This is an important statewide safety event. Last year was the most successful tornado drill ever with more than 1.2 million people across the state participating.

For help in planning a tornado drill for your location, contact the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management at 571-350-1000, TTY 711. You also can visit *www.vaemergency.com/threats/tornado* for information and to register your participation.

The Statewide Tornado Drill is sponsored by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), Ready Virginia and the National Weather Service in cooperation with media broadcasters and emergency management offices throughout Virginia.

For further information, contact VDEM at *pio@vdem.virginia.gov* or 804-897-6510.

Develop Inclusive Work Force Emergency Plans

The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, provides guidelines that individuals, employers and emergency managers can use to create inclusive emergency preparedness plans for their workplace.

ODEP
Office of Disability Employment Policy
A World In Which People With Disabilities Have Unlimited Employment Opportunities

Developed by an interagency council of federal agencies, the guide includes some of the best methods being used in the federal government to ensure that the needs of all individuals are considered during an emergency.

For more information, visit *www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ep/preparing2.htm*.

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Here's a great online winter survival puzzle for the kids to enjoy during these cold winter months. www.srh.noaa.gov/jetstream/coolstuff/5/2.htm

CERT Basic Classes Held on Saturdays

By James Sobecke

Fairfax County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) recently offered the FEMA CERT Basic training free to county residents on four Saturdays in response to residents who could not attend the regular evening classes due to work and family requirements.

After the success of the Saturday classes, a second opportunity is in development for Saturday classes in February/March. Several of the recent graduates of the CERT Basic Class 50 have expressed interest in getting their own community and homeowners associations to sponsor additional CERT Basic classes for their neighbors.

The initial Saturday classes were split between the West Springfield Government Center and the Braddock District Supervisor's Office in Burke. A final fire safety class was held separately at Burke Volunteer Fire and Rescue Station 14.

While CERT Level 2 classes (classroom plus additional hands-on experience in lifting, carrying and rescue techniques in a more realistic disaster training scenarios) continue to be offered at the Fire and Rescue Academy twice a year, the CERT Basic classroom instruction is being exported to local sites across the county. The only requirement is a local community sponsor for a suitable facility to conduct classes and 12-15 students. Although these CERT Basic classes do not include any patient lifting or carrying, or hands-on experience using cribbing, levers or lifting implements, they still provide the required CERT skills and techniques.

The Fairfax County CERT training program has been expanded to reach out to civic, community and homeowners associations to develop a resource of CERT-trained residents across the entire county. The intent is similar to the Neighborhood Watch program where residents provide an added layer of preparedness, safety and security for themselves, their family and their neighbors. In the event a disaster occurs, the CERT program goal is to have citizen responders in each community to facilitate rescue and victim treatment until the first responders arrive.

The nine CERT Basic units were organized into four modules for the Saturday curriculum. The first module began with an introduction to disasters and the CERT program. Successive modules combined classroom instruction with skill drills and exercises for the CERTs-in-training to apply the classroom theory and concepts in simulated disaster scenarios and situations.

These mini-drills provided an opportunity to demonstrate basic search-and-rescue guidelines, apply immediate lifesaving measures on found victims and then apply triage and develop a treatment plan for their care in a simulated treatment area.

The Fairfax County CERT training curriculum stresses the use of field-expedient splinting and bandaging, the many uses of duct tape and any resources that are on-hand. The "MacGyver" approach – using ordinary things – to splinting and bandaging is encouraged.

You can be part of the CERT program too – submit a request to the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department volunteer coordinator by contacting Dana Powers at *dana.powers@fairfaxcounty.gov*.

James Sobecke is a CERT volunteer.

The CERT National Program Office announces the first 2011 quarterly "CERT National Newsletter."

This edition features an informative story on Haiti CERT's response to the devastating earthquake a year ago. Also, be sure to read the stories on a rodeo in Guam that refreshes disaster readiness skills and how a "disability" is a special skill in disguise.

Visit *www.citizencorps.gov/cert/newsletter.shtm* to read and download the newsletter.

Subscribe to the CERT national newsletter at *www.citizencorps.gov/cert/subscribe.shtm*.

Fairfax County, Va., publication.

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

Volunteers Serve on MLK Day

In line with Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy of service, the American Red Cross in the National Capital Region partnered with Hope *worldwide* in a civic engagement event on Jan. 17.

Dave McKernan, OEM coordinator, participated in the American Red Cross fire prevention program on Monday, Jan. 17, Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday, as part of the national King Day of Service. photo by Marcelo Ferreira, OEM

For the third year in a row, volunteers from the two organizations distributed vital fire safety information throughout the National Capital Region.

This year volunteers canvassed neighborhoods in Alexandria, Fairfax County, Loudoun County and Prince William County in Virginia and Montgomery County in Maryland. In Washington, D.C, volunteers passed out information as they participated in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade.

Doris Crawford, disaster services volunteer for the American Red Cross in the National Capital Region, works with other volunteers to review information before canvassing Lorton neighborhoods with fire safety information. photo by American Red Cross

Volunteers engaged in conversations with more than 1,200 area residents about ways to heat and cook safely, the value of smoke alarms and the need to create and practice a household fire escape plan. In addition, more than 350 volunteers visited over 6,300 homes and left door hangers with fire prevention information in Spanish and English.

David McKernan, coordinator of the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management, equipped Fairfax volunteers with crucial fire facts. Information about carbon monoxide safety was provided by the Alexandria Fire Department. For more on fire safety, visit *www.redcross.org/homefires*.

Marcelo's Minute

A Devotion to Service

Marcelo Ferreira

Members of the volunteer Fairfax County Community Chaplains devote up to six weeks per year to serve as on-call community chaplains to provide spiritual care and support to the residents of Fairfax County during an emergency or disaster.

Last month, the community chaplains received their first activation due to the unfortunate death of a young woman.

Within 30 minutes of receiving the notification, a community chaplain arrived on-scene and checked in with Fairfax County Police. After having his credentials verified, the community chaplain, Rev. Lewis Whittle, received a briefing and was told that the family was not associated with any religion, but needed someone to talk to.

Whittle later reported that he tried to be there as a supportive friend and was able to support the family through the grieving process.

This activation was an example of the tremendous service that the Fairfax County Community Chaplains provide to the residents of Fairfax County.

In the event of an emergency or disaster, they may be deployed to family assistance centers, emergency shelters and disaster/emergency assistance centers with the goal of providing a listening ear, pastoral care and a sense of spiritual safety and security.

All community chaplains are ordained/invested or certified clergy from a cross section of faiths, but they agree to not proselytize or conduct religion-specific prayer ceremonies in public (but may conduct private religion-specific prayer ceremonies if requested by a resident).

For additional information about the Fairfax County Community Chaplains, visit *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dsm/cil/emergency.htm*.

Review online winter storm resources and share them with your organization.
www.fema.gov/hazard/winter/index.shtm

Flu Season

Seasonal flu activity is increasing across the nation and in Virginia. For the first time this flu season, the influenza activity level in the state has increased to "widespread." This means that during the week ending Dec. 25, a majority of Virginia's health-planning regions were above their thresholds for influenza-like illness and had laboratory evidence that the flu was circulating in the community.

"Flu season typically peaks in January or February and can last as late as April or May," says Anne Schuchat, assistant surgeon general of the U.S. Public Health Service and director of CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. "We are encouraging people who have not yet been vaccinated to get vaccinated now."

For millions each year, the flu can bring a fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, fatigue and miserable days spent in bed instead of at work or school. However, you may not realize that more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications each year. The flu also can be deadly. Between 1976 and 2007, CDC estimates that annual flu-associated deaths in the U.S. reached a high of about 49,000 people.

Flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months and older. It's available in two forms: a shot and a nasal spray. While the flu shot can be given to just about everyone, the nasal spray is approved only for use in healthy people ages 2 to 49 and who aren't pregnant. Anyone can get the flu, but some are at greater risk for serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia, that can lead to hospitalization and even death.

In addition to getting vaccinated, take these everyday precautions to prevent spreading the flu:
• Cover your mouth when coughing/sneezing.
• Stay at home when ill.
• Wash your hands frequently.

To locate a pharmacy, physician or local health department clinic offering seasonal flu vaccine, go to *www.fairfaxcounty.gov /flu* or *www.vdh.virginia.gov*. Information also is at *www.flu.gov* or by calling the CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Webinar: Earthquake Safety and Mitigation for Schools

Earthquake Safety and Mitigation for Schools is a one-hour webinar for school officials, teachers, facility managers and other local stakeholders interested in learning how to reduce earthquake risks and take actions to ensure school safety and continued operations. Information is based on FEMA 395: Incremental Seismic Rehabilitation of School Buildings (K-12): Providing Protection to People and Buildings, available online at *www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=1980*.

Numerous school buildings in multiple states and U.S. territories are vulnerable to earthquake damage and losses, including:
• Death and injury of students, teachers and staff.
• Damage to or collapse of buildings.
• Damage and loss of furnishings, equipment and building contents.
• Disruption of programs and school operations.
• Inability to use schools as temporary shelters.

At this webinar, participants will learn:
• How to assess and analyze earthquake risks.
• How to develop an actionable plan to reduce and manage earthquake risks.
• How to initiate an earthquake risk reduction plan for existing school buildings that were not designed and constructed to meet modern building codes.
• How to secure "non-structural" elements of the school facility.
• How to apply incremental seismic rehabilitation to protect buildings and ensure occupant safety.
• Why incremental seismic rehabilitation is an affordable alternative for school safety.

The webinar will be held on Thursday, Feb. 17, at 3 p.m. and again on Thursday, March 17, at 3 p.m. Registration is free. Send your preferred date, name, organization, address, phone number and e-mail address by fax to 650-593-2320, by e-mail to *atc@atcouncil.org*, or visit *www.atcouncil.org/events.html*.

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 to *marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov*.

Frostbite

Frostbite is an injury to the body that is caused by freezing. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body and severe cases can lead to amputation.

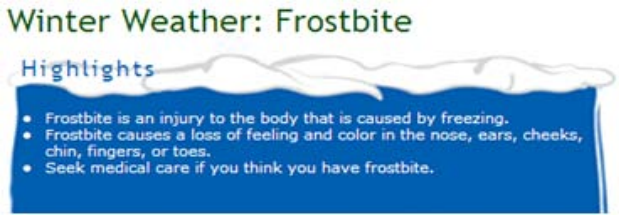
At the first signs of redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin – frostbite may be beginning. Any of the following signs may indicate frostbite:

- A white or grayish-yellow skin area.
- Skin that feels unusually firm or waxy.
- Numbness.

A victim is often unaware of frostbite until someone else points it out because the frozen tissues are numb. If you detect symptoms of frostbite, seek medical care. Because frostbite and hypothermia both result from exposure, first determine whether the victim also shows signs of hypothermia, a more serious medical condition that requires emergency medical assistance. If there is frostbite but no sign of hypothermia and immediate medical care is not available, proceed as follows:

- Get into a warm room as soon as possible.
- Unless absolutely necessary, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes – this increases the damage.
- Immerse the affected area in warm – not hot – water (the temperature should be comfortable to the touch for unaffected parts of the body).
- Or, warm the affected area using body heat. For example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten fingers.
- Do not rub the frostbitten area with snow or massage it at all. This can cause more damage.
- Don't use a heating pad, heat lamp or the heat of a stove, fireplace or radiator for warming. Affected areas are numb and can be easily burned.

More information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is at *http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/frostbite.asp*.



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

Only one in three American families have developed and practiced a home fire escape plan. Do you have a plan? http://ow.ly/3DpFs

Small Business Disaster Preparedness Webinars

Small business owners have an opportunity to get tips on business continuity planning in 2011 through a series of free webinars hosted by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and Agility Recovery Solutions.

The January webinar focused on a business's potential vulnerabilities to natural and man-made disasters, discussing the basics of risk assessment, the importance of identifying critical small business functions and employee preparedness.

Dates and topics for the upcoming free webinars are:
- Feb. 15 – Disaster Recovery Year in Review
- March 15 – SBA Disaster Assistance
- April 19 – Leading with Resiliency During a Disaster
- May 17 – Crisis Communications Planning
- June 21 – Hurricane Season Preparation
- July 19 – Disaster Recovery Best Practices
- Aug. 16 – Social Media and Disaster Recovery
- September – Weekly webinars during National Preparedness Month include testing recovery plans, pandemic planning and securing management support for recovery planning.
- Oct. 18 – Preparing your Business for the Winter Weather Season
- Nov. 15 – The Impact of Preparedness on the Bottom Line
- Dec. 20 – Management Obligations During Disaster Recovery

More preparedness tips for businesses, homeowners and renters are available on the SBA's website at *www.sba.gov/content/disaster-preparedness*.

2011 National Severe Weather Workshop

The 2011 National Severe Weather Workshop will be held in Norman, Okla., March 3-5. This is a unique and growing workshop focused on hazardous weather information sharing and discussions on the effective transmission of messages about meteorological risk. Visit *www.norman.noaa.gov/nsww/* for more details.

Fire Safety

During this time of year, the extreme cold temperatures force many families to seek alternative forms of heat, many of which are potential fire hazards. However, according to a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) survey, only one of every three American families have actually developed and practiced a home fire escape plan. For those who have a plan, less than 50 percent have practiced it. The results of the survey show that families think they have at least six minutes to escape a fire in their home, but realistically, the time it takes to safely escape a fire will most likely be less.

Cut your family's chances of dying in a house fire in half by having a working smoke alarm. Practicing fire-safe behaviors and knowing what to do in an emergency can give your family extra seconds to escape.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) has safety resources designed especially for families and children. Many of their publications are available to download in both English and Spanish. Parents can learn about home fire safety and preventing a home fire at USFA's website *www.usfa.dhs.gov*. Teachers can download proven lesson plans that will help teach children basic fire safety at *www.usfa.dhs.gov/kids/lesson/index.shtm*.

USFA also has an interactive kids page (*www.usfa.dhs.gov/kids/*) where children can learn about fire safety, smoke alarms and home escape plans while completing crossword puzzles, coloring pages and word searches. After the children have learned about fire prevention and safety, they can take an online quiz to receive a Junior Fire Marshal certificate.

Winter Fire Stats

- Winter residential building fires result in an estimated average of 945 deaths, 3,825 injuries and $1.7 billion in property losses each year.
- Fires in one- and two-family dwellings account for 67 percent of all winter residential building fires.
- Cooking is the leading cause of all winter residential building fires.
- Winter residential building fires occur mainly in the early evening hours, peaking from 5 to 8 p.m.
- Although at its highest in December, residential building fire incidence is collectively highest in the three winter months of January, February and March.

Next Generation 9-1-1, Moving Accessibility Forward

By Bruce A. McFarlane Sr.

On Jan. 14, I attended the opening session of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Emergency Access Advisory Committee (EAAC) in Washington, D.C. The EAAC is composed of a select group of 40 subject matter experts from around the country, experienced with accessible and inclusive emergency communication systems.

After welcoming remarks and discussions on the statutory obligations of the "Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010" or CVAA, the EAAC began discussions on one of the required elements of the CVAA: a national survey on the next generation 9-1-1 and how it will look and be used by people with access and functional needs.

Results from the survey will be analyzed and the EAAC will develop and submit to the FCC its recommendations to implement such technologies and methods to ensure accessibility.

Topics at the opening meeting included the migration to a national Internet protocol (IP)-enabled network, technical capabilities and requirements to ensure reliability and interoperability, and to ensure that new technologies and methods for providing emergency relay services are adopted by providers of relay services.

On behalf of the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management and the Fairfax County Department of Public Safety Communications (9-1-1 Center), located at the MPSTOC facility in Fairfax, I was selected as a member of the subcommittee charged with drafting the questions to be used for the national survey.

The six subcommittee members have less than two months to develop the questions. Survey distribution must begin in April and the survey must be completed by July to allow committee members time to review the results and submit recommendations by December.

The EAAC Committee meets each month and I will be providing updates. If you have any questions or concerns or would like to be on the survey distribution list, e-mail *bruce.mcfarlane@fairfaxcounty.gov*.

Bruce McFarlane Sr., inclusive emergency planner for the Office of Emergency Management, holds the Certified Emergency Management Assistant (CEMA) credential from the Virginia Emergency Management Association (VEMA).

FEMA reminds residents that the dangers of severe weather and related flooding do not end when colder weather begins. Floods are a year-round hazard, and they can be especially damaging during the winter due to heavy seasonal rains, melting snows and other factors. Also, most homeowners insurance does not cover flood damage. Without the financial safety net that flood insurance provides, residents may be forced to cover thousands of dollars in damage on their own. Because flood policies typically take 30 days to become effective, residents should not wait for the next storm to take action – the time to get protected is now. Learn more about seasonal flood risks and what to do to prepare by visiting FEMA's *FloodSmart.gov* website, or by calling 1-800-427-2419.

This newsletter is a publication of the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management, 571-350-1000, TTY 711; *oem@fairfaxcounty.gov*.

"Don't make the public fit how we do business," said FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate. "It's a disaster. Your home's been destroyed. Do you need any more hassles?" http://blog.fema.gov/2011/01/dont-make-public-fit-how-we-do-business.html.

New Registration Initiative for CERT Programs and Citizen Corps Councils

FEMA has two improved online registries that will help capture the community readiness efforts of local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs and Citizen Corps Councils. FEMA is asking all new and pre-existing local CERT programs to register on the national CERT or Citizen Corps websites. The CERT registry will collect information for each registered program to provide a snapshot of local successes. It will allow CERT programs to highlight basic and supplemental training activities; CERTs in action in non-emergency functions and in disaster response; and local program policies and procedures. The registration includes a total of 29 questions.

This effort will recognize the tremendous work accomplished to date and serve as a baseline for future individual and community preparedness and resiliency projects.

Every local CERT program and Citizen Corps Council is required to register to have a listing in the CERT and Citizen Corps directories on the national websites. Please note that only CERT programs and Citizen Corps Councils may register. The registry is not for individual CERT teams that are organized within a CERT program.

More information and guidance documents for registration are available on the CERT program registration support pages at *www.citizencorps.gov/cert/registry.shtm*. The website provides a registration fact sheet, registration questions and contact information for technical assistance and support. Similar information for local Citizen Corps Councils is located at *www.citizencorps.gov/councils/registry.shtm*.

Fairfax County Health Department Earns Public Health Emergency Preparedness Recognition

The Fairfax County Health Department (FCHD) has been recognized as "public health ready" by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO).

This designation acknowledges the agency's readiness to respond to public health emergencies, including emerging and infectious diseases, bioterrorism, natural disasters and other public health threats.

"The Health Department is constantly improving its readiness," said Fairfax County Director of Health Gloria Addo-Ayensu, M.D., M.P.H. "Although NACCHO has recognized our recent strides, we must remember that one of the most important factors in our community's ability to respond to an emergency is the preparedness of our residents."

Visit the Fairfax County Health Department online at *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd*.

Winter Weather Warning

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the United States Fire Administration (USFA) are urging consumers to play it safe as winter weather blankets the United States.

According to USFA, home fires spike in winter months. Cooking and home heating are the leading causes of residential building fires during the winter. The risk of fires also increases with the use of supplemental heating, such as space heaters. CPSC estimates that home heating was associated with an average of 33,300 fires and 180 fire deaths per year from 2005 to 2007.

Carbon monoxide is called the "invisible killer," because it is an odorless, colorless and poisonous gas. CPSC staff estimates there were 184 CO poisoning deaths on average per year from 2005-2007 compared to 122 deaths per year from 1999-2001.

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are an important line of defense in the home, and they give consumers valuable escape time. About two-thirds of fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms, or in homes where consumers have removed the alarm's batteries or where the batteries are dead.