

Be Mobile Ready

Virginia Launches Free Emergency Preparedness Mobile App

Governor Bob McDonnell recently announced a way for Virginians to become “mobile ready” for disasters. The Ready Virginia mobile app, developed by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, gives a new way to prepare for disasters and also receive the latest information during emergencies.



The free Ready Virginia app for iPhone and Android mobile devices provides emergency planning and preparedness guidance along with several other important features, including:

- Location-specific weather watches and warnings as well as flood information issued by the National Weather Service.
- Disaster news from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.
- Maps with open American Red Cross shelters, hurricane evacuation routes, hurricane storm surge zones and stream gauges.
- A template for creating a customized family emergency plan that can be easily shared.
- Local emergency manager contact information.
- Links to register for local emergency alerts.

“Mobile phones and tablets quickly have become a primary

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Register Now for March 12 Statewide Tornado

Virginia's annual Statewide Tornado Drill is scheduled for **Tuesday, March 12, at 9:45 a.m.** Registration is open. The date will be observed as Tornado Preparedness Day. If widespread severe weather threatens the commonwealth, the drill will be rescheduled for Wednesday, March 13, at 9:45 a.m.

The tornado drill is an important statewide safety exercise. In recent years Virginia has been hard hit by multiple tornadoes that have cost lives and left extensive property damage.

Some communities continue to recover from devastating tornadoes.

Each of the past two years, some 1.2 million Virginians have registered to participate in the statewide drill.



To register and to learn more about planning a tornado drill, go to www.vaemergency.gov and click through the rotating graphics at the top of the page, or go to www.ReadyVirginia.gov.

The Statewide Tornado Drill is sponsored by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Ready Virginia and the National Weather Service in cooperation with local emergency management offices.

For further information about the statewide drill, contact the Virginia Department of Emergency Management Office of Public Affairs at pio@vdem.virginia.gov or 804-897-6510, TTY 711. Help planning a tornado drill is available from the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management; 571-350-1000, TTY 711.

Be Ready! Winter Weather

- Weatherproof your home to protect against the cold.**
 - Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in your home.
 - Have your chimney or flue inspected every year.
 - Make sure the batteries are working!
 - Insulate walls and attic.
 - Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows.
- Check out more tips on winter weather indoor safety.**
- Never leave lit candles or other flames unattended.**
- Bring your pets indoors as temperatures drop!**
- Prepare yourself for exposure to winter weather.**
 - Dress warmly and limit exposure to the cold to prevent frostbite.
 - Avoid getting wet to prevent hypothermia.
- If power lines are down, call your local utility and emergency services.**
 - If power lines fall on your car, warn people not to touch the car or power lines.
- Make sure your car is ready for winter travel.**
 - Check antifreeze level and have radiator system serviced.
 - Replace worn tires and check tire air pressure.
 - Keep gas tank full to avoid ice in tank and fuel lines.
 - Make a winter emergency kit to keep in your car.

www.cdc.gov/phpr/infographics.htm

During the past two years, 62 tornadoes hit Virginia, killing 10 people and injuring more than 200. Some 210 homes were destroyed and more than 1,050 were damaged. Nearly every part of the state was affected.

When a tornado warning is issued for your area:

- Go immediately to a safe area – usually the lowest level of your home, office or school.
- Move to a windowless interior room, closet or hallway.
- Take a “drop, cover and hold” position. This means crouch as low as possible to the floor, facing down and covering your head with your hands.
- Get instructions on how to hold a drill at www.ReadyVirginia.gov.

Health and Safety Podcast

Every two weeks, Fairfax County produces the “Health and Safety” podcast, featuring news from Fairfax County’s public safety agencies, Health Department and the Office of Emergency Management, in addition to emergency preparedness information.



The short audio program – normally five minutes or less – is available to listen to online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/podcasts/ or on iTunes. If you have a smartphone, you can also listen to the podcast, along with several others from the county such as “News to Use” and highlights from the Board of Supervisors meetings.

Learn more about the “Health and Safety” podcast, and the county’s other podcasts, at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/podcasts/.



Fairfax County, Va., publication.

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

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.

Be a Force of Nature

National Severe Weather Preparedness Week

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have partnered to designate **March 3-9, as National Severe Weather Preparedness Week**, and is calling upon all Americans to “Be a Force of Nature.”

Commit to be a force of nature by knowing your risks, taking action and being an example in your community by sharing steps you took to prepare. Because we live in an area prone to tornadoes, flash floods, severe thunderstorms, snow and more, we are reminded that this weather can strike anywhere at anytime.

Join today and pledge to prepare for severe weather. Information on the different types of severe weather such as tornadoes, severe thunderstorms and flooding is available at www.weather.gov and ready.gov/severe-weather or the Spanish-language website www.listo.gov.

www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation/force.html

Be Prepared for Nighttime Tornadoes

Shrouded in darkness, nighttime tornadoes can be especially deadly during the winter season when people do not expect such severe weather. Given the dangers, forecasters with NOAA’s National Weather Service issue public severe weather outlooks online to alert people of a potential threat in their area before they go to sleep.

In the event a nighttime tornado is expected, be sure to:

- Have a NOAA weather radio (www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr) at your bedside.
- Build an updated emergency kit.
- Designate a safe room with no windows, preferably a basement.
- Know your family’s communications plan (www.weather.gov/)

Buying Flood Insurance Now Will Save Dollars and Heartache Later

People who live near water are not the only ones who experience flooding. Floods can move and spread for miles. Flash floods can begin and end within just hours, cutting a path of major destruction.

One of the ways you can protect yourself is with flood insurance. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers this important insurance coverage through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The NFIP was created by Congress in 1968 to provide flood insurance at a reasonable cost in exchange for careful management by local communities of flood-prone areas.

Flood insurance provides coverage that your homeowners or renters insurance doesn't – coverage for damages caused by floods.

How do you go about getting a policy and what else do you need to know?

Contact your insurance agent and tell them you would like more information about flood insurance. The agent will be able to determine whether your community participates in the NFIP. Flood insurance from the NFIP is only available in participating communities. The agent should also be able to tell you what is covered and how much your policy will cost.

The cost will be determined in part by whether you live in a floodplain, also known as a special flood hazard area (SFHA). Your local building official(s) should have maps showing if there are special flood hazard areas and where they are. You can determine whether you are in a low-, medium- or high-risk area by checking these maps.

Those who are located outside the floodplain may be able to get a preferred risk policy. These policies offer fixed combinations of building and contents coverage at set prices.

Another way to reduce your premium is through an elevation rating. If the lowest floor of your house is above the base flood elevation (predicted flood depth in your area), you can qualify for lower rates. Local

officials can help determine the base flood elevation for your home, however, the homeowner will need to provide an elevation certificate.

Even so, the cost of flood insurance is far cheaper than having to pay thousands of dollars to repair your home or replace contents because a flood caught you off guard.

- Homeowners, business owners and renters all can purchase flood insurance as long as their community participates in the NFIP.
- Flood insurance claims are paid even if a federal disaster is not declared by the president.
- You do not have to live in a floodplain to buy flood insurance. In fact, more than 20 percent of flood insurance claims come from medium- or low-risk flood areas.
- Compared to a fire, people in floodplains are nearly four times more likely to have a flood during their 30-year mortgage.
- You can buy flood insurance from licensed insurance agents.
- Flood insurance coverage is available for residential and business structures and contents. A single-family home can be insured for up to \$250,000. An additional \$100,000 can be purchased for contents. Commercial buildings can be insured for up to \$500,000. Business contents can be covered for up to \$500,000.
- Renters can purchase contents coverage for up to \$100,000 to cover personal belongings.
- If you have a home-based business, you'll need to purchase separate coverage for the business and/or contents. Coverage is not automatically included under a homeowner's flood insurance policy, even if the business is located inside your home.
- A flood insurance policy can be written to cover actions taken to prevent flood damages. These actions can include moving the insured contents to a safe place and/or the cost of purchasing sandbags, plastic sheeting, lumber, pumps, etc.
- A flood insurance claim will reimburse you for your covered losses and never has to be repaid, unlike a disaster assistance loan.

Mobile Ready

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way for people to stay informed during disasters. Last year, social media and Web-based information were critical to informing the public and keeping individuals updated with important information during the severe derecho wind storm and Hurricane Sandy,” said McDonnell. “The new Ready Virginia mobile app gives people another way to stay informed and quickly identify services and other valuable resources regardless of their location.”

The Ready Virginia app is available for download in the App Store and in Google Play for Android.

In addition to the mobile app, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management launched a mobile version of its website at m.vaemergency.gov. The mobile site contains all the information available on VDEM’s regular website, but with easier navigation for those who use smartphones and tablets to access websites.

“This new app is one of the most important ones Virginians can install on their mobile devices. Now our citizens can get ‘mobile ready’ and ensure that their families are prepared for emergencies and stay informed with official disaster information when an emergency occurs,” said McDonnell.

iPhone Screenshots



Office of Emergency Management
4890 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030
571-350-1000, TTY 711

The Fairfax County Citizen Corps

harnesses the power of individuals through education, training and volunteer service to make communities



www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps

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/police/getinvolved/120711volunteers.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)



The Medical Reserve Corps is composed of medical and non-medical volunteers of the Fairfax County Health Department that could support the Health Department if called upon to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural and man-made disasters and 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

Preparedness Is for Everyone

How quickly people recover from an emergency may depend on the thought and planning put into preparing for a possible event.

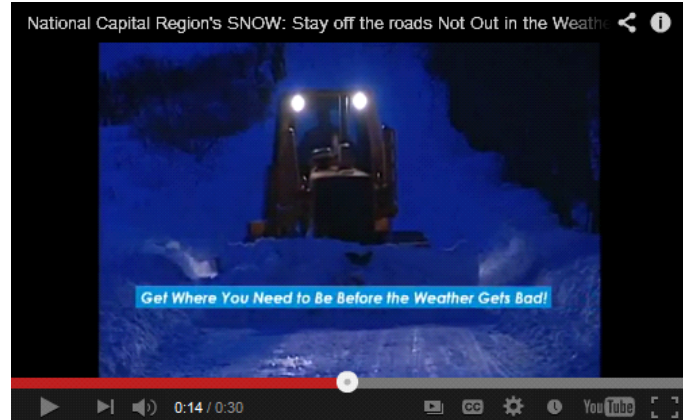
Make a plan that includes letting family and friends know your location if you are required to evacuate from your home.

Another first action is to put together a basic emergency kit. This should include:

- Three-day supply of water and nonperishable food.
- Medications to last at least a week.
- Battery-powered or crank radio.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- First-aid kit, extra glasses, hearing aids with extra batteries and copies of prescriptions.
- Important documents such as insurance and bank information, Social Security numbers for every family member, and cash and credit cards. Put these important documents in a waterproof container ready to pick up at a moment's notice.

Move anything that may block your path to an exit if you need to evacuate, especially if the power is out.

Plan for pets as well. Plan to take them with you if you have to evacuate. Take along appropriate food, water and other necessities. Who knows when you might be able to return?




During inclement weather, remember to “get where you need to be before the weather gets bad.” Learn more at <http://www.capitalregionupdates.gov/go/doc/4063/1688519/>.

Stay informed about your local situation. Know what the local officials are advising and be ready with your emergency kit. You may need more than one kit: one for sheltering at home and one to take with you.

If you will require assistance, notify the local emergency management office. Prepare for emergencies now before they happen.

For more information on being prepared, go to www.ready.gov.



Fairfax County and Northern Virginia residents can use the family and business emergency planners at www.ReadyNOVA.org.

Emergency News

by email

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Receive emergency preparedness information and emergency news by email

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog

U.S. Fire Administration Releases Highway Vehicle Fires Report

The U.S. Fire Administration issued a special report this month examining the characteristics of highway vehicle fires in the United States from 2008-2010.

Approximately one in seven fires responded to by fire departments across the nation is a highway vehicle fire. This does not include the tens of thousands of fire department responses to highway vehicle accident sites. Unintentional action (32 percent) was the leading cause of highway vehicle fires.

Additional information in the report:

- Eighty-six percent of highway vehicle fires occurred in passenger vehicles.
- Sixty-one percent of highway vehicle fires and 35 percent of fatal highway vehicle fires originated in the engine, running gear or wheel area of the vehicle.
- The leading factor contributing to the ignition of highway vehicle fires was mechanical failure (44 percent).
- Insulation around electrical wiring (28 percent) and flammable liquids in the engine area (18 percent) were the most common items first ignited in highway vehicle fires.

The risks from motor vehicle fires are often overlooked. Toxic gases and other hazardous substances, along with flying debris and explosions, can combine to produce serious dangers.

Report: www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v13i11.pdf

Source: www.usfa.fema.gov/media/press/2013releases/010713.shtm

In the event of a motor vehicle fire, follow these important steps

- Pull to the side of the road and turn off the ignition to shut off the electric current and stop the flow of gasoline. Do not open the hood or trunk if you suspect a fire under it. Air could rush into the area and enlarge the fire.
- Get out of and away from the vehicle. Never re-enter a burning vehicle to retrieve personal property.
- If the vehicle is in a garage or other structure, exit the building immediately.
- Do not put yourself in danger by trying to use a fire extinguisher. Only trained firefighters should extinguish vehicle fires.
- After you are a safe distance away, call 9-1-1 or your fire department's emergency number.

Be Prepared for Power Outages

- Ensure you have a battery-powered or hand crank radio to listen for emergency updates and news reports.
- If using a portable generator during a power outage, it should always be operated outside, away from doors and windows to avoid dangerous carbon monoxide.
- Have flashlights or electric lanterns on hand to provide light and keep a supply of extra batteries. Candles are dangerous fire hazards.
- Remember, microwaves will not work. It's important to keep a supply of water and non-perishable food such as ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables, canned juices, milk and soup. Additionally, have a hand-operated can opener available.

Actions to get ready for snow or winter weather:

- Winterize your vehicle and your home.
- Most importantly, minimize travel as blizzard-like conditions may arise making it difficult to see when driving.
- Ensure you have snow shovels and other snow removal equipment on hand.
- Bring pets/companion animals inside. Move other animals or livestock to sheltered areas.

For more information, visit www.ready.gov/.

Preventing Chain Saw Injuries During Tree Removal After a Disaster

Each year, approximately 36,000 people are treated in hospital emergency departments for injuries from using chain saws. The potential risk of injury increases after hurricanes and other natural disasters, when chain saws are widely used to remove fallen or partially fallen trees and tree branches.

It is best to have a chain saw **operator who has training and experience in safe chain saw use and cutting techniques to fell and remove limbs from trees.**

Safeguards against injury while using a chain saw

- Operate, adjust and maintain the saw according to manufacturer's instructions provided in the manual accompanying the chain saw.
- Properly sharpen chain saw blades and properly lubricate the blade with bar and chain oil. Additionally, the operator should periodically check and adjust the tension of the chain saw blade to ensure good cutting action.
- Choose the proper size of chain saw to match the job, and include safety features such as a chain brake, front and rear hand guards, stop switch, chain catcher and a spark arrester.
- Wear the appropriate protective equipment, including hard hat, safety glasses, hearing protection, heavy work gloves, cut-resistant legwear (chain saw chaps) that extend from the waist to the top of the foot



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/chainsaws.asp>.

- and boots that cover the ankle.
- **Avoid contact with power lines** until the lines are verified as being de-energized.
- **Always cut at waist level or below** to ensure that you maintain secure control over the chain saw.
- **Bystanders or co-workers should remain at least two tree lengths (at least 150 feet) away** from anyone felling a tree and at least 30 feet from anyone operating a chain saw to remove limbs or cut a fallen tree
- **If injury occurs, apply direct pressure over site(s) of heavy bleeding;** this act may save lives.

• **Take extra care in cutting “spring poles,” trees or branches that have gotten bent, twisted, hung up on or caught under another object during a high wind.** Before you begin, identify the maximum point of tension on the spring pole if the tree or the branch is suddenly released; it may strike the person cutting it, or a bystander, with enough force to cause serious injury or death. Even a seemingly small tree or branch (2 inches in diameter, for example) may pose a hazard when it is released from tension. Slowly

- shave the underside of the tree rather than cut through to allow the tree or branch to release tension slowly

Learn more at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/chainsaws.asp>.

4 Main Tips to Remember

- Choose the proper size of chain saw to match the job.
- Operate, adjust and maintain the saw according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Take extra care in cutting “spring poles”— trees or branches that have gotten bent, twisted, hung up on or caught under another object during a high wind.
- Be sure that bystanders are at a safe distance from cutting activities.

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.