

# Emergency Preparedness

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## Resolve to Be Ready in 2013

By Laura Southard

**N**ow's the time – resolve to be ready in 2013!

New year ... new start! Now is the time for you and your family to make an important resolution for 2013 that won't cost much and could save a lot of heartache.

your home, choose a place to meet in your neighborhood and another place outside your neighborhood if you can't get back in there. Your neighborhood meeting place may be a friend's house on the next street. A meeting place outside your neighborhood may be a



**Resolve to be ready** for any emergency.

Whether severe winter storms, tornadoes, spring flooding, earthquakes, hurricanes or something else hits next year, you can be prepared ahead of time.

To get started on your resolution, make an emergency plan. Get a free worksheet at [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov) or call toll-free 1-866-782-3470 to have one or more mailed to you, free of charge.

Decide with your family:

- **Who is your emergency point of contact?** Choose an out-of-town friend or relative to be your contact. During emergencies, it's often easier to make long distance rather than local calls. So choose an out-of-town person to call who can help communicate among your family members if you are separated from each other because of the emergency. Make sure every family member knows your emergency contact's phone number.

- **Where are your meeting places?** In case you can't return to

nearby church, store or another friend's home.

- **Do your schools have emergency plans?** If you are a

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## Simplifying Weather Messaging

The National Weather Service (NWS) is working to clarify its winter weather hazard terminology, specifically the Watch, Warning and Advisory notices, after surveys and feedback have shown the public may not understand what each term means and how they should respond.

The NWS is requesting assistance in simplifying their terminology and clarifying the products they publish. The NWS demonstrates a new proposed headline method on their website and is requesting comments from the public on how the old and proposed systems compare. You may also submit alternative suggestions.

Certain parts of the country are currently seeing samples of the new weather warnings through March 31, and people outside the test areas can view current before-and-after examples using the map on the NWS website.

This project is part of the Weather-Ready Nation initiative ([www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation)). Anyone may contribute by answering the NWS survey after reviewing the informational website.

Clarification and unified messaging has the potential to help the public better prepare for winter hazards and will therefore help the emergency management community as a whole.

*Reprinted from the Dec. 13 issue (Vol. 12, Issue 49) of The Infogram, published by the Emergency Management & Response-Information Sharing & Analysis Center, as taken from the National Weather Service: [http://nws.weather.gov/haz\\_simp/](http://nws.weather.gov/haz_simp/).*

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](mailto:marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov).

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

Regularly practice a fire escape plan with your loved ones.  
Identify at least two exits from every room in the house.

### HOW TO RESPOND WHEN AN ACTIVE SHOOTER IS IN YOUR VICINITY

QUICKLY DETERMINE THE MOST REASONABLE WAY TO PROTECT YOUR OWN LIFE. CUSTOMERS AND CLIENTS ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS DURING AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>1. EVACUATE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an escape route and plan in mind</li> <li>• Leave your belongings behind</li> <li>• Keep your hands visible</li> </ul> | <b>2. HIDE OUT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hide in an area out of the active shooter's view.</li> <li>• Block entry to your hiding place and lock the doors</li> </ul> | <b>3. TAKE ACTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger.</li> <li>• Attempt to incapacitate the active shooter</li> <li>• Act with physical aggression and throw items at the active shooter</li> </ul> |
|---|---|---|

**CALL 911 WHEN IT IS  
SAFE TO DO SO**

### HOW TO RESPOND WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES ON THE SCENE

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. HOW YOU SHOULD REACT WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions</li> <li>• Immediately raise hands and spread fingers</li> <li>• Keep hands visible at all times</li> <li>• Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as attempting to hold on to them for safety</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling</li> <li>• Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises</li> </ul> |
| <b>2. INFORMATION YOU SHOULD PROVIDE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OR 911 OPERATOR:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location of the active shooter</li> <li>• Number of shooters, if more than one</li> <li>• Physical description of shooter/s</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and type of weapons held by the shooter/s</li> <li>• Number of potential victims at the location</li> </ul>  |

### RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF POTENTIAL WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

AN ACTIVE SHOOTER MAY BE A CURRENT OR FORMER EMPLOYEE. ALERT YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT IF YOU BELIEVE AN EMPLOYEE EXHIBITS POTENTIALLY VIOLENT BEHAVIOR. INDICATORS OF POTENTIALLY VIOLENT BEHAVIOR MAY INCLUDE ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism, and/or vague physical complaints
- Depression/Withdrawal
- Increased severe mood swings, and noticeably unstable or emotional responses
- Increasingly talks of problems at home
- Increase in unsolicited comments about violence, firearms, and other dangerous weapons and violent crimes



Contact your building management or human resources department for more information and training on active shooter response in your workplace.

The recent school shootings in Newtown, Conn., has evoked many emotions — sadness, grief, helplessness, anxiety and anger. Schools are supposed to be one of the safe places, where students go to learn and be with friends. Children who are struggling with their thoughts and feelings about the stories and images of the shooting may turn to trusted adults for help and guidance. Reinforcing safety after this tragedy is important with very young children. They need to hear that their parents/caregivers will do everything they can to keep them safe. Schools will be working to be sure that their school is a safe place for learning and having fun with friends and classmates.

A good information resource is the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, [www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org).

One of the available resources online is a PDF, "Talking to Children about the Shooting," at [www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/talking\\_to\\_children\\_about\\_the\\_shooting.pdf](http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/talking_to_children_about_the_shooting.pdf).



See how safety tips from the Fairfax County Risk Management Division can help you avoid injury on a ladder and lifting heavy boxes. More information is online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/holidays/tips.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/holidays/tips.htm). Watch a YouTube video showing the proper way at [http://youtu.be/\\_CWIVYtb8KI](http://youtu.be/_CWIVYtb8KI).



## Inauguration Information Resources

- Capital Region Updates  
[www.CapitalRegionUpdates.gov](http://www.CapitalRegionUpdates.gov)
- D.C. Inauguration Web page  
<http://inauguration.dc.gov/>
- U.S. Secret Service  
[www.secretservice.gov/presidential\\_inaugural.shtml](http://www.secretservice.gov/presidential_inaugural.shtml)
- Joint Congressional Committee on Inauguration  
[www.inaugural.senate.gov/](http://www.inaugural.senate.gov/)
- Metro Inauguration Web page  
[www.wmata.com/getting\\_around/metro\\_events/inauguration.cfm?nocache](http://www.wmata.com/getting_around/metro_events/inauguration.cfm?nocache)
- Special Metro Inauguration Twitter Feed  
<http://twitter.com/metroinaug>
- MARC Train Service/Ticket Sales  
<http://mta.maryland.gov/inaugural-day-information>
- Secret Service Twitter  
<https://twitter.com/SecretService>

To see Inauguration related material on Twitter, use #inaug2013. U.S. Park Police have created a NIXLE account for the Inauguration to provide text and email alerts. To receive free emergency alerts and public notifications regarding the Inauguration, text the word "INAUGURATION" to 888777. Text messaging fees may apply per your cellular plan.

## Marcelo's Minute

### Resolve to Increase Community Preparedness



Marcelo Ferreira

Fast-moving storms, such as the derecho wind storm, demonstrated how reliant individuals are on technology for information gathering. Fairfax County has enhanced its ability to share vital and timely messages to residents by utilizing the Emergency Information Blog ([www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog)), social media and mobile apps. However, its effectiveness is dependent on the ability of residents to access the information. After the storm, power and phone outages left many feeling isolated, while some were able to use smartphones to stay informed.

In many communities throughout Fairfax County, from mobile home communities to high-rise buildings, neighbors are helping neighbors prepare for the next emergency by developing community emergency plans and encouraging one another to make a kit, make a plan and stay informed. The community emergency plans outline how residents will collaborate and leverage resources in the event of disaster while also helping address the needs of the elderly and neighbors who are disabled. By resolving to increase your community's level of preparedness, you can help ensure that your family and neighbors are informed and cared for during and after a disaster.

For more information, visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency) and [www.readynova.org](http://www.readynova.org). For training and volunteer opportunities, visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps).

Emergency preparedness initiatives continue year-round. If you or your organization are in need of a presentation about emergency preparedness or other emergency-related topics, let me know: 571-350-1013, TTY 711; [marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov).

*Marcelo Ferreira, OEM community liaison, holds the certified emergency manager (CEM) credential from the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM).*

## Natural Disasters Happen - Take Steps to Minimize Home Damage

**W**eather happens. Sometimes it's severe enough to cause flooding and wind damage like Superstorm Sandy.

You can take steps before the next disaster to protect your family and minimize property damage. It's called hazard mitigation.

Mitigation experts from the Federal Emergency Management Agency suggest that families have a disaster preparedness plan and make their homes less vulnerable to high winds and torrential rains that accompany tropical storms or hurricanes.

Some things you can do yourself, such as stowing outside furniture when there's a forecast for severe weather. Other measures may need the expertise of an electrician, plumber, contractor or other professional. Also, remember to check with local officials for any permit requirements.

**Anchor a fuel tank.** Whether it's in a basement or outside of your dwelling, attach the tank to structural supports. Keep it topped-off to reduce the possibility of the tank floating away.

**Raise electrical boxes, major appliances and HVAC components.** Survey the "infrastructure" of your home and elevate vulnerable items, such as furnaces, hot-water heaters, washers and dryers.

**Stop water backup.** If flood waters enter the sewer system, sewage can back up and enter your home. To prevent this, install a backflow valve.

**Protect your home against high winds.** If you are considering replacing doors and windows, look for impact-tested doors and think about adding storm shutters.

**Brace garage doors.** During a hurricane, garage doors are vulnerable. Adding braces across the back of the door and strengthening glider wheel tracks can help. If you are constructing a new home, consider installing a garage door built to withstand high winds.

FEMA publications can point you in the right direction for information about how to reinforce your home against high winds and flooding and how to secure important personal property. Go online to FEMA's "How To" series at [www.fema.gov/protect-your-property-or-business-disaster](http://www.fema.gov/protect-your-property-or-business-disaster) or order copies by calling FEMA Publications at 800-480-2520.

Other sources of helpful information are [www.disastersafety.org](http://www.disastersafety.org) and [www.flash.org](http://www.flash.org), the website of the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes – FLASH Inc.



*"RUN. HIDE. FIGHT. Surviving an Active Shooter Event" is a powerful video on how to survive an active shooter at your workplace.*

*The video was produced and funded by the City of Houston Mayor's Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security Department. The city released the how-to video on what people should do if a crazed gunman opens fire. The film crew actually wrapped up the project two weeks before the July 20 shooting in Aurora, Colo., that left 12 dead and dozens of others injured during a midnight showing of the Batman movie "The Dark Knight Rises."*

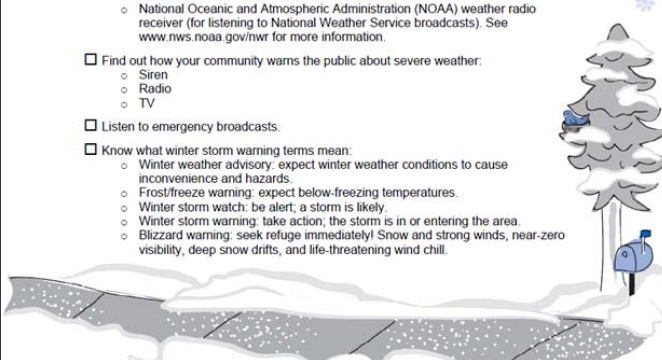
*Watch the video at <http://youtu.be/5VcSweJ2D0>.*



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


**CDC Checklist: Winter Weather Communication**

- Make sure you have at least one of the following in case there is a power failure:
  - o Battery-powered radio (for listening to local emergency instructions). Have extra batteries.
  - o National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio receiver (for listening to National Weather Service broadcasts). See [www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr) for more information.
- Find out how your community warns the public about severe weather:
  - o Siren
  - o Radio
  - o TV
- Listen to emergency broadcasts.
- Know what winter storm warning terms mean:
  - o Winter weather advisory: expect winter weather conditions to cause inconvenience and hazards.
  - o Frost/freeze warning: expect below-freezing temperatures.
  - o Winter storm watch: be alert, a storm is likely.
  - o Winter storm warning: take action; the storm is in or entering the area.
  - o Blizzard warning: seek refuge immediately! Snow and strong winds, near-zero visibility, deep snow drifts, and life-threatening wind chill.



Get your CDC checklist, “Winter Weather Communication” online at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/pdf/checklist-communication.pdf>.

*Tips for Talking to Children and Youth After Traumatic Events*  
**A Guide for Parents and Educators**



Children respond to trauma in many different ways. Some may have reactions very soon after the event; others may do fine for weeks or months, and then begin to show troubling behavior. Knowing the signs that are common at different ages can help parents and teachers recognize problems and respond appropriately.

**Preschool Age**  
 Children ages 1-5 find it particularly hard to adjust to change and loss. These youngsters have not yet developed their own coping skills, so they must depend on parents, family members, and teachers to help them through difficult times.

Very young children may regress to an earlier behavioral stage after a violent or traumatic event. Preschoolers may resume thumb-sucking or bedwetting, or may become afraid of strangers, animals, darkness, or “monsters.” They may cling to a parent or teacher, or become very attached to a place where they feel safe.

Changes in eating and sleeping habits are common, as are unexplainable aches and pains. Other symptoms to watch for

are disobedience, hyperactivity, speech difficulties, and aggressive or withdrawn behavior. Preschoolers may tell exaggerated stories about the traumatic event or may refer to it repeatedly.

**Early Childhood**  
 Children ages 5-11 may have some of the same reactions that younger children have. They also may withdraw from playgroups and friends, compete more for the attention of parents, fear going to school, allow school performance to drop, become aggressive, or find it hard to concentrate. These children also may return to more childish behaviors, such as asking to be fed or dressed.

**Adolescence**  
 Children ages 12-14 are likely to have vague physical complaints when under stress, and may abandon chores, school work, or other responsibilities they previously handled. Though they may compete vigorously for attention from parents and teachers, they also may withdraw, resist authority, become disruptive at home or in the classroom, or begin to experiment with high-risk behaviors such as alcohol or drug use.

Traumatic events, such as shootings, bombings, or other violent acts, can leave children feeling frightened, confused, and insecure.

Whether a child has personally experienced trauma, has seen the event on television, or has merely heard it discussed by adults, it is important for parents and educators to be informed and ready to help if stress reactions begin to occur.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
 Center for Mental Health Services  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration offers tips for talking with children and teens after disasters and tragedies. Among them, provide children with opportunities to talk about what they see on television and to ask questions. Answer questions at a level the child can understand. Learn more at [www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/media/796/tips\\_talking\\_to\\_children\\_after\\_disaster.pdf](http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/media/796/tips_talking_to_children_after_disaster.pdf).

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:

FAIRFAX COUNTY  
**citizen★corps**  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps)

**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](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)**

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](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)





# NFPA and the U.S. Fire Administration Team Up to Put a Freeze on Winter Fires

## *More fires occur in December, January and February*

**W**hile a warm home and a hot meal on a cold winter’s day may conjure up thoughts of safety and security, the unfortunate reality is that winter is the leading time of year for home fires in the United States. That’s why the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) have teamed up to help prevent home fires in the winter months.

Through a jointly sponsored initiative – “Put a Freeze on Winter Fires” – NFPA and USFA are working collaboratively to tell the public about ways to stay fire-safe this winter. The effort targets home heating and cooking, which represent the two leading causes of U.S. home fires. Both types of fires peak in the winter months.

According to a recent NFPA report, heating equipment was involved in an estimated 57,100 reported U.S. home structure fires in 2010. The associated losses included 490 civilian deaths, 1,530 civilian injuries and \$1.1 billion in direct property damage.


As in previous years, space heaters account for about one-third of home heating fires and approximately 80 percent of associated fire deaths.

The USFA’s report, “Winter Residential Building Fires,” shows that winter home fires occur mainly in the early evening hours, peaking from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. NFPA and USFA recommend these safety tips to prevent winter home fires:

***Winter home fires occur mainly in the early evening hours, peaking from 5 to 8 p.m.***

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period, turn off the stove.
- Space heaters need space; keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from each heater.
- Check electrical cords often and replace cracked or damaged electrical or extension cords. Do not try to repair them.
- Never use your oven or stovetop to heat your home. They are not designed for this purpose and can be a fire hazard. In addition, carbon monoxide (CO) gas might kill people and pets.
- Select the new “flameless” candles that operate by battery to bring the look and scent of real candles to your home. If you must use burning candles, place them in sturdy candleholders that won’t burn.
- If you smoke, use only fire-safe cigarettes and smoke outside.

For more tips for staying safe all winter long, visit USFA at [www.usfa.fema.gov/winter](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/winter) and NFPA at [www.nfpa.org/winter](http://www.nfpa.org/winter). The “Winter Residential Building Fires” report is online at [www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v10i5.pdf](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v10i5.pdf).



Fairfax County and Northern Virginia residents can use the family and business emergency planners at [www.ReadyNOVA.org](http://www.ReadyNOVA.org).

## Wiki Launches Accessibility Toolkit to Empower People with Disabilities to Use Social Media in Emergencies

The Emergency 2.0 Wiki Accessibility Toolkit has been designed to help people with disabilities use social media to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

The online toolkit provides tips, resources and apps to help people with a disability to overcome accessibility challenges of social media. The kit also includes guidelines to assist the emergency sector, government, community, media and business to make social media messages more accessible.



Social media can save lives, but people with disabilities often have difficulty accessing important messages because the social media platforms themselves are inaccessible.

It's vitally important that people with disabilities, who are the most vulnerable in our communities during emergencies, are empowered to access instant, lifesaving messages through social media.

Learn more about the kit at <http://emergency20wiki.org/20121210/wiki-launches-accessibility-toolkit>.

Image courtesy of <http://emergency20wiki.org/>.

### Save the date for ShakeOut 2013

Some 1.8 million residents of Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Washington, D.C., participated in the first ever Great SouthEast ShakeOut multi-state earthquake drill held in October. Based on the success of the drill – and to provide a national exercise just after the annual National Preparedness Month campaign in September – states will once again have a simultaneous earthquake drill in 2013. **Mark your calendars for Oct. 17 at 10:17 a.m.** Additional information will be forthcoming starting in the spring.



## How to Safely Enjoy Winter Activities

Now that winter is here, kids are keeping their fingers crossed for a snow day so they can go sledding, have snow ball fights and do lots of other winter activities. You and your family may also get outside this winter to enjoy the ski slopes, ice skating rinks and other fun the weather brings.

USA.gov offers tips to stay safe while enjoying all that winter has to offer:

- When heading out to a winter sports activity, such as skiing or snowboarding, remember to dress appropriately with a helmet, boots and other cold weather gear, all of which help prevent injury, hypothermia and other hazards of winter fun. Read up on winter safety and health tips so you're prepared before you head out. [www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/index.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/staysafe/index.asp)
- It's important to look for winter storm warnings, watches and advisories before you hit the slopes or other recreational areas. Twenty-five percent of winter weather fatalities are because people are caught off guard. Make sure you're prepared by knowing the projected snowfall and other advisories before leaving your house. [www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/winter1.shtml](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/winter1.shtml)
- For tips on specific winter sports safety equipment, such as hockey, ice skating, sledding and more, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission offers time-tested tips for each specific winter activity and how to dress yourself and your kids appropriately for each. [www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prereel/prhtml73/73046.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prereel/prhtml73/73046.html)
- If you're heading out on a hike or camping on public lands, you can use Recreation.gov to search for recreation areas with winter sports activities near you. The site also provides information on winter sports activities across the nation and tips on taking care of our public land while visiting. [www.recreation.gov/recFacilityActivitiesHomeAction.do?goto=winter\\_sports.htm](http://www.recreation.gov/recFacilityActivitiesHomeAction.do?goto=winter_sports.htm)

# FCC Announces Commitment by Major U.S. Wireless Carriers and Public Safety Leaders to Accelerate Nationwide Text-to-9-1-1 Services

FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski has announced that the nation's four largest wireless carriers – AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile – have agreed to accelerate the availability of text-to-9-1-1, with major deployments expected in 2013 and a commitment to nationwide availability by May 15, 2014. Building on text-to-9-1-1 deployments and trials that are already underway, this agreement will accelerate progress and ensure that over 90 percent of the nation's wireless consumers, including millions of consumers with hearing or speech disabilities, will be able to access emergency services by sending a text message to 9-1-1, where local 9-1-1 call centers (known as a Public Safety Answering Points, or PSAPs) are also prepared to receive the texts.

Text-to-9-1-1 will provide consumers with enhanced access to emergency communications in situations where a voice call could endanger the caller, or a person with disabilities is unable to make a voice call. Text-to-9-1-1 will be a complement to, not a substitute for, voice calls to 9-1-1 services. Consumers should **always make a voice call to 9-1-1 during an emergency** if they can.

In addition, to help eliminate consumer confusion while text-to-9-1-1 capability is being phased-in, the carriers have committed to provide an automatic "bounce back" text message to notify consumers if their attempt to reach 9-1-1 via text message was unsuccessful because this service is not yet available in their area. Such a message would instruct the recipient to make a voice call to a 9-1-1 center. The four carriers will fully implement this bounce back capability across their networks by June 30, 2013.

The FCC will take additional action as necessary to ensure the public's ability to reach 9-1-1 using text messaging. Next, the FCC will consider steps towards ensuring that text-to-9-1-1 is made available as soon as possible by all carriers and over-the-top providers who offer Internet-based text services. The commission will continue to work with all stakeholders including 9-1-1 authorities, PSAPs, the Emergency Access Advisory Committee, public safety organizations, disability

organizations, consumer groups and industry on this issue.

Genachowski said, "Access to 9-1-1 must catch up with how consumers communicate in the 21st century – and today, we are one step closer towards that vital goal. Last year I announced a comprehensive plan to accelerate the transition to Next Generation 9-1-1, including text-to-9-1-1, and the FCC has acted to advance this effort."

The agreement was signed by APCO International, AT&T, NENA-The 9-1-1 Association, Sprint Nextel, T-Mobile USA and Verizon.

## Resolve to Be Ready

*continued from Page 1*

parent, ask your schools and day care providers about their emergency plans. Find out how they will communicate with families during a crisis. Ask if they are prepared to stay in school if necessary and where they plan to go if they must leave.

• **Do you own a small business?** If so, find helpful information and steps on how to protect your business against disasters at [www.Ready.gov](http://www.Ready.gov).

Emergencies will happen, but taking action now helps minimize the impact they will have on our lives. Now is the time ... **Resolve to be Ready**, and make your plan for 2013.

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

