

Emergency Preparedness

Published by the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management
July 2011

Stay Connected to Fairfax County Emergency Information

Fairfax County now has several ways for residents to stay in touch and receive emergency information, including a new application for iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad, as well as a mobile friendly website.

iPhone, iPod Touch or iPad Application

If you have an iPhone, iPod Touch or iPad, Fairfax County's new app is now available in iTunes. The official Fairfax County government iPhone/iPad app connects you with key information and services for Virginia's most populous and thriving county with more than 1 million people located outside of Washington, D.C. The app features nine sections:

- Contact Us
- Locations
- Calendars
- NewsWire
- Alerts
- Social Media
- Transportation
- Supervisors
- Search Site

These nine icons (as seen below) can be rearranged to your



preferences. Most content can be sent via email or text message.

Download the app: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/fairfaxcounty/id440217640?#>.

Mobile Website

Now you can connect to Fairfax County news and emergency information while you're on the go with the county's mobile friendly website, m.fairfaxcounty.gov.

In addition, Fairfax County uses social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook, in addition to CEAN alerts, to keep residents up-to-date with emergency news.

In This Issue

Stay Connected with App and Mobile Friendly Website

Page 1

Red Cross Volunteer Returns

Page 2

Get Children Involved in Planning | Marcelo's Minute

Page 3

Protect Your Property From the Elements

Page 4

Get Direct Deposit

Page 5

Break the Grip of the Rip

Page 6

FEMA Denies Virginia's Appeal | Nationwide FCC Test

Page 7

FEMA Region III Prepares

Page 8

Local Red Cross Volunteer Returns from Deployment to Tornado Stricken Alabama

By Kim Lee Alvarado

Jon Cauble, a Fairfax County resident, has been a Red Cross volunteer for the last two years. He is a Disaster Action Team (DAT) Lead and a certified Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) driver with the American Red Cross in the National Capital Region. Last month, Jon had the opportunity to go on his first deployment to Alabama following the recent tornadoes that devastated that area.

Share CDC's Hurricane Tips on Your Own Website!

Stay informed about hurricane readiness with new social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, eCards, buttons, badges and widgets! The CDC Hurricane Tips widget allows you to display the tips directly on your Web page. You can embed content in personalized homepages, blogs and other sites. Once you've added the widget, there's no technical maintenance. CDC will update the content automatically.

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/socialmedia/hurricanes.asp>.



Grilling Fire Safety Tips

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills must only be used outdoors. If used indoors, or in enclosed spaces such as tents, they pose a fire hazard and a risk of exposing occupants to deadly carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Place the grill a safe distance from lawn games, play areas and foot traffic. Grills should be positioned at least 10 feet away from siding, deck railing and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep matches, lighters and starter fluid out of the reach of children in a locked drawer or cabinet.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area: declare a three-foot "kid-free zone" around the grill.
- Use long barbeque mitts and long-handled grilling tools to protect yourself from heat and flames.

He drove one of the local Red Cross ERVs from Prince William County to Birmingham, Ala., and then to a small rural town called Snead, which is where he remained for two weeks. He worked 12 to 13 hours a day delivering meals to affected homes. Over 10 tornadoes had passed through Snead. Some homes were completely destroyed.



Jon Cauble
Submitted photo

Jon was impressed by the support offered by the local community. Response following a tornado can be especially challenging, because street signs are often missing, which makes navigation difficult. "From the first week we were there, the local volunteer fire station offered a lot of assistance. I encouraged ERV drivers in other towns to also reach out to the local fire chiefs for support," said Jon.

For Jon this was a fulfilling experience that he would repeat. He is willing to deploy again, and in the meantime is going to take courses in disaster assessment and logistics, to be able to assist with other aspects of the response. (View courses offered by your local Red Cross at www.redcrossnca.org/index.php/take-a-class.html.)

In addition to having recently deployed, Jon has responded to about a dozen DAT calls for local disasters, such as fires, emergencies caused by heavy snow and a recent gas explosion.

Kim Lee Alvarado is communication coordinator, marketing and communication with the American Red Cross in the National Capital Region.

Get Children Involved in Disaster Planning: It Helps Calm Their Fears

With the tornadoes and flooding of April and May still fresh in peoples' minds, now is a good time for you and your family to prepare for the next disaster, whatever that may be. If you have children, include them in the planning process. Experience has shown that when children are involved in the planning process, it calms their fears.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's website, **Ready Kids**, is designed for children. It has fun quizzes and games. At the same time, it helps families prepare for a disaster. Go to www.ready.gov/kids.

One of the most important first steps is to have children help stock an emergency supply kit. They can help decide what should go in the kit and why, and help choose how it will be stored and where. The Ready Kids website explains the kit's contents and provides materials in a format kids will enjoy while they are learning.

Another important step is to make a family emergency plan. A good plan includes a list of possible emergencies, evacuation routes, phone numbers of friends, relatives and local emergency management offices. Such a plan should be designed to help the family be self-sustaining for at least three days.

Finally, families should be informed. Learn together about the types of emergencies that can happen in your area and how to respond to them.

And don't forget your pets! Prepare an animal emergency supply kit, develop a pet care buddy system in case you can't take care of your animals yourself, and if you must evacuate, take your pets with you if at all possible.

More information on disaster planning can be found at www.ready.gov.

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.

Marcelo's Minute

Emergency Water Supply



Marcelo Ferreira

Floods, hurricanes, tornados, power outages and other disasters can all affect local water supplies. By taking proactive steps to build an emergency water supply, you can increase your resiliency during an emergency. FEMA recommends that each individual have enough supplies on hand for *at least* three days, while allotting one gallon of water per person per day. This means that three gallons will be required for one person over a three day period. Water is needed for drinking, food preparation and hygiene.

When storing water, it is best to use commercially bottled water that is in its original container and has not been opened. This will give the water a longer shelf life. When your water resources are low, reducing activities and staying cool will minimize the amount of water that your body needs. Additional sources of water can also be found in hot water tanks, pipes and ice cubes.

Prior to using these sources of water, be sure that it has been protected from contamination due to broken water or sewage lines. To help protect your water supply, shut off incoming water by turning the main valve to the closed position. Do NOT use water from toilet flush tanks or bowls, radiators, waterbeds, or swimming pools/spas.

For additional information about maintaining an emergency water supply, hidden water sources and treating water during an emergency, visit:

- www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/prepare/water.htm
- www.fema.gov/pdf/library/f&web.pdf
- www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/water.shtm

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

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

Protect Your Property From the Elements

By Laura Southard

What should property owners, business owners and renters be doing before tropical weather systems affect Virginia?

Consider getting flood insurance.

Most homeowners insurance does not cover flood damage. Inland flooding is often a problem in Virginia, so a direct hit from a hurricane isn't necessary for there to be extensive damage. Get free info at www.floodsmart.gov or call 1-888-379-9531. Talk to your insurance agent now. Coverage usually takes 30 days before it goes into effect.

Other things to consider:

- Permanent storm shutters are the best protection for windows. Tape does not prevent windows from breaking. Another option is to cover windows with 5/8" plywood.
- Be sure trees and shrubs around are well trimmed.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Get a portable battery-powered/hand crank radio with NOAA weather band so you can hear information even when the power is out. Have plenty of batteries on hand.
- Store drinking water. Have at least a three-day supply: one gallon per person per day.
- Families should have an emergency plan. Get a fill-in form at www.ReadyVirginia.gov.
- Equally important, businesses should be prepared with emergency plans to improve the likelihood that your company may recover from a disaster. Visit www.ready.gov/business for more.

What should residents do if a tropical storm warning is issued?

Listen to a battery-powered radio or television for instructions from local officials.

- Those in mobile homes should check tie downs and go to a sturdier building for shelter.
- Keep a supply of flashlights and extra batteries. Don't use open flames such as kerosene lamps and candles for light.

- Be sure you have at least a three-day supply of food that doesn't need refrigeration or electricity for preparation.
- Store valuables and personal papers in a waterproof container on the highest level of your home.
- Stay inside, away from windows, skylights and glass doors.
- If power goes off, turn off major appliances to reduce power "surge" when electricity is back on.

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



Did You Know

- According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, small businesses represent more than 99 percent of all employers; provide approximately 65 percent of the net new jobs added to the economy; and represent 97 percent of all U.S. exporters.
- Up to 40 percent of businesses affected by a disaster never reopen.
- Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of businesses report they don't have any type of an emergency plan.

Learn more by visiting www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/business or www.ready.gov/business.

A Paper Check Is No Match for a Hurricane or Tornado; Get Direct Deposit

The United States is the most severe weather-prone country on Earth according to the National Weather Service. Hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding and other natural disasters can strike without warning and force you to evacuate your home or cause disruptions in mail service.

Ensuring you get your money in the most reliable way is the reason why the U.S. Department of the Treasury is moving to all-electronic federal benefit payments.

Everyone applying for federal benefits will now receive their payments electronically from day one, while anyone currently relying on paper checks must switch to electronic payments by March, 1, 2013. Paper checks will no longer be an option.

If you are still receiving Social Security or other federal benefit payments by paper check, don't wait until the final deadline to make the switch. Mother Nature is unpredictable and a disaster could prevent you from getting your money on time. In recent years, severe weather has caused alternative delivery arrangements for millions of Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) paper checks.

To switch to direct deposit or the Direct Express card, contact your federal benefit agency office, visit the Treasury Department's Go Direct campaign website at www.GoDirect.org, or call the U.S. Treasury Electronic Payment Solution Center at 800-333-1795.

For direct deposit, you can also make the switch at your local financial institution. There are lots of ways you can help get members of your community signed up for direct deposit. For more information go to <http://godirect.org/partners/toolkits/community/disaster-preparedness-tool-kit/>



Fairfax County, Va., publication.

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

FAIRFAX COUNTY



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

Beach-goers Urged to *Break the Grip of the Rip*

With beach vacation season here, NOAA and partners are alerting beach-goers to the threat of rip currents and how to prevent drowning from their strong and potentially fatal grip.

The National Weather Service issues rip current outlooks for different coastal areas, called “surf zone forecasts,” so be sure to check out the rip current outlook before heading to the beach this summer. Rip currents claim more than 100 lives per year nationally. NOAA has teamed up with the United States Lifesaving Association and the National Park Service to sponsor this summer’s Rip Current Awareness Campaign with the theme *Break the Grip of the Rip*.

According to the U.S. Lifesaving Association, each year America’s beach lifeguards rescue more than 50,000 swimmers from rip currents. Swimming at a guarded beach can greatly reduce the chance of drowning.

Rip currents are narrow channels of water moving swiftly away from the shore, and they can pull people



Marcelo Ferreira (left), community outreach liaison for the Office of Emergency Management, recently attended the SAIC Personal Preparedness Fair. He is pictured with Matt Crutchfield, an intern with OEM. If your business, organization or nonprofit is holding an upcoming event and would like OEM to exhibit, contact Ferreira at 571-350-1000. Photo courtesy of SAIC.



far out into the ocean. Rip currents are surprisingly strong. They occur just above the ocean floor and can knock people off their feet. Rip currents often occur with strong onshore winds, in cuts or breaks of a sandbar along the edge of the breaking waves, and near man-made objects such as piers or jetties. But they can occur anywhere there are breaking waves.

Rip Current Safety Tips

Before you go:

- Check surf zone forecasts.
- Study how rip currents work and how to escape them.
- Swim at a beach with lifeguard protection and talk with the lifeguard about the safest places to swim.
- Observe and obey signs and flags posted to warn about rip currents.
- Never swim near jetties or piers where there are fixed rip currents.
- Don’t swim in a large body of water that is subject to changing wind, waves and currents unless you are a strong swimmer.
- Swim with a buddy, never alone.
- Rip currents are strongest at low tide.

If you get caught in the grip of a rip current:

- Yell for help immediately.
- Don’t swim against a rip current – it will just tire you out.
- Escape the rip current by swimming parallel to the beach until you are free.
- If you are unable to swim out of the rip current, float or calmly tread water.
- When out of the current, swim toward the shore.

For more, visit www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov.

Outside is the most dangerous place to be during a lightning or thunderstorm, and more people are outside during the summer. Lightning accounts for more deaths per year than tornados. The safest place to be during lightning activity is a large enclosed building, not a picnic shelter or shed. The second safest location is an enclosed metal vehicle, car, van, etc., but **not** a convertible, bike or other topless or soft top vehicle. If caught outdoors and no shelter is nearby, stay away from tall trees. If there is no shelter, crouch in the open, keeping twice as far away from a tree as it is tall.

FEMA Denies Appeals for Tornado Damage Assistance

The Commonwealth was notified on Thursday, June 23, that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) denied all three appeals for federal assistance to help individuals recover from 34 tornadoes that struck Virginia in April.

On May 19, Governor Bob McDonnell appealed FEMA's denial of three separate requests: for Pulaski County; for Halifax and Washington counties; and a request to consider April 8-28 as one period so that other localities such as Gloucester and Middlesex counties could be added.

According to a news release from the governor's office, Virginia will immediately pursue assistance from the Small Business Administration (SBA) in the form of low-interest loans for homeowners, renters and business owners who suffered damage.

The SBA can provide real property loans of up to \$200,000 to homeowners to repair or restore their primary home to its pre-disaster condition. Also, the agency can authorize personal property loans to provide homeowners or renters with up to \$40,000 to help repair or replace personal property, such as clothing, furniture and automobiles lost in the disaster.

In addition, businesses suffering damage could receive loans to help repair or replace damaged property and for the loss of business revenues.

To assist charitable groups in their efforts to help Virginians recover, Governor McDonnell established the Virginia Disaster Relief Fund. The governor announced in May that \$600,000 in anticipated state agency savings will be added to the fund to go toward helping Virginians who were affected by severe weather and tornadoes that struck the commonwealth in April.

A website has been created to process credit card donations at <http://disasterrelief.vi.virginia.gov/>.

Make checks payable to the Treasurer of Virginia with "tornado relief" noted in the memo line. Send checks to Comptroller's Office, P.O. Box 1971, Richmond, VA 23218-1971. Donations are tax deductible.

FEMA, FCC Announce Nationwide Test of the Emergency Alert System

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA, www.FEMA.gov) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC, www.FCC.gov) will conduct the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) on Wednesday, Nov. 9, at 2 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. The test may last up to three and a half minutes.

The EAS is a national alert and warning system established to enable the President of the United States to address the American public during emergencies. NOAA's National Weather Service, governors and state and local emergency authorities also use parts of the system to issue more localized emergency alerts.

Similar to local EAS tests that are already conducted frequently, the nationwide test will involve broadcast radio and television stations, cable television, satellite radio and television services and wireline video service providers across all states and the territories of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and American Samoa.

On Nov. 9, the public will hear a message indicating that "This is a test." The audio message will be the same for both radio and television. Under the FCC's rules, radio and television broadcasters, cable operators, satellite digital audio radio service providers, direct broadcast satellite service providers and wireline video service providers are required to receive and transmit presidential EAS messages to the public.

A national test will help the federal partners and EAS participants determine the reliability of the system and its effectiveness in notifying the public of emergencies and potential dangers nationally and regionally.

Visit www.Ready.gov for more information about how to prepare for and stay informed about what to do in the event of an actual emergency.

FEMA Region III Prepares for 2011 Storm Season

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region III office is making preparations for an above-normal hurricane season, which officially began on June 1 and runs through Nov. 30. Region III's jurisdiction includes the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. Residents, particularly those in coastal areas, are urged to pay close attention to weather forecasts during hurricane season.

While federal, state and local emergency officials are fully engaged in preparation for storms and flooding, FEMA strongly recommends individuals take ownership of their safety – being prepared is everyone's responsibility. If a storm is predicted to strike Region III, FEMA will do the following:

- Work in conjunction with state and local partners to pre-position life-saving and life-sustaining supplies within the mid-Atlantic region. Food, water, cots, blankets, and tarps will be pre-positioned to reach impacted areas as quickly as possible.
- Activate the 24-hour Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) to oversee the response effort and to monitor the needs of the impacted state. Federal agencies assigned to Emergency Support Functions will be activated to work in the RRCC to help fulfill requests for assistance. Through mission assignments, support can range from helicopters, generators and Disaster Medical Assistance Teams.
- Deploy personnel and teams, such as liaison officers and incident management assistance teams to facilitate operational planning between the regional office and state agencies.
- Place preliminary damage assessment teams on standby. These teams work jointly with state officials to conduct damage assessments that will determine eligibility for a presidential disaster declaration, which triggers the release of federal disaster funds.
- Place mobile disaster recovery centers (DRCs) on standby. DRCs are temporary facilities that provide on-site disaster assistance to victims, allowing them to register for temporary housing, grants and other aid. If there is a need to distribute commodities during a disaster, FEMA, state, and local agencies play key roles to ensure supplies reach those in need. While working towards similar goals, the role played by each level of government is different.

As such, commodities are distributed in the following way:

State and Local Role

- When disaster survivors need supplies, local jurisdictions attempt to fill the need from existing resources. When unable, the requirements are forwarded to a county or state jurisdiction.
- Once a request is received, one option for the county or state is to work from existing or commercial resources to address the local need by signing an Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). EMAC is a cooperative agreement between states to facilitate the sharing of critical resources during emergencies and disasters.
- Should the county or state be unable to meet local needs, the state requests federal assistance.

Federal Role

- Once a state request is received, FEMA works to fulfill it. Supplies are delivered by FEMA to the state-designated staging area or point of distribution (POD).
- Supplies are distributed to disaster survivors at these sites by the state. The state identifies and operates these points of distribution.

Preparedness by Residents

Personal preparedness is critical. Individuals and families should be ready to take protective actions even before a storm is forecast. FEMA wants the public to make sure it has provisions for **at least 72 hours** after a storm strikes. This includes food and water as well as other needed supplies, including a battery-powered radio to receive important response and recovery information should electricity service be interrupted.

If residents are told by local officials to evacuate, they should do so without hesitating and should take copies of important papers with them including checkbooks, driver's license, credit card information, birth certificates, social security cards and other forms and documents proving ownership/identity.

Everyone should know the local evacuation routes, and if available, the location of nearby safe shelters. Individuals and families need to have a communication plan in place to contact or find each other. As the storm approaches, residents should listen to and closely follow instructions from local and state authorities. For more information, visit www.ready.gov/hurricanes and www.floodsmart.gov. Business owners and managers can learn how to prepare at www.ready.gov/business.