

Emergency Preparedness

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Fairfax Alerts

By Sandi Fox

If we can't reach you, we can't alert you. That's the mantra of Fairfax County's official emergency alert system aptly named, Fairfax Alerts. Thousands of County residents have signed up for this free service that allows them to be in the know on emergencies, big and small, that may affect their lives. Plus, it's now customizable and allows members to add other reminders and notifications about topics like taxes, elections and transportation, to keep them further up-to-date.

Signing up is easy – visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts to create a profile. You can then customize it with weather, traffic and information about county services, such as reminders from the Department of Tax Administration. Other notifications that are available include alerts from Fairfax County Police, Fairfax Connector passenger information, Office of Elections updates and even different county agency newsletters.

Users have found the system to be helpful and informative. From rerouting during bad traffic to learning about county facility and service updates during snowstorms and other significant weather events, Fairfax Alerts offers a notification for everyone.

Additionally, residents also have the ability to identify a functional need from a list of 12 different categories such as mobility impairment; vision impairment/blind; and refrigerated medicine required. The Fairfax Alerts system has a mapping capability that assists in better response throughout the county during an emergency by pre-identifying potential service needs to fire and police responders. Identifying with one of these functional needs does not require any specific, private medical information, however, residents are encouraged to enter

an accurate home address so help can be sent to the correct location.

Note that while the Fairfax Alerts system is free, users may incur charges from their cellphone

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This newsletter is published by the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management

Providing Shelter From the Cold and Saving Lives

It's winter and it's cold. Imagine you are spending the night sleeping outside, behind a store on Route 1, in the woods in Burke or beside the parkway in Reston. For the homeless in our county it is a frightening and potentially life-threatening reality.

To help our vulnerable neighbors survive the winter, Fairfax County provides overnight shelter with a no turn-away policy at all emergency homeless shelters during freezing weather.

From late November through March, the county operates the Hypothermia Prevention Program, a countywide community network of overnight shelters. Through this program last winter, the county's nonprofit and faith-based community partners provided 1,061 men and women with a safe, warm place to sleep.

If you see someone at night who is unsheltered and you think could be at risk of hypothermia, call the county's non-emergency phone line at 703-691-2131, TTY 711.

Learn more at <http://1.usa.gov/1IUymhU> and <http://1.usa.gov/1tjdkOf>.



The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management is available to deliver emergency preparedness presentations to community organizations and homeowners associations. If interested, call OEM at 571-350-1000, TTY 711, or email oem-outreach@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Fairfax Alerts

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company if they have a per call or per message limit on their mobile device. Any information provided upon registration with Fairfax Alerts is not shared with or available to the public. Personal information will be used as needed for emergency purposes only.

You Choose the Alerts

- Pick the types of weather alerts you wish to receive, along with traffic and public safety alerts.
- Create a “do not disturb” time frame when you don’t want to receive weather alerts.
- Learn about county government non-emergency notices such as tax and election deadlines.

Alerts for Different Devices

- Choose up to 10 delivery methods like home phone, cellphone, email, text messaging and more.
- Manage your Fairfax Alerts profile from your phone by downloading the Everbridge Mobile Member app for iPhone or Android.
- The mobile app allows for two-way conversations with emergency managers and does not use text messaging service.
- While most alerts can be customized, alerts about events posing a significant risk to life or property will be sent to all devices.

Alerts for Your Locations

- Customize your Fairfax Alerts locations to include home, work, school and more.
- Get geo-targeted weather alerts based on up to five addresses you define.
- Receive weather advisories for you, your family, home, business, school, child care and more.

Fairfax Alerts is another tool that Fairfax County uses to keep you informed and safe. Learn more at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts. Remember, if we can’t reach you, we can’t alert you.

Sandi Fox is the community outreach manager with OEM and holds a bachelor’s degree from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in marine and environmental science and is working on her master’s in public administration from California State University, Long Beach.

Is Your Home Ready for Winter Weather?

You might wear gloves and a hat to protect yourself from cold temperatures outside, but did you know that your home needs protection, too?

With the proper maintenance, you can prepare your home for the winter season and reduce heat loss during a power outage. Follow these tips from America's PrepareAthon! "How to Prepare for a Winter Storm."

- Hire a contractor to check the structural ability of your roof to sustain unusually heavy weight from the accumulation of snow or ice.
- Insulate pipes with insulation or newspaper and plastic.
- Allow faucets to drip during cold weather to avoid freezing.
- Have a professional inspect your chimney or heating equipment.



For added warmth, you may choose to use indoor space heaters. If you purchase a space heater, look for one that has an automatic shut-off or tip-over switch. Place the heater on a level surface away from high-traffic areas and flammable items such as curtains, bedding or furniture. Make sure the room has enough ventilation to help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

Get more tips at <http://1.usa.gov/1C6RvYT>.

Reprinted from the "Individual and Community Preparedness e-Brief," Dec. 3, 2015, edition

Emergency Management Outreach Events

January

- Jan. 6 – McLean Civic Association – Community Resiliency Group Presentation, McLean
- Jan. 12 – Dranesville District Community Resiliency Group Seminar, McLean
- Jan. 13 – Culmore Mothers Group, Bailey's Crossroad
- Jan. 16 – Boy Scouts at OEM for Merit Badge, OEM
- Jan. 20 – George Mason Library Emergency Preparedness Workshop, Annandale
- Jan. 21 – Faith Communities In Action Emergency Planning Committee Meeting, OEM
- Jan. 25 – Alpha Delta Kappa at OEM for Tour and Preparedness Presentation, OEM
- Jan. 28 – Fairfax County Citizen Corps Council meeting, Government Center, Fairfax

February

- Feb. 9 – Burke Centre Library Emergency Preparedness Workshop, Burke Centre
- Feb. 11 – Dranesville District Community Resiliency Group Tabletop Exercise, McLean
- Feb. 18 – Faith Communities In Action Emergency Planning Committee meeting, OEM

To learn more about emergency preparedness or having an OEM representative attend your event or give a presentation at your homeowners association or civic association meeting, call 571-350-1000, TTY 711; email oem-outreach@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Emergency News

by email

Subscribe



Receive emergency preparedness information and emergency news by email

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog

Children Found Due to Wireless Emergency Alerts

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) directly attributed FEMA's Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) with saving the lives of 21 children since 2012 by providing information to instantly inform citizens to assist in the search for and safe recovery of missing children.

AMBER Alerts are urgent bulletins issued in the most serious child-abduction cases, and can be sent straight to cellphones via WEA without the need to download an app or subscribe to a service.



WEA look like a text message. If you have a WEA-enabled cellphone, you are automatically enrolled for three types of alerts: Presidential, Imminent Threat and AMBER.

While your cellphone may permit the settings to opt out of receiving WEA for imminent threats and AMBER alerts, you cannot opt out of a presidential message. FEMA encourages everyone to **not** opt out as it could save your life or the life of a child.

NCMEC has issued AMBER Alerts through FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) to WEA on cellphones since December 2012.

To find out if your mobile device is capable of receiving WEA alerts, contact your cellular service. For more information on WEA alerts, visit www.ready.gov/warning-systems-signals.

Reprinted from FEMA's External Affairs Bulletin, Dec. 14, 2015, edition.

Stay Connected to Emergency Information



Fairfax County Emergency Alerts
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts



Emergency Information Blog
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog



Fairfax County Government Radio
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/radio



Fairfax County on Twitter
www.twitter.com/fairfaxcounty



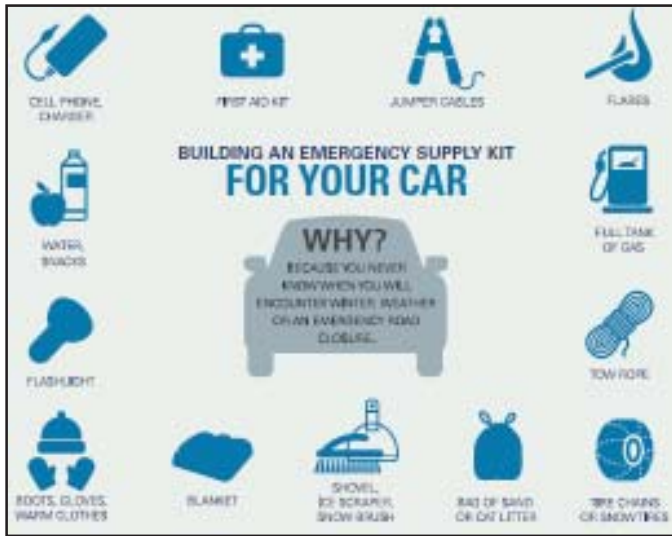
Fairfax County on Facebook
www.facebook.com/fairfaxcounty



Fairfax County on YouTube
www.youtube.com/fairfaxcountygov



www.capitalert.gov



Car Emergency Kit

You may have prepared your home for winter weather, but what about your car? Seasonal changes also mean changes to your car's emergency supply kit.

America's PrepareAthon! encourages you to update your vehicle's emergency kit with items, including:

- A shovel.
- Jumper cables.
- A bag of sand or cat litter.
- Warm clothes.

Avoid many dangerous winter travel problems by planning ahead. Before you hit the road, have a mechanic check items on your vehicle, including:

- Antifreeze levels – ensure they are sufficient to avoid freezing.
- Battery and ignition system – terminal should be clean.
- Brakes – check for wear and fluid level.
- Tires – make sure they have adequate tread.

For more ways to prepare your car for winter weather, check out the "How to Prepare for a Winter Storm" guide from America's PrepareAthon!
<http://1.usa.gov/1C6RvYT>

Reprinted from FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness e-Brief, Dec. 9, 2015. Above graphic reprinted from the "How to Prepare for a Winter Storm" guide.

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/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/fr/cert



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



Small Business Expertise Sought to Help Solve Homeland Security Challenges

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is seeking proposals from small businesses to address technical challenges in homeland security. DHS will accept proposals for its upcoming Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program FY 16.1 joint solicitation, which covers 13 technical areas from two DHS organizations: the Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) and the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO).

The pre-solicitation notice for DHS SBIR Program FY 16.1, is published in www.FedBizOpps.gov (Solicitation Number: HSHQDC-16-R-00012) and details topics, descriptions and technical contacts for the pending solicitation.

The S&T topics in the joint solicitation are developed by S&T program managers and generally address DHS needs.

Proposals submitted to this joint solicitation are due no later than 2 p.m. ET on Jan. 20, 2016. All offerors must submit proposals through the online proposal submission system at <https://sbir2.st.dhs.gov>. For more information about the DHS S&T SBIR Program visit the program portal <https://sbir2.st.dhs.gov>.

The DHS S&T SBIR Program was initiated in 2004 with the goal of increasing the participation of innovative and creative U.S. small businesses in federal research and development programs and challenging industry to bring innovative homeland security solutions to fruition.

More information is also online on the DHS website at <http://1.usa.gov/1YfycTy>.



Fairfax County, Va., publication.

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



Help put a freeze on winter fires. Learn more online at <http://1.usa.gov/1J3wV0e>.

Holiday Fire Safety

Winter holidays are a time for families and friends to get together, but holidays can also bring an increased risk for home fires.

Here are a few simple tips that can make the holidays fire-safe.

- Choose holiday decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Keep lit candles and flames away from decorations and flammable items.
- Make sure you are using the right lights. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulbs.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- Make sure decorations do not block windows or doors.
- Test smoke alarms and tell guests about the home fire escape plan.
- Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking at high temperatures.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside and keep smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.
- Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.
- Blow out lit candles and turn off all light strings and decorations when leaving the room or going to bed.

For more information about winter fire safety, visit www.usfa.fema.gov/winter.

Reprinted from FEMA's External Affairs Bulletin, Dec. 21, 2015.

Are You Prepared for El Niño?

The United States experiences extreme and dangerous weather. This winter, parts of the U.S. face a particularly severe threat. Forecasts are showing a soon-to-peak El Niño that could deliver drenching conditions to California and throughout the South.

These predicted conditions come with an enhanced flood threat and an increase in tornado activity through the spring.

For the next several months, many areas in the United States are at an increased flood risk from El Niño as a direct result of drought and wildfires.

Disasters don't always occur when families are together in one place. Now is the time to put together a family communication plan and talk with your family about ways to contact each other during an emergency and designate a safe meeting spot. Complete your family plan – as well as a business plan and faith-based house of worship plan – online at www.ReadyNOVA.org.

You can also plan ahead by knowing official evacuation routes and keeping important papers in a safe, water-proof place. Additional tips and resources on how to stay safe and prepare are available at www.ready.gov.

More information is available about El Niño at www.fema.gov/el-nino. The tab labeled additional resources include links to resources from various federal agencies including NOAA, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Here are some key federal agency links:

NOAA

- NOAA El Niño Regional Impact
<http://1.usa.gov/ITFN10f>
- NOAA El Niño Winter Outlook
<http://1.usa.gov/IPvfNRJ>
- El Niño Historical Info
<http://1.usa.gov/IMaf8QO>

The Small Business Toolkit
Tools and Resources to Plan, Prepare, and Protect

www.fema.gov/small-business-tools-resources

FEMA

- FEMA El Niño Web Page
www.fema.gov/el-nino
- FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Fact Sheet
<http://1.usa.gov/1OXwTpK>
- Individual and Community Preparedness Division Resources
<http://1.usa.gov/1Q7Qwix>

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Emergency Response and Advanced Measures Fact Sheet
<http://1.usa.gov/1pcBEz4>

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- Rural Development Rural Utility Services Fact Sheet
<http://1.usa.gov/21VpJtt>
- Resources Related to Severe Weather and Flood Hazards Posed by El Niño
<http://1.usa.gov/1RIKP9U>

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- Disaster Recovery Toolkit
<http://1.usa.gov/1OWx86D>
- Rebuild Healthy Homes Guide
<http://1.usa.gov/1Y2GaVr>

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

- USGS Water Data Collection and Resources for Emergency Management
<http://water.usgs.gov/floods/resources/emgmt/>

Reprinted from FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency

ReadyNOVA.org
ReadyNOVA
Plan to Be Prepared
Use the family and business emergency planners at www.ReadyNOVA.org.

Winter Care for Pets

Winter weather can be dangerous not only for humans, but for pets too! Taking extra precautions throughout the season can ensure your pets stay healthy and happy.

The Humane Society of the United States offers tips to keep pets safe, including:

- Protect paws from salt. This and other chemicals used to melt snow and ice can irritate the pads of your pet's feet. Be sure to wipe off their paws with a damp towel.
- Keep pets warm and indoors. No matter the temperature, windchill can threaten a pet's life. Pets are sensitive to severe cold and are at risk for frostbite

when outdoors during extreme cold snaps.

- Avoid antifreeze poisoning. Antifreeze has a sweet taste that may attract animals but is a deadly poison. Don't allow pets to wander unattended near driveways, garages or other places when they may come into contact with antifreeze. It only takes a few tablespoons of highly toxic antifreeze to injure your pet.

Learn the signs of antifreeze poisoning.

<http://bit.ly/IPNPkxB>.

Reprinted from the "Individual and Community Preparedness e-Brief," Dec. 3, 2015, edition.

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.

Prepare yourself for exposure to winter weather.

- Never leave lit candles or other flames unattended.
- Bring your pets indoors as temperatures drop!
- Dress warmly and limit exposure to the cold to prevent frostbite.
- Avoid getting wet to prevent hypothermia.

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.
- 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.

www.cdc.gov/phpr/infographics.htm

If we can't reach you, we can't alert you!

FAIRFAX ALERTS

Fairfax County's FREE alert system sends you important information during an emergency

In the know, on the go. fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts