

Emergency Preparedness

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Register Now for Statewide Tornado Drill March 22

While we're still in the throes of winter, it's hard to imagine a tornado showing up, but tornado season is year-round. Virginia averages 18 tornadoes annually, and it helps to know where to go and what to do when one is about to strike.



Registration is now open for the March 22 Statewide Tornado Drill.

Seven weak tornadoes were recorded in Virginia in 2015 and 12 in 2014, making both below-average years for tornadoes. However, there were 67 tornadoes in Virginia from 2011 to 2013. Ten people died in 2011 in Virginia due to tornadoes. On July 24, 2014, an EF-1 tornado tracked for 8 miles, partially over water, through the Cherrystone Campground in Northampton County. Straight-line wind and baseball-sized hail produced by the same storm caused considerable damage, with two deaths and 36 injuries resulting from the storm, reported the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Registration for the tornado drill is not necessary, but participants can learn more and sign up at www.ReadyVirginia.gov. In recent years, 1 million Virginians have signed up for the drill. Businesses, organizations, schools, colleges, families and individuals can practice taking cover from tornadoes by participating in the

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

Citizens Fire and Rescue Academy

Designed for adults to learn more about how the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department is organized and operates, the Citizens Fire and Rescue Academy (CFRA) is open to those 18 and older who live in Fairfax County.

Classes meet Thursday evenings for nine consecutive weeks, from 6 to 9 p.m. beginning March 24, and ending May 19. **The deadline to register for this session is March 7.**

Each session, participants learn about a different aspect of the fire and rescue department, ranging from fire suppression, emergency medical services, hiring and training firefighters to special rescue operations.

Participants will also spend time at fire stations, the training academy, public safety headquarters and at the 9-1-1 dispatch center.

For more information on the academy and how to register to participate, contact Battalion Chief Willie Bailey, Personnel Services Bureau, at 703-246-3575 or via email at fire.CFRA@fairfaxcounty.gov.

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/cfa/#citizens_fire_rescue

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
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www.capitalert.gov

Tornado Drill

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annual Statewide Tornado Drill on Tuesday, March 22, at 9:45 a.m.

A NOAA Weather Radio is one of the fastest ways to receive a tornado warning and they are available at many stores and online for about the cost of a fill-up at a gas station. Receiving a tornado warning as quickly as possible can make the difference between life and death, according to Bill Sammler, warning coordination meteorologist for the National Weather Service (NWS).

Cellphone apps, such as Ready Virginia, are also available, and can quickly provide critical warning information at little or no cost. Wireless Emergency Alerts also provide tornado and flash flood warnings via text message to any compatible cellphone within the warning area, even if you are visiting or just traveling through an affected area.

The annual drill is an effort by the NWS and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management to emphasize the need to prepare for tornadoes, which have occurred during all months and in nearly every county of Virginia.

The drill will start at approximately 9:45 a.m. with a test tornado warning sent by the NWS to NOAA Weather Radios. NOAA Weather Radios will sound a tone alert and show a message (or flash to indicate a message) to simulate what people will hear or see during an actual tornado warning. The test message then will be broadcast by many local radio and TV stations and cable outlets.

With an average of more than 1,000 tornadoes annually, the United States leads the list of countries worldwide with tornadoes, according to NOAA. The Plains, Midwest and portions of the southeast U.S., including Virginia, have the greatest potential for tornadoes. This is due in part to the high number of thunderstorms occurring in this region, and a high number of storms means a greater chance of tornadoes.

Fire Escape Plan

More than 15,925 people were injured by fire in the United States in 2013, according to the U.S. Fire Administration.

If a fire breaks out in your home, you may have as little as two minutes to safely escape once the alarm sounds.

Planning can help protect you, your family and your home when seconds count.

Here are a few steps to help keep your family fire safe:

- Check that all smoke alarms are working properly.
- Make a map of your home and mark all windows and doors through which you may escape.
- Choose a meeting place outside the home where firefighters can see you and your family.
- Write the emergency telephone number for your fire department on your escape plan.
- Practice your fire escape drill.
- Keep your fire escape plan in a common area where everyone can see it, i.e., refrigerator.

For more information about protecting your family and developing a fire escape plan, check out the home fire escape materials from the U.S. Fire Administration at www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/escape.html.

Reprinted from FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness e-Brief, Jan. 14 edition



Fairfax County, Va., publication.

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

Outreach Events

March Events

- March 2 – VDEM Access and Functional Needs Advisory Committee Meeting, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Charlottesville
- March 3 – Kings Park Library Emergency Preparedness Workshop, 7-9 p.m., Burke
- March 5 – Community and Neighborhood Leaders' Conference, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Falls Church
- March 5 – Medical Reserve Corps Summit, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m., Government Center, Fairfax County
- March 5 – Worship Watch, Reston District, 9 a.m. - noon, Reston
- March 7 – Community Chaplain Corps Conference, 9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., Falls Church
- March 11 – Reston Community Center, Senior Preparedness Workshop, 10 a.m. - noon, Reston
- March 14 – Fairfax Area Disability Services Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m., Government Center, Fairfax
- March 17 – Faith Communities In Action Emergency Planning Committee Meeting, 8:30 - 10 a.m., MPSTOC, Fairfax
- March 24 – Citizen Corps Council Meeting, 6:45 - 9 p.m., Government Center, Fairfax
- March 25 – Annandale Senior Citizens Council, Senior Preparedness Workshop, 10 - 11 a.m., Annandale

April Events

- April 5 – Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, Faith-based Recovery Project, 8 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., Fairfax
- April 6 – VDEM Access and Functional Needs Advisory Committee Meeting, 1-3 p.m., TBD
- April 9 – Worship Watch Advance Program (Tentative), 9 a.m. - noon, TBD
- April 19 – Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Emergency Planning (Tentative), 9:30 a.m. - 2 p.m., Annandale
- April 21 – Faith Communities In Action Emergency Planning Committee Meeting, 8:30 - 10 a.m., MPSTOC, Fairfax
- April 25 – Childcare Provider Emergency Preparedness Class, 7-9 p.m., Pennino Building, Fairfax

To learn more about emergency preparedness visit www.Ready.gov or call 571-350-1000, TTY 711; email oem-outreach@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Preparing Your Business for an Earthquake

An earthquake can happen at anytime and anywhere. Unlike many other natural disasters, earthquakes can strike during any season. An earthquake can also occur with little to no warning at all.

Earthquakes can knock out heat, power and communications services, sometimes for days at a time, leaving people stuck without utilities or other services. Your goal for protection is to learn to drop, cover and hold on during an earthquake.

WHEN THE EARTH SHAKES, KNOW WHAT TO DO:



Most casualties and injuries during an earthquake occur when: people fall while trying to walk or run during the shaking; when they are hit by falling, flying or sliding items or non-structural debris; and/or when they are struck or trapped by collapsing walls or other parts of the building.

The America's PrepareAthon! "How to Prepare for an Earthquake" (<http://1.usa.gov/1HRLfkU>) explains what you should do before, during and after an earthquake:

- To prevent potential injuries, take the time to secure your space. Secure items that might fall, fly or slide in an earthquake. Imagine if the room was picked up and shaken up and down and side to side and then determine what items would be thrown around.
- Make sure your business is safer during earthquakes and more resistant to earthquake damage. Get professional help to assess the building's structure and then take steps to install nonstructural solutions, including foundation bolting and cripple wall bracing.



Fairfax County
Office of Emergency Management
4890 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030
571-350-1000, TTY 711
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem
oem@fairfaxcounty.gov

The America's PrepareAthon! "Prepare Your Organization for an Earthquake Playbook" – online at <http://1.usa.gov/17trsPc> – also explains how business owners can take the necessary steps now to prepare themselves and their staff for an earthquake.

The playbook helps to enhance organizational coordination and communication on preparedness and operational continuity by recommending the following:

- Hold a preparedness discussion to explain company plans and policies to motivate employees to be better prepared at home and work.
- Explain and practice drop, cover and hold on.
- Conduct a tabletop exercise with your staff to ensure that the organization is familiar with and knows how to implement readiness plans.
- Develop an employee communications plan with all staff contact information, including emergency points of contact.
- Sign up for local alerts and warnings in your community.
- Organize and keep handy important documents such as insurance information and rental or mortgage agreements.

Reprinted from FEMA's "Individual and Community Preparedness e-Brief," Feb. 11 edition

March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Approximately 4.6 million Americans have an intellectual or developmental disability. During a disaster, people with disabilities may need additional assistance to obtain the services they need. It is important for people with disabilities and their families and/or caregivers to prepare for emergencies.

Where can you get information? Visit www.ready.gov where you can download a variety of material for individuals with disabilities or access and functional needs.



Fire Safety for Older Adults

According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), older adults – ages 65 and older – are more likely to be injured during a fire.

It is important that older adults and their caregivers take steps to protect themselves from a fire in their home.



USFA has several recommendations, which include:

- Have a smoke alarm that works for you and the functional needs that you have. For example, many smoke alarms have lower decibel ranges for those who are hard of hearing. Others may have smoke alarms with strobes or separate bed shaker. There are also smoke alarms with long-lasting batteries for someone with a mobility disability or vision loss.
- Have conversations with household members, caregivers and friends about your fire safety plan. Develop and test an escape plan that works for you and your household if you live in a single-family home. If you live in multi-level housing such as an apartment or high-rise building, know your evacuation plan.
- Keep any devices such as wheelchairs, canes, eyeglasses and hearing aids in a consistent place so you can get out quickly.

For more information about how to protect older adults in your family or community, visit the USFA website www.usfa.fema.gov.

Photo courtesy of the U.S. Fire Administration

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



Heating Safety and Carbon Monoxide

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, home fires occur more often in winter. Space heaters cause about one-third of the heating fires and four out of five heating fire deaths. Be fire smart by following these safety heating tips.

When using heaters that require fuel, make sure you have a carbon monoxide detector. Carbon monoxide is called the “invisible killer” because it’s a colorless, odorless, poisonous gas. The detector will sound when the carbon monoxide levels begin rising.

If you are using a portable heater:

- Only use portable heaters from a recognized testing laboratory.
- Make sure the heater has an automatic shut-off so if it tips over, it shuts off.
- Keep anything that can burn such as bedding, clothing and curtains at least 3 feet away from the heater.
- Plug portable heaters directly into outlets and never into an extension cord or power strip.
- Turn heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.

If you are using a fireplace:

- Keep a glass or metal screen in front of the fireplace to prevent embers or sparks from jumping out and igniting.
- Do not burn paper in your fireplace.



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 at oem-outreach@fairfaxcounty.gov.



- Before you go to sleep or leave your home put the fire out completely.
- Put ashes in a metal container with a lid; store the container outside at least 3 feet from your home.

If you are using a wood stove:

- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned each year by a professional.
- Place your wood stove at least 3 feet from anything that can burn.
- Do not burn paper in your wood stove.
- Before you go to sleep or leave your home put the fire out completely.

Find out more from the U.S. Fire Administration about heating and carbon monoxide online at www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/heating.html.

Reprinted from the FEMA Bulletin, week of Feb. 8

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

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

ReadyNOVA.org

ReadyNOVA
Plan to Be Prepared

Use the family, business and faith-based emergency planners at www.ReadyNOVA.org.

Heating is the second leading cause of home fires. #WinterSafety

SCC's Bureau of Insurance Can Help After Disaster

Last month's storms and tornadoes throughout parts of Virginia left many people with damaged homes, businesses or automobiles. The storms are also a reminder to contact the State Corporation Commission's (SCC) Bureau of Insurance anytime you have questions about insurance coverage.

Virginia Insurance Commissioner Jacqueline K. Cunningham encourages Virginians who suffer storm-related property damage to contact their insurance company or agent as soon as possible to determine what coverage is available under their insurance policy. The insurance agent or company will also be able to guide consumers through the process of filing a claim.

The Bureau of Insurance can provide assistance to consumers who have problems contacting their insurance company or agent or have questions or concerns about their insurance. Contact information for insurance companies and agents is available online at www.scc.virginia.gov/boi/ConsumerInquiry/.

Consumers also may contact the bureau through its toll-free telephone number at 1-877-310-6560. To reach the Consumer Services Section of the bureau's Property and Casualty Division in Richmond, call 804-371-9185.

Cunningham suggests taking pictures of damaged property, saving receipts for repair costs and protecting your property from further damage. Do not remove or destroy any damaged property until the insurance company has had a chance to inspect it.

The Bureau of Insurance offers consumer guides with tips on what to do when a disaster strikes. Guides are available for homeowners and businesses. Both provide answers to the most commonly asked questions about settling disaster-related insurance problems. These guides are available on the bureau's website at www.scc.virginia.gov/boi/pubs.aspx.

For additional emergency preparedness information relating to tornadoes and other types of disasters, visit www.ready.virginia.gov.

National Terrorism Advisory System

At the end of last year, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) unveiled an update to the National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS). DHS said it will achieve the objective of more flexible, timely and useful communication with the public regarding terrorist threats through the introduction of an additional component of NTAS to accompany the existing NTAS Alerts: the NTAS "Bulletin."

NTAS bulletins will provide information describing broader or more general trends and current developments regarding threats of terrorism. They will share important terrorism-related information with the American public and various partners and stakeholders, including in those situations where additional precautions may be warranted, but where the circumstances do not warrant the issuance of an "elevated" or "imminent" alert.

An NTAS Bulletin will summarize the issue and why it is important for public awareness, outline U.S. government counterterrorism efforts and offer recommendations to the public on how it can contribute to the overall counterterrorism effort.

With the introduction of the bulletin, NTAS will now consist of two types of advisories: bulletins and alerts.

If there is sufficient information regarding a credible, specific terrorist threat against the U.S., DHS will share an NTAS Alert – either elevated or imminent.

The alert may include specific information, if available, about the nature of the threat, including the geographic region, mode of transportation or critical infrastructure potentially affected by the threat, as well as steps that individuals and communities can take to protect themselves and help prevent, mitigate or respond to the threat.

FEMA Seeks Applicants for National Advisory Council

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is requesting individuals who are interested in serving on the FEMA National Advisory Council (NAC) to apply to be considered for appointment. The NAC is a federal advisory committee established to ensure effective and ongoing coordination of federal preparedness, protection, response, recovery and mitigation for natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

The NAC advises the FEMA administrator on all aspects of emergency management frameworks, strategies and plans while incorporating the whole community's input through appointed council members. The NAC will consider individuals for appointment in the following disciplines:

- Emergency Management (one representative appointment)
- Emergency Medical Providers (one Special Government Employee appointment)
- Functional and Access Needs (one representative appointment)
- Non-Elected Local Government Officials (one representative appointment)
- Non-Elected State Government Officials (one representative appointment)
- Public Health (one Special Government Employee appointment)
- Standards Setting and Accrediting (one Special Government Employee appointment)

All appointments are for three-year terms starting in September 2016. All applications must be received by the close of business on **March 16, 2016**.

Qualified individuals interested in serving on the NAC are invited to apply for appointment.

Detailed instructions on how to apply and frequently asked questions can be found on the membership applications Web page at www.fema.gov.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) application period for the 2016 Individual and Community Preparedness Awards is open. The awards highlight innovative local practices and achievements by individuals and organizations that made outstanding contributions toward making their communities safer, better prepared and more resilient.

FEMA will review all entries and select the finalists. A panel of representatives from the emergency management community will then select winners.

Winners will be announced in the fall and will be invited as FEMA's honored guests at a recognition ceremony. The winner of the "Preparing the Whole Community" category will receive the John D. Solomon Whole Community Preparedness Award.

To be considered for this year's awards, all submissions must be received by March 28, at 11:59 p.m. EDT and must feature program activities taking place between Jan. 1, 2015, and March 28, 2016.

Download an application and read the application guidance at www.ready.gov/preparedness-awards. Applications can be sent to citizencorps@fema.dhs.gov.

