

Emergency Preparedness

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Get Ready for Winter Weather

Recent Virginia winters have been cold and snowy, and many people had power outages. It's so important to be winter-ready that the National Weather Service and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management set aside Nov. 30-Dec. 6 as Winter Preparedness Week.

No matter the predictions, a significant winter storm is always possible.

With an El Niño weather pattern expected this season, there could be a wetter than normal winter. And El Niño winters can be snowier if atmospheric conditions are right ... just like the winter of 2009-10.

Remember: an important part of winter weather planning is being prepared to stay where you are until conditions improve. To be ready, take these steps.

Get a kit

Basic emergency supplies include:

- Three days' food that doesn't need refrigeration or electricity to prepare it.
- Three days' water (a gallon per person per day).
- A battery-powered and/or hand-crank radio with extra batteries.
- For businesses and offices, some bottles of water, food bars and a radio or TV to hear local information about whether or not it is safe to travel.
- A power pack for recharging cell phones and other mobile devices.



Make a plan

Everyone needs an emergency plan:

- Decide who your out-of-town emergency contact will be.
- Where will you meet up with family members if you can't return home?
- Get an emergency plan worksheet, available online at www.ReadyVirginia.gov.

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Heating Fire Safety Tips

As the weather becomes cooler, people begin heating their homes. No matter if it's a space heater, fireplace or wood stove, it is important to remember heating fire safety. Each year there are approximately 53,600 home fires due to heat sources.

These fires are responsible for 400 civilian deaths, 1,520 civilian injuries and \$893 million in property damage. Space heaters are responsible for one-third of home heating fires and four out of five home heating fire deaths.

To keep families and homes safe from fire, follow these fire safety tips:

- Keep anything that can burn a minimum of 3 feet away from heating equipment, such as the furnace, fireplace, wood stove or portable heater.
- Never use an oven for heating.
- Turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- If a fireplace is used, make sure it has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room.
- For wood-burning stoves, install chimney connectors and chimneys following manufacturer's instructions or have a professional do the installation.
- Make sure all fuel-burning heaters are vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.
- Install CO alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning.

As always, ensure there is a smoke alarm and CO alarm on every level of the home, inside and outside sleeping areas. Test smoke alarms every month. Have a home fire escape plan and test the plan at least twice a year to ensure everyone knows how to escape the home if there was a fire.

Reprinted from FEMA's "External Affairs Bulletin," Nov. 3 edition.



Use a metal or glass fireplace screen to keep sparks from hitting nearby carpets or furniture. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Fire Administration.

Winter Weather

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Stay informed

Before, during and after a winter storm, you should:

- Listen to local media for information and instructions from emergency officials.
- Be aware of winter storm watches and warnings and road conditions.
- Get where you need to be before the weather gets bad.
- Get road condition information 24/7 by calling 511 or checking www.511Virginia.org.

Download the Ready Virginia app

Free app for iPhone and Android features:

- Location-specific weather watches and warnings issued by the National Weather Service.
- Disaster news from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.
- A customizable family emergency plan that can be easily shared.
- A checklist for gathering emergency supplies.
- Links to register for local emergency alerts and more.



Fairfax County, Va., publication.

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

Preparing for Everyone's Needs

When planning for emergencies, it is vital to account for the needs of everyone who may be impacted. For example, there are several steps that individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs can take to stay safe and independent during a disaster.

Such steps include, but are not limited to:

- Plan how to contact family members or friends.
- Make copies of medical prescriptions and medical history.
- Stock a basic disaster supply kit.

Individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs should also include items in their disaster kits essential for their needs, such as:

- A TTY text telephone.
- Hearing aids and batteries.
- Written descriptions of service needs.
- Supplies for a service animal.

For more ideas on how to plan for disasters, check out this emergency preparedness instructional video (www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/videos/78827) for individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. You can also contact the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management at 571-350-1000, TTY 711, or email oem@fairfaxcounty.gov.



Volunteers canvassed the Huntington community last month distributing emergency preparedness materials and talking with residents. See Page 5 for more details.

Outreach Events

- Nov. 5 – Potomac Home Economist Group, Burke United Methodist Church
- Nov. 6 – Emergency Preparedness Expo, U.S. Courts Administrative Offices, D.C.
- Nov. 6 – GMU Graduate Program Tour
- Nov. 12 – Women's Association of NoVA, Springfield Golf & Country Club
- Nov. 12 – Citizens Advisory Committee, Sully District Police Station
- Nov. 15 – Disabilities Expo, Tysons Corner Marriott
- Nov. 18 – Providence District Council, Dunn Loring Center
- Nov. 20 – Federation of Citizens Associations, Mason District Government Center
- Nov. 22 – Childcare Provider Preparedness
- Dec. 3 – District Meeting Exercise, Mason District
- Dec. 3 – Chaplain Corps Tabletop Exercise
- Dec. 5 – Senior Safety Seminar, Herndon Senior Center
- Dec. 9 – CEPS Family Child Care Workshop, Pennino Building

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@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience Month

November is Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience Month. Just like the day-to-day efforts to secure and protect infrastructure, building awareness and understanding of the importance of critical infrastructure requires a nationwide effort with partners across federal, state, local, territorial and tribal governments and private sector owners and operators working together. An important part of Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience Month is the continued work on implementing the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP). The NIPP's focus is to safeguard both cyber and physical systems through collaborative public-private partnerships at all levels of government and industry from local, regional, national and international perspectives.

www.dhs.gov/critical-infrastructure-security-resilience-month

Cellphones Can Alert You to Severe Weather

In the fall, severe weather such as tornadoes and flash flooding can occur without warning. FEMA reminds you to be aware of severe weather conditions in your area and know how to prepare for the unexpected.

When severe weather occurs, imminent threat weather alerts can be sent directly to cellphones to give users a critical window of time to find safety.

These imminent threat weather alerts are just one type of wireless emergency alerts (WEAs) that are sent directly to cellphones. The National Weather Service forecast offices send imminent threat weather alerts for severe weather warnings for tornadoes, flash floods, extreme wind, tsunami, hurricane, typhoon and dust storms.

Local public safety officials – including the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management – may also send WEAs for a wide range of emergency warnings.

Cellphones capable of receiving WEAs grab attention with a unique tone and vibration designed to alert individuals to an imminent threat in the area. All that is needed is a wireless device that receives the 90 character WEA messages. No signups are necessary to receive the free WEA alerts. WEAs are sent from cell towers in a warning area and resemble text messages. However, unlike text messages, WEAs use one-way cell broadcast technology that ensures the alerts will not get backlogged during times of emergency when networks are highly congested.

The WEA is a heads-up that there is dangerous weather in the area. Local radio and TV sources can provide detailed warning information about the threat. The availability of WEA alerts will depend on a wireless carrier's network availability and if individuals have a handset that can receive WEAs. To determine if a wireless device can receive WEA alerts, contact the appropriate wireless carrier for more information or



check online. For a list of public safety agencies using WEA, visit www.fema.gov/integrated-public-alert-warning-system-authorities.

State AMBER coordinators in coordination with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children can also send WEAs for missing children and if ever an extreme national emergency were to occur, a presidential WEA could be sent to wireless devices.

Reprinted from the FEMA "External Affairs Bulletin," Oct. 27 edition

FEMA, in conjunction with its interagency steering group, has announced the public review period for the Draft Environmental and Historic Preservation Guidance for Federal Disaster Recovery Assistance Applicants. The draft guidance is an important step in the implementation of the Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Process (Unified Federal Review) legislatively mandated in the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act. The law amends the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act and authorizes several significant changes to the way agencies may deliver federal disaster assistance and establishes efficiencies to expedite the recovery process. The guidance will assist in navigating through and understanding environmental and historic preservation compliance requirements when multiple agencies may be involved in funding or permitting a disaster recovery project. It also outlines types of information applicants should submit to federal agencies to assist in expediting the environmental and historic preservation review. To access the guidance and for instructions on submitting comments, visit www.fema.gov/environmental-historic-preservation/draft-environmental-and-historic-preservation-guidance-federal. Comments can be submitted through Nov. 28.



Neighborhood Canvassing Project

By Dean Sherick

A joint project among multiple agencies and organizations was successfully accomplished in an effort to enhance the Huntington neighborhood's knowledge of emergency preparedness. Planning for the Oct. 18 event started several months ago with staff from the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) working with members of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, Stormwater Management, to share information on various topics of emergency preparedness, including flooding, with residents of the Huntington area.

As the project moved from being a topic of discussion to an actual event, more partners were engaged to assist. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program provided 300 bags with informational pamphlets on flood preparation and safety. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management provided brochures on general emergency preparedness in both English and Spanish. Stormwater Management produced a multi-page informational bulletin on the flood safety information, flood warning system, the Huntington levee and the national flood insurance program that was printed in English and Spanish.

Volunteer Fairfax provided several items for the bags and coordinated with the Fire and Rescue Department to provide File of Life packets. The Huntington Community Center served as home base for the event. Fairfax County GIS produced maps for the selected area. And OEM ensured that Fairfax Alerts information was shared.

Volunteer Fairfax arranged to have all of the brochures and information loaded into the 300 bags at a multi-age volunteer event in Reston and ensured the bags would be available for distribution on the day of the actual canvassing. They also arranged for 22 volunteers from the FEMA AmeriCorps to come to the Huntington neighborhood to talk with the residents about emergency preparedness and distribute the bags.

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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





Disability Mentoring Day

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) continued to participate in the county’s annual “Disability Mentoring Day” with the arrival of eight area high school students with disabilities to the McConnell Public Safety and Transportation Operations Center (MPSTOC) on Oct. 23.

The Department of Family Services sponsors this annual event that gives high school students an opportunity to see various county agencies and personnel at work, possibly leading to career choices and opportunities.

While at MPSTOC, the students and their school mentors were given a tour of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the 9-1-1 Call Center by Bruce McFarlane, OEM community outreach coordinator, and Sulayman Brown, manager of the EOC.

The tour and Q & A session lasted almost two hours with much discussion on current events and on developing an emergency plan with their families.

Financial First Aid

When survivors of Hurricane Sandy were asked what they wished they would have done before the storm, one of the top five responses was collecting and safely storing important personal financial documents.

A FEMA survey conducted in 2011 showed that less than 35 percent of Americans report having copies of their vital records stored as part of their preparedness kit.

FEMA (www.fema.gov), together with Operation HOPE (www.operationhope.org), has released an updated tool to support emergency financial preparedness. The Emergency Financial First Aid Kit (EFFAK) – www.ready.gov/financialpreparedness – helps individuals and families at all income levels collect and secure critical financial documents and information. The updated EFFAK includes new checklists and forms that can be filled out online and saved electronically. You can access the updated EFFAK on the FEMA or Operation HOPE websites.

The America’s PrepareAthon! campaign also offers financial preparedness support materials, including the “Be Smart. Protect Your Critical Documents and Valuables” guide.

Remember, disaster preparedness extends beyond storing water and supplies. Having a plan to pay your bills and access your important records and accounts will help you on the road to recovery.

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

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

FEMA Seeks Input

FEMA is seeking comments from insurance companies and associations on a proposed policy that requires applicants of its Public Assistance Program to obtain and maintain insurance coverage equal to the assistance FEMA provided.

Comments must be submitted through the process outlined in the Federal Register notice and are due on Dec. 8. In 2013, the Public Assistance Program obligated more than \$4.5 billion.

Under federal law, applicants who receive assistance under the Public Assistance Program are required to obtain and maintain insurance coverage for the peril that caused the damage for at least the amount of funding FEMA provided. The proposed policy, among other things, clarifies that this requirement extends to both flood and non-flood events and can be satisfied through a variety of options including commercial insurance, blanket policies, insurance pools, self-insurance or a combination of these options.

The Public Assistance Program provides grants to state, territorial, local and federally recognized tribal governments and certain private nonprofit entities to assist them with the response to and recovery from disasters. Specifically, the program provides assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures and permanent restoration of infrastructure such as roads and bridges, water control facilities, public buildings and contents, public utilities and parks, recreational and other facilities.

The Public Assistance Policy on Insurance was recently posted to the Federal Register. The notice and related documents are online at www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=FEMA-2014-0029.



Some of the attendees at the National Weather Service Baltimore/Washington 3rd Biennial Emergency Management/Broadcast Media Conference "Working Together to Prepare for Weather Extremes" held at the McConnell Public Safety and Transportation Operations Center on Oct. 16-17. Attendees also had the opportunity to tour the Emergency Operations Center and chat with staff from our emergency management office. Photo courtesy of the National Weather Service. Read more about the weather conference online at www.weather.gov/lwx/emmediaconf14.

Canvassing

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On Saturday morning, Oct. 18, the AmeriCorps volunteers, staff from Stormwater Management, OEM, and Volunteer Fairfax all met at the Huntington Community Center. Stormwater Management personnel provided AmeriCorps volunteers with the background of flooding in the area and how the Fairfax Alerts system can be utilized for emergency notifications. At the end of the event, informational packets had been distributed to 268 residences and the volunteers had the opportunity to talk with over 90 different households. The volunteers reported that their interactions were very positive and that many residents had emergency plans in place should an evacuation be necessary.

Multiple agencies, working together for a common goal of sharing emergency preparedness information, all came together to produce a successful event that should assist in a more resilient and prepared community.

Dean Sherick is community liaison assistant with OEM and has nearly 40 years of experience in public safety.



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

Sneaky Gas

When power outages occur after severe weather such as hurricanes or snowstorms, using alternative sources of power can cause carbon monoxide (CO) to build up in your home and poison your family. CO is a colorless, odorless gas created by gas ranges, portable generators and burning wood. It is also produced by running your car.

While hundreds of people die in the U.S. each year from accidental CO poisoning, this tragedy can be prevented.

You should follow these important safety tips:

- Operate portable generators outdoors in a well-ventilated location away from windows, doors and vent openings.
- Do not run your car inside a garage, even if the garage door is open to the outside.
- Never use your oven or stove to heat your home.

Having a battery-powered or battery backup CO detector in your home can also help protect you. Just be sure to check it every six months. Since you can't see or smell carbon monoxide, it is important to recognize the most common symptoms of CO poisoning, which include shortness of breath, fatigue and nausea.

CO poisoning can be confused with flu symptoms, food poisoning and other illnesses. If you think you're experiencing CO poisoning, get fresh air and seek medical attention immediately. Do not hesitate to call 9-1-1.

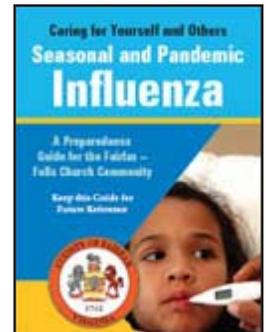
Learn more about CO poisoning from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) online at www.cdc.gov/co/guidelines.htm as well as www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/112345/464.pdf.

Taming of the Flu

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), winter is the typical season for influenza activity, but flu outbreaks can happen as early as October. The flu is different from a common cold and usually comes on suddenly.

Flu symptoms can include muscle or body aches, sore throat, cough, headaches and fever.

Anyone can get the flu, but some people are at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications. This includes people age 65 and older, people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease), pregnant women and young children.



Now is a good time to prepare for the upcoming flu season. The best way to prevent this respiratory illness is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

There are several vaccine options available this season, including the flu shot and nasal spray.

If you are sick with the flu, avoid spreading it by:

- Staying home from school or work.
- Covering your mouth with your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Washing your hands often with soap and warm water.

For more information about the upcoming flu season and how to prevent the spread of this illness, visit www.CDC.gov or the Fairfax County Health Department at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/flu.

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by email

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