Emergency Preparedness
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September 2011

National Preparedness Month

"A Time to Remember; A Time to Prepare"

By Laura Southard

This September marks the 10-year anniversary of the tragic terrorist attacks of 9/11. This included a jet airplane crashing into the Pentagon on Virginia soil, killing 125 military and civilian workers and all 64 people on the plane.

In observing the 10th anniversary we can honor the memory of those who were lost by making sure we are ready to respond to all types of disasters and emergencies. There is no better time for Virginians to get ready for emergencies than September – National Preparedness Month.

Those who are prepared for emergencies recover faster and can help others who also may be affected. Every family and business can take a few simple steps to prepare and protect family and assets:

• **Make an emergency plan.** In a recent survey, just 15 percent of Virginia respondents had a written family emergency plan. This may be the single most important thing you can do for your family. Plan in advance what you will do in an emergency and how you will get in touch with each other. Write it down. Get a family emergency plan worksheet at *www.ReadyVirginia.gov*.

• **Store at least a three-day supply of water and food.** The rule of thumb is to store one gallon of water per person per day. That is enough for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene. Be sure to have canned and packaged food on hand that does not need electricity to store or prepare, in case the power is out.

• **Get a battery-powered and/or hand-crank radio.** To stay

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In case of a power outage, keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer to help determine the safety of food. For additional tips from the CDC, visit http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/poweroutage/needtoknow.asp.

Prevent Injuries After Storms

After the wind and waters recede, people in the areas affected by Hurricane Irene will continue to face a number of hazards associated with cleanup activities. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) offers these tips to stay safe following a natural disaster:

Food Safety Precautions

• Perishable foods including meats, dairy products and eggs that haven't been refrigerated for more than two hours should be discarded because they are no longer safe to consume.
• Foods that have been contaminated by flooding should also be discarded.
• Be particularly careful to thoroughly disinfect surfaces that may come in contact with food, such as counter tops, pantry shelves, pots and pans, dishes and inside refrigerators, etc.

Wear Protective Gear

• For most work in flooded areas, wear hard hats, goggles, heavy work gloves and watertight boots with steel toe and insole (not just steel shank).
• Wear earplugs or protective headphones to reduce risk from equipment noise. Equipment such as chain saws, backhoes and dryers may cause ringing in the ears and subsequent hearing damage.
• Wear eye goggles while removing or cleaning up debris to prevent eye injuries.

Beware of Electrical Hazards

• If water has been present anywhere near electrical circuits and electrical equipment, turn off the power at the main breaker or fuse on the service panel. Do not turn the power back on until electrical equipment has been inspected by a qualified electrician.
• Never enter flooded areas or touch electrical equipment if the ground is wet, unless you are certain that the power is off.
• Never touch a downed power line.
• When using gasoline and diesel generators, switch the main breaker or fuse on the service panel to the off position prior to starting the generator.

Avoid Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that is poisonous to breathe. During flood cleanup, operate all gasoline-powered devices such as pumps, generators and pressure washers outdoors and never bring them indoors.

Prevent Muscle and Bone Injury

Special attention is needed to avoid back injuries associated with manual lifting and handling of debris and building materials. To help prevent muscle and bone injury:
• Use teams of two or more to move bulky objects.
• Avoid lifting any material that weighs more than 50 pounds.
• Use proper automated-assist lifting devices.
• Use caution or seek professional assistance when removing fallen trees, cleaning up debris or using equipment, such as chain saws.
• Wear eye goggles while removing or cleaning up debris to prevent eye injuries.

Beware of Structural Instability

Never assume that water-damaged structures or ground are stable. Buildings that have been submerged or have withstood rushing flood waters may have suffered structural damage and could be dangerous.
• Don't work in or around any flood-damaged building until it has been examined and certified as safe for work by a registered professional engineer or architect.
• Assume all stairs, floors and roofs are unsafe until they are inspected.
• Leave immediately if shifting or unusual noises signal a possible collapse.

Avoid Hazardous Materials

Flood waters can dislodge tanks, drums, pipes and equipment, which may contain hazardous materials such as pesticides or propane.
• Do not attempt to move unidentified dislodged containers without first contacting the local fire department or hazardous materials team.
• If working in potentially contaminated areas, avoid skin contact or inhalation of vapors by wearing appropriate protective clothing and respirators.
• Frequently and thoroughly wash skin that may have been exposed to pesticides and other hazardous chemicals.

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Fairfax County, Va., publication.

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

Earthquake Rocks Fairfax County

A 5.8 magnitude earthquake on Tuesday, Aug. 23, near Mineral, Va. – approximately 100 miles from Washington, D.C. – shook homes and businesses across large portions of the East Coast, including Fairfax County.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, this earthquake is almost as strong as the strongest recorded earthquake in Virginia, a magnitude 5.9, which occurred in May 1897 in Giles County, Va. The strongest recorded earthquake to strike the East Coast was the 1886 Charleston, S.C., earthquake, which was about a magnitude 7.3.

Officials from the Office of Emergency Management, along with public safety agencies and others, responded immediately to the 1:51 p.m. (EDT) quake by activating the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to a level one – monitoring phase. OEM personnel coordinated with response activites and and public safety agencies, county officials and the Board of Supervisors. It used tools such as WebEOC to maintain situational awareness for the county and to document damage.

The earthquake is a good reminder for county employees to have an emergency supply kit ready in your home, office and car; and to make a communications plan so you and your loved ones will know how to get in touch with each other following a disaster or emergency.

As with many such large-scale events, communication networks are often overwhelmed, leading to difficulty making and receiving telephone calls. Texting is a good alternative, and the use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook are also good options to consider for notifying family and friends.

Fairfax County also uses such tools. Follow the county on Twitter at *www.twitter.com/fairfaxcounty* and Facebook at *www.facebook.com/fairfaxcounty*.

Emergency updates, protective actions and news from the Office of Emergency Management are included on these social media sites, as well as the Fairfax County website at *www.fairfaxcounty.gov*.

Marcelo's Minute

An Earthquake and a Hurricane in One Week. Were You Prepared?

Marcelo Ferreira

Were you able to communicate with family, friends and colleagues after the earthquake? Did you know how and where to meet your family if you couldn't reach them? How did you get up-to-date information about the emergency?

The fourth week in August was a great opportunity to evaluate your emergency plans and procedures. If you were unsure about how to react after the earthquake or how to prepare for the hurricane, take the time to address those uncertainties now while still fresh in your mind.

After the Aug. 23 earthquake, many wondered if it was best to stay inside or to evacuate their building. FEMA recommends that individuals who are outside during an earthquake stay outside and move away from any buildings. Those inside should stay inside until the shaking stops and it is safe to go outside (take cover under a steady doorway or sturdy piece of furniture away from any windows). When in a moving vehicle, stop as quickly as safety permits and avoid any bridges or ramps that may be damaged.

The two recent weather events also demonstrate how emergencies can happen at any time, even in Fairfax County.

Help make our community more resilient by taking time now to prepare your family, neighborhood and workplace.

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

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

In case of a power outage, keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer to help determine the safety of food. More info at www.cdc.gov.

9/11/2011 - A National Day of Service and Remembrance

This year marks the 10th anniversary since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

Family members of the 9/11 victims promoted the idea of fostering volunteerism and unity in communities across America as a way of honoring and paying tribute to those who lost their lives. Because of their efforts, Sept. 11 was designated a National Day of Service and Remembrance by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act in 2009.

The Corporation for National and Community Service estimates that more than 1 million Americans are expected to serve in their communities in honor of 9/11. Service projects will range from food drives and home repairs to neighborhood cleanups and disaster preparation activities.

Find out more about this worthwhile event at *www.serve.gov/sept11.asp*.

The Office of Emergency Management will host a live, call-in program, "OEM Live," on Fairfax County Government Channel 16 on Tuesday, Sept. 6, at 7 p.m.

"OEM Live" is your opportunity to learn about National Preparedness Month and what you should do to prepare for emergencies. Find out about the county's emergency plans, what to do in inclement weather and how to put together an emergency supply kit for your car, home or office.

Submit questions you have about emergency preparedness in advance to *wwwcpd@fairfaxcounty.gov*. Residents also can call in to 703-818-1445 or email questions that night to the email address above.

You may tune into Channel 16, or watch the program live on 16's streaming video on the county website, *www.fairfaxcounty.gov*; click on the Channel 16 logo in the left side navigation box, or simply visit *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cable/channel16/asx/live_stream.asx*.

Fairfax County Government 9/11 Tenth Anniversary Remembrance Ceremony

2001 - 2011

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors cordially invites you to attend the 9/11 Tenth Anniversary Remembrance Ceremony.

Sunday, Sept. 11, 2011
2 to 3 p.m.
Fairfax County Government Center
12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax

The ceremony will take place in the Government Center Forum, followed by a procession outside to the Memorial Grove.

"This September: A Time to Remember. A Time to Prepare."

For more information, directions or reasonable ADA accommodations, call 703-324-3187, TTY 711.
A Fairfax County, Va., publication. Aug. 2011

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*.

Presidential Policy Directive 8: National Preparedness Goal

Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8), signed by President Barack Obama in March 2011, calls on all levels of government, the private and nonprofit sectors, and individual citizens to play a more active and well-defined role in strengthening the nation's security and resiliency.

This forum provides an opportunity to comment on some foundational concepts that apply to all PPD-8 requirements. In addition, federal officials also are separately seeking input for the first draft of the National Preparedness Goal (NPG) on *www.fema.gov/ppd8*. Both will help FEMA to achieve the requirements of PPD-8.

For this forum, your input and ideas are welcome on any or all foundational concepts by focus area (e.g., prevention, protection, response, recovery and mitigation) and for preparedness overall. Your thoughts, questions or ideas are welcome about a secure and resilient nation, including whether the narratives provide an adequate description of the focus areas, the capabilities needed to achieve success in the focus areas and what role the community should play in these focus areas.

Visit *http://fema.ideascale.com* and click on the "Presidential Policy Directive: National Preparedness Goal" link under campaigns to provide your feedback.

Never drive through flood waters.

Turn around, don't drown.

Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management

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Tel: 571-350-1000, TTY 711
Email: oem@fairfaxcounty.gov

FAIRFAX COUNTY citizen corps

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

In case of a power outage, turn off major appliances to reduce power surge when electricity is restored.

Fairfax County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated for Hurricane Irene on Saturday, Aug. 27.

Then Came Irene

If the earthquake in Virginia earlier this month wasn't enough, Hurricane Irene came up the East Coast passing through Fairfax County on Saturday, Aug. 27, and Sunday, Aug. 28.

The Fairfax County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), located at the McConnell Public Safety and Transportations Operations Center (MPSTOC), was partially activated to respond to the impact of Irene, and the Office of Public Affairs fully activated the JIC – Joint Information Center – with public information staff.

In addition, the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services opened its Stormwater Department Operations Center to monitor and respond to any potential flooding issues. And the county's public safety agencies opened a Joint Operations Center (JOC) in MPSTOC to monitor and respond to the effects of Hurricane Irene.

Thanks to all county agencies and staff for responding and providing an excellent response during this event-filled week.

The Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs launched a new emergency blog (*www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog*) prior to Hurricane Irene, and used the blog throughout the weekend of Aug. 27-28, to provide regular updates to the public. Follow the blog during emergencies for the latest news and information. You can also sign up for email updates or get updates with your favorite RSS reader.

Virginia is susceptible to all levels of tropical systems, from tropical depressions to severe Category 5 hurricanes.

Screen shot from the hurricane preparedness program.

Through Nov. 30, the Office of Emergency Management encourages everyone to prepare for hurricane season. Watch "Preparing for All Hazards: Hurricane Preparedness" and learn how to assemble a kit, make a plan and stay informed in the event of an emergency.

The program airs on Fairfax County Channel 16:
- Mondays at 10:30 a.m.
- Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.

You can also catch the video on the county's YouTube channel at *http://youtu.be/vfFHe9Ja79Y*.

Continuity of Operations Planning for Faith Communities

What would you do if your house of worship had to unexpectedly relocate?

How would you react to a fire during your worship service?

Are you prepared for the unexpected?

A Practical Workshop on How to Prepare for the Unexpected.

Thursday, 10/6/2011
9:00 - 12:00 PM
Location: Providence Presbyterian Church
9019 Little River Turnpike
Fairfax, Va 22031

Instructor: Dr. Greg Shaw
George Washington University
Institute for Crisis, Disaster & Risk Management
(Registration is required please see below)

For Houses of Worship
and
Faith Based Organizations

Training is Free
Pre Registration is Required

To register please email your name, organization, address, phone number & email to CILUSER@Fairfaxcounty.gov

For more information contact
Community Interfaith Liaison
Tenia Simmons
Phone: 703-324-3453

Do your clergy, laity, and staff have a plan to continue its outreach / care / ministry / operations if a disaster required a physical relocation? Do you have a plan in case your lead clergy or clergy team is suddenly unable to perform their duties?

Because so many people depend on houses of worship and faith based organizations, leaders must be ready for incidents that can cause relocation and/or significantly alter activities. This classroom style workshop is for clergy, staff, and lay leaders to help them "think forward" and prepare for the unexpected.

"For reasonable accommodation or information in an alternate format, Call 703-324-4600 or TTY 711."

Atlantic Hurricane Season Update Calls for Increase in Named Storms

NOAA issued its updated 2011 Atlantic hurricane season outlook on Aug. 4 and raised the number of expected named storms from its pre-season outlook issued in May. Forecasters have increased confidence that 2011 will be an active Atlantic hurricane season. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, a division of the National Weather Service, updates its Atlantic hurricane season outlook every August.

Based on these conditions and on climate model forecasts, the confidence for an above-normal season has increased from 65 percent in May to 85 percent. Also, the expected number of named storms has increased from 12-18 in May to 14-19, and the expected number of hurricanes has increased from six-10 in May to seven-10.

Across the entire Atlantic Basin for the whole season – June 1 to Nov. 30 – NOAA's updated seasonal outlook projects, with a 70 percent probability, a total of 14 to 19 named storms (top winds of 39 mph or higher), including seven to 10 hurricanes (top winds of 74 mph or higher), of which three to five could be major hurricanes (Category 3, 4 or 5; winds of at least 111 mph). These ranges are indicative of an active season, and extend well above the long-term seasonal averages of 11 named storms, six hurricanes and two major hurricanes.

Key climate factors predicted in May continue to support an active season. These include: the tropical multi-decadal signal, which since 1995 has brought favorable ocean and atmospheric conditions, leading to more active seasons; exceptionally warm Atlantic Ocean temperatures (the third warmest on record); and the possible redevelopment of La Niña. Reduced vertical wind shear and lower air pressure across the tropical Atlantic also favor an active season.

The last hurricane to make landfall in the United States was Ike in 2008. Last year saw above-normal hurricane activity, but none made landfall in the United States.

August through October are peak months of the Atlantic hurricane season.

Are You Prepared?

Disasters and emergencies can affect anyone at any time. Do you have the plans and supplies in place to help withstand the first three to five days after a disaster?

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management suggests three steps that each individual and family should take to prepare for an emergency:

1. **Make a Plan** – Determine how you will contact your family, and get back together, if you are separated during an emergency. Be sure to identify what you will do in various situations. More information is available at *www.ReadyVirginia.gov* and *www.MakeaPlan.org*. Create your plan at *www.ReadyNOVA.org*.

2. **Assemble a Kit** – An emergency kit should contain basic supplies to help you withstand a disaster. It's best to think first about the basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth.

3. **Stay Informed** – The most convenient way to stay up-to-date about local emergencies is to register for the Community Emergency Alert Network (CEAN), which delivers important emergency alerts, notifications and updates during a major emergency, in addition to regular weather and traffic alerts. Register at *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean*.

National Preparedness Month

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informed if the power is out, you'll need a radio to hear instructions from local officials. Make sure you have extra batteries, and choose one with a NOAA weather band so you'll get weather information direct from the National Weather Service.

This September: "A Time to Remember; A Time to Prepare." Honor the past by being ready for whatever the future may hold.

For more information, go to *www.ReadyVirginia.gov* or *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency.*

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

Never use a generator inside a home, basement, shed or garage, even if doors and windows are open. Read both the label on your generator and the owner's manual and follow the instructions.

Weather.gov Design Refresh

The National Weather Service is proposing a design refresh of the NWS website *www.weather.gov* (proposed design at right). The proposed design was developed based on:

- Ongoing Web survey for Weather.gov.
- Ongoing user feedback.
- Search query analysis.
- Survey of NWS local offices.
- Usability testing.
- Best practices.

The proposed design refresh is the beginning of a phased effort to update the National Weather Service Web presence and improve customer access to information and services. The goal of this first phase is to improve content organization, navigation, look and feel, functionality and usability of Weather.gov.

Subsequent phases will support advancement in the delivery of information and decision support services from Weather.gov. Integration of an interactive watch and warning map is also under consideration.

Residents are asked to submit comments on the proposed design, through Sept. 12, to *www.weather.gov/survey/nws-survey.php?code=newwebdesign*.

Recover from Storms

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Candle Safety

- Use a flashlight instead of a candle whenever possible.
- Extinguish all candles when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Keep candles away from items that can catch fire such as clothing, books, curtains, or flammable liquids.
- Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily and are made from a material that can't burn.
- Keep candles out of reach of children.
- Try to avoid carrying a lit candle.
- Never use a candle for a light when checking pilot lights or fueling equipment.

Prevent Fatigue-Related Injuries

Continued long hours of work combined with exhaustion can create a highly stressful situation during cleanup. People working on hurricane and flood cleanup can reduce their risk of injury and illness in several ways:

- Set priorities for cleanup tasks and pace the work.
- Avoid physical exhaustion.
- Resume a normal sleep schedule as quickly as possible.
- Be alert to emotional exhaustion or strain.
- Consult family members, friends or professionals for emotional support.

For more information about how to protect yourself and your family before, during and after natural disasters, visit *www.vdh.virginia.gov*, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management's website at *www.vaemergency.gov*, or Fairfax County's emergency information blog at *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog*.