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## National Preparedness Month, September 2007

### *30 Days, 30 Resources*

Thirty articles in four emergency preparedness categories:

#### I. Back-to-School

- **SECURE SCHOOLS:** Emergency Preparedness for Educational Facilities
- **KEEPIN' IT REAL:** Talking with Kids about Emergency Preparedness
- **A NATIONAL CRISIS:** School Violence
- **THINKING ABOUT THE UNTHINKABLE:** Terrorism Preparedness in Schools
- **SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS IS FOR *EVERYONE!*** Emergency Planning for Students with Disabilities
- **PARTNER FOR PREPAREDNESS:** Community Based Action Plans: Best Practices
- **NOTHING TO SNEEZE AT:** Preparing for Pandemic Flu in School
- **TIPS FROM GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY:** Campus-Level Accessible Notification

#### II. Business Preparedness

- **GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS:** Emergency Preparedness in the Workplace
- **SMALL BUSINESSES, BIG RESPONSIBILITIES:** Emergency Preparedness for Small Businesses
- **THE ONLY PLAN WORTH HAVING:** Emergency Plans that Include Workers with Disabilities
- **ECONOMIC EPIDEMIC:** Pandemic Preparedness for Businesses
- **DOOM SERVICE:** Emergency Preparedness in the Hospitality Industry
- **FIRST THINGS TO DO:** Work Related Emergencies
- **THE BUCK STOPS HERE:** Employer Responsibilities in Emergencies

#### III. Multicultural Preparedness

- **THE BIG COUNTRY:** Emergency Preparedness in Rural Communities
- **THE ONCOMING STORM:** Emergency Preparedness in Coastal Communities

- **A RATTLESNAKE’S TAIL:** Emergency Preparedness in the American Southwest
- **FORCE OF NATURE:** Emergency Preparedness in the Interior Plains
- **SAFE CITIES:** Emergency Preparedness in Urban Centers
- **BLIZZARD WARNING!** Emergency Preparedness in Northern Communities
- **EVACUATE! Urban** Evacuation Preparedness

## **IV. Household and Family Preparedness**

- **ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL:** Disaster Tips for Owners of Pets and Service Animals
- **OLDER, WISER, SAFER:** Emergency Preparedness and the Elderly
- **FIRST THINGS TO DO, PART II:** Household Emergencies
- **SAFETY: A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE** Emergency Preparedness in Non-English Speaking Families
- **WITH PREPAREDNESS AND SAFETY FOR ALL:** Responding to Patients with Disabilities
- **PROMOTING PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS:** Universal Design and Health Interventions
- **WHERE DO YOU GET INFORMATION DURING AN EMERGENCY?** Emergency Notification
- **EMERGENCY PEPAREDNESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:**
  - Part 1: **SPECIAL NEEDS, BASIC NEEDS:** Emergency Planning for People With Disabilities
  - Part 2: **DON’T BE DISABLED BY A DISABILITY:** Be Prepared

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**National Preparedness Month, September 2007**  
***30 Days, 30 Resources***

## **I. Back-to-School Preparedness**

- **SECURE SCHOOLS:**  
Emergency Preparedness for Educational Facilities
  
- **KEEPIN' IT REAL:**  
Talking with Kids about Emergency Preparedness
  
- **A NATIONAL CRISIS:**  
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- **TIPS FROM GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY:**  
Campus-Level Accessible Notification

## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **SECURE SCHOOLS:**

#### **Emergency Preparedness for Educational Facilities**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Schools have a unique role in disaster preparedness, with an important dual responsibility. They must develop emergency plans and take the appropriate actions during a disaster, when children are in school. They must also function as emergency shelters when called upon. Schools often face a difficult decision: During an emergency situation, is it safer to cancel school and send students home, or should the children be kept inside the school building? The answer will always vary, depending upon the situation at hand.

#### **Deciding Whether to Stay or Go**

In an emergency, schools tend to differ in deciding whether or not to cancel school. Administrators will make this decision based on the type and severity of the emergency situation. Although education is important, the administration's first priority is the safety of its students. Administrators should have different policies in effect for delayed openings and early closings, based on the safety of roadways or the expected arrival of storms. An important question: If there are delayed openings or early closings, what will happen to children who have no one to pick them up? Transportation must be arranged in situations like these. If there is any risk that a child might be harmed or injured by going outside, it may be necessary to keep all children inside the school.

#### **Evacuating with Students**

Evacuations—especially fire evacuations—are well planned for by the school system. In most states, schools are required by law to conduct regular fire evacuation drills. However, other emergencies, such as gas leaks, sinkholes, and criminal activity, may also require evacuation of schools. In case of evacuation, students and faculty should adhere to the following guidelines:

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1. Evacuate the building and immediately head to predetermined meeting spots.
2. Call 911 to report the emergency. Teachers can then use their class lists to make sure that all students are present and safe.
3. Groups should move at least 60 feet away from the building in any emergency situation, and should be prepared to move further away if necessary.
4. Students should be taught that, even in an emergency, they must not run across streets with traffic or block fire lanes and entrances that emergency responders may need to access.

### **Sheltering-In-Place with Students**

In certain situations, it will be necessary to keep children indoors. This is usually the best option if children are already at school when an emergency occurs with no prior warning. Rather than risk sending children home, many schools will opt to “shelter-in-place” or lockdown, meaning they will wait indoors until the emergency has subsided. There are certain guidelines that teachers and administrators can follow in preparing for and dealing with these situations:

**1. Roll Call.** When first deciding to shelter-in-place, each teacher should take a careful roll call of the students in his or her class. It can take time for teachers to account for every student, since children may be out of the classroom to use the bathroom or drinking fountain, or to go to the nurse’s office. This is why it is important for teachers to always keep a detailed log in the classroom each time a child has to leave, so that they can be easily located in an emergency.

**2. Emergency Procedures.** Aim to continue lessons as usual, if at all possible. This will help keep students’ minds off the emergency, reducing stress and panic. Depending on the situation and its severity, it may be necessary to move students to rooms on the inside of the building (in a hurricane or thunderstorm), in the basement (in a tornado), or on the highest floor (in a flood). Students should be moved in shifts from their classrooms to other parts of the school building, and should be kept together in classroom groups, with their teacher as a leader.

**3. Warning Bells.** Specific warning bells or intercom signals should accompany each type of emergency. Some schools use different bells, others use color codes or verbal warnings communicated from the main office through the intercom system. Regardless of the type of warning a school uses, it is absolutely necessary that there be different warning signals for evacuation and for sheltering-in-place, so that they will not be confused by faculty and students. Just as schools hold regular fire drills, they should also hold regular shelter-in-place drills to make certain that the students will recognize the different warning signals.

### **Successes and Challenges**

While most school districts have taken federally recommended steps to plan and prepare for emergencies, many plans now in place *do not* include recommended practices. For example, nearly all plans address hazards such as natural disasters, intruders, and bombs, but few address pandemic influenza or radiological hazards. Also, while half of all school districts update their emergency plans on a yearly basis, an estimated ten percent of them have *never* updated their plans. Many school district administrators say that, although they have not experienced challenges in communicating with students about emergency preparedness, they *have* faced difficulties in communicating and coordinating with first responders and parents.

In an estimated thirty-nine percent of school districts with emergency management plans, officials experienced a lack of partnerships, limited time or funding to discuss planning with first responders, or a lack of interoperability between equipment used by school districts and first responders. About half of the officials in the 27 school districts interviewed reported difficulty in ensuring that parents received consistent information from the district during an emergency. Some of these officials also described problems in communicating emergency-related information to parents limited in English language proficiency.

### **Information is Available**

A great deal of work has gone into developing policies that outline how educational facilities can best prepare an effective emergency management plan. Yet considering the importance of the topic, it seems that much work still needs to be done. Fortunately, there exists a wealth of available resources on best practice findings regarding emergency preparedness: Extensive studies have been undertaken, the results have been published, and much of this data is available online.

The National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities (NCEF), which provides information on planning, funding, building, improving and maintaining safety in high-performance schools, posts a webpage entitled *Disaster Preparedness and Response for Schools and Universities*. This resource provides a list of links, books, and journal articles that address building or retrofitting schools to withstand natural disasters and terrorism, developing emergency preparedness plans, and using school buildings to shelter community members during emergencies. Visit <http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/disaster.cfm>

### **Resource 1 - Schools:**

**The Educational Facilities Disaster and Crisis Management Guidebook**  
<http://www.ncef.org/pubs/edfacilities-disaster-management-guidebook-2007.pdf>

Developed by the Florida Department of Education in January 2007, this guide provides direction for disaster preparedness planning and management for a variety of situations affecting school districts and community colleges. The book is intended for facility managers, and is organized around four phases of emergency management: preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. The dual issues of schools as emergency shelters and their prompt return to an educational function are covered. Thirty-eight references are included, as is an

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appendix advising on sheltering, mental health, debris removal, family preparedness, and other related topics.

**US Department of Education and Department of Homeland Security's  
School Preparedness Checklist**

<http://www.osba.org/hotopics/crismgmt/checklst.htm>

This school preparedness checklist was developed in a cooperative effort of the US Department of Education, Department of Homeland Security, and other federal agencies. It is divided into four categories: Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. Each category has the appropriate steps for schools to follow.

TOMORROW: Talking with Kids about Emergency Preparedness

**About The Authors**

**John Cavanagh** is Communications Director for Bridge Multimedia and Chief Researcher for Emergency Information Online.

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **KEEPIN' IT REAL:**

#### **Talking with Kids about Emergency Preparedness**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

When it comes to planning for emergencies, it is extremely important to make sure that those around you are also prepared—especially children. Although some adults find disaster readiness a difficult topic to discuss with children, it is essential that preparedness information be presented in a direct, honest manner. When children are made aware of an emergency plan, they will be able to face an emergency situation in a calmer, more capable manner. It is important to have several plans in place to respond to different types of emergencies, and to make certain that children are familiar with each plan. Key elements of any school or home emergency plan should include: what to do, where to meet, who to call, and how to communicate.

### **How to Involve Children in Emergency Planning**

- 1. Keep kids involved.** Never assume that an adult will be present during an emergency situation; include children in emergency planning so that they know what will be expected of them. Children should be taught *exactly* where to go, what to do, and how to communicate during a crisis. Emergency plans should be reviewed with children on a regular basis to make sure that they won't forget any information.

- 2. Ask for their input.** If children help to create a plan, they will be more likely to remember it when the time comes to implement it. Parents may want to quiz their children by asking, "Where in town is a good place for us to meet if there is ever a crisis? Do you know how to get there by yourself?" or "Who is a the best relative or other person to call outside of

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this area if we cannot communicate with each other? Do you have their phone number memorized?” Be sure to make practice visits to your family meeting place, and practice calls to your emergency contact relatives, so children will feel comfortable doing so when the time comes.

3. **Supply Kit Game.** Making an emergency supply kit can be a fun game for kids! First, have children make a list of what they think might be needed in an emergency. Compare it with a published list, such as the one on The Department of Homeland Security’s “Ready Kids” website ([http://www.ready.gov/kids/\\_downloads/familylist.pdf](http://www.ready.gov/kids/_downloads/familylist.pdf)). Then, have a scavenger hunt to search the home or classroom for the items that are needed. Make sure to purchase any items that you do not already own for the home or classroom!

4. **Go Online.** There are great resources on the Internet that can help parents and teachers make learning about emergency preparedness fun for kids. Websites such as Ready Kids (see above) and FEMA for Kids (<http://www.fema.gov/kids/>) are perfect for engaging kids in disaster preparedness. They provide stories and information about emergencies written in a kid-friendly way, and have games that will help kids remember what to do in an emergency. Kids enjoy websites like these and will have fun learning information that could save their lives!

## **The Aftermath**

No one is ever *completely* prepared to experience a crisis situation. Emergencies can strike unexpectedly. They are frightening and often can take an emotional toll on a child. Individuals react to trauma in different ways, and some children will need extra time and attention to allow them to cope with the memories and feelings connected to a distressing experience.

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After an emergency has passed and once everyone involved is safe, it is important to talk with young people about what occurred and help them come to terms with its effects. Children may act out in ways that can confuse parents and teachers, but it is important to remember that patience is essential in helping children recover from an emergency.

### **Common Reactions– And How to Deal With Them**

1. **Regression to earlier behavioral stages.** Children may experience fear and insecurity, resulting in a lack of independent behavior. It is not uncommon for children to regress to thumbsucking, bedwetting or clinging to their parents. They may become afraid to be left alone in places they once were comfortable in, such as school, their own room at bedtime, or the homes of friends. While you cannot allow children to succumb to these behaviors completely, you must be patient and give them time to adjust. Try to compromise and reassure your child that he or she is safe.
2. **Lowered performance in school.** Children and teens alike may experience a lack of interest in schoolwork and after-school activities. They may become disruptive and even resistant to authority in school and at home. Parents and teachers can encourage kids to talk and let them release some of the pent-up stress linked to the event, but sometimes, professional assistance may be needed.
3. **Constant talk about the event, or fear that it will happen again.** This reaction is common among young children, who may be confused about the crisis that they experienced. It is important to be honest with children about what happened and why. Then, reassure them about what preparedness actions are being taken to prevent this type of crisis from happening again. If children make up or exaggerate stories of what they experienced, gently remind them of the facts.

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4. **Helplessness and Guilt.** This reaction is often experienced by teens and older children, who realize that the effects of the disaster reach far beyond their personal experience. They may want to do something to help, and parents should encourage this on a small scale. Taking on too much responsibility may put more stress on teens, but helping out by donating a reasonable amount of time, food, clothing, or toys may be enough to make them feel as if they have done their part.

Preparing children for emergencies and helping them cope with the aftermath are difficult but crucial tasks. Patience and reassurance can be invaluable tools in carrying them out. The National Mental Health Information Center maintains a website with tips for parents and teachers about talking to children after a disaster. Visit <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/KEN-01-0093/default.asp>.

## **Resource 2 – Schools: Kid-Friendly Preparedness Websites**

### **Ready Kids**

<http://www.ready.gov/kids/home.html>

The Ready Kids website is a tool to help parents and teachers educate children in grades 4-5 about emergencies and how they can help get their family prepared. Ready Kids is part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's campaign to educate and empower Americans to prepare themselves for an emergency. The website features age-appropriate, step-by-step instructions on what families can do to become better prepared and discusses the role kids can play in this effort.

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## **FEMA For Kids**

<http://www.fema.gov/kids/>

The Federal Emergency Management Agency created this online resource for children to teach them about disaster preparedness. The website includes preparedness related games and stories for children and safety information for teachers and parents.

TOMORROW: Day 3 – School Violence

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **A NATIONAL CRISIS:**

#### **School Violence**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly necessary in today's world for schools not only to be prepared for natural disasters, fires, and terrorist activity, but also to protect students against violence by their peers. Tragedies such as those at Columbine and Virginia Tech have raised public awareness of the deadly serious problem of school violence. As school shootings become more and more frequent, parents and teachers are left wondering how to prepare for school violence and, more importantly, how to recognize the warning signs in order to *prevent* it from occurring.

### **How to Make Sure Your Community's Schools Are Prepared:**

- 1. Assess the situation.** Ask students directly how prepared they think their schools are. Ask questions like, "Do you know what to do if someone brings a gun to school?" or "What is your school's communication or signaling system in a crisis?" If children do not know the answers to these questions, it is clear that more work needs to be put into the school's Emergency Preparedness Plan.
  
- 2. Instate Strict School Violence Prevention Policies.** Schools should have a zero-tolerance weapons, violence, and bullying rule. This rule should also apply to any threats of violence or carrying of weapons. Children should be made aware that words can often lead to actions, and threats should *always* be reported to school authorities.

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**3. An Emergency Disaster and Violence Plan.** Parents and teachers should work together to create detailed plans that are specific to each kind of crisis that could occur in schools. Plans should include a communication and signaling system that students and teachers are familiarized with. In addition, all students and faculty should regularly participate in lockdown and evacuation safety drills.

**4. Form a Coordinated Community Response Team.** Involve the fire department, police and medical emergency team in your plan. The police and fire department should review the school's emergency plan, as they may have tips on how to improve it. The more that local authorities know about a school's disaster plan, the more efficiently they will be able to assist in case of an emergency.

There is no foolproof way to create a profile of what type of student may commit a violent act in school. Sometimes peers will claim that a student who became violent was a "normal" kid. However, in many cases, there have been certain characteristics shared in common by students who have initiated school violence. Although these indications do not necessarily mean that a student *will* commit a school shooting or other violent act, teachers and administrators, as well as parents, should be aware of these signs. Children who fit these criteria are "at risk" of becoming violent, and should be given the help that they need before the situation worsens.

**Seven Warning Signs of "At Risk" Kids:**

1. **Social withdrawal.** Students who don't get along with other children, or who often get into arguments or fights may need help.
2. **Feelings of rejection, depression or uncontrollable anger.** Each of these feelings can lead to violent behavior. If a student shows signs of any of these strong inner emotions, they may need professional help to cope with them.

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3. **Involvement in any type of bullying activity.** This includes not only students who are bullies themselves, but also students who are bullied by others and may be motivated to strike back.
4. **Making threats of violence.** Students who threaten violence should *a/ways* be taken seriously. They should be made aware that talk of violence is not a joke and that their statements won't be taken lightly.
5. **Using drugs or drinking; poor performance in school.** Students who are often disciplined in school for drug use, lateness, skipping class and other delinquent behavior may need counseling or other professional help.
6. **Absence of a caring adult.** Often, children who do not have good adult role models can lose their way and become mixed up in gangs or violence. When there is a lack of adult supervision, this can become especially dangerous.
7. **A history of violent behavior.** Students who have become violent in the past or who have a history of hurting people or animals should be watched closely by teachers, parents and administrators.

The importance of preparing for school violence cannot be overemphasized, and might actually prevent future tragedies from occurring. If parents and teachers educate themselves about the causes of school violence, they will stand a better chance of reversing the current acceleration of this alarming trend.

### **Resource 3 - Schools :**

#### **The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center**

<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/topics/school.asp>

The NYVPRC posts a webpage dedicated to the topic of school violence. This page offers the latest tools to facilitate discussion with children, to resolve conflicts nonviolently, to stop bullying, to prevent teen suicide, and to end violence committed by and against young people. Resources include fact sheets, best practices documents, funding and conference announcements, statistics, research bulletins, surveillance reports, and profiles of promising programs.

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| TOMORROW: Day 4 – Terrorism Preparedness in Schools |
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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **THINKING ABOUT THE UNTHINKABLE:**

#### **Terrorism Preparedness in Schools**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

In August 2003, a disturbing report appeared, entitled the “National School-Based Law Enforcement Survey.” The study, which involved school-based police officers from all 50 states, revealed that 90 percent of these professionals consider the nation’s schools to be “soft targets” for terrorism, which means that they are unprotected against an attack! After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, many former “soft targets” have adopted new safety procedures to guard against terrorist attacks. The majority of our nation’s schools, however, have not yet begun to address this potential threat. It is the responsibility of parents, teachers, and administrators to work together to establish heightened security procedures to follow during terrorist threats or when the Department of Homeland Security issues a heightened alert.

#### **How Is Terrorism Different from Other School Emergencies?**

Unlike school shootings, schools subjected to terrorist attacks would be chosen at random. With alertness to warning signs of school violence, it has become easier to identify students at risk for violent behavior; not so with terrorists. Also, the perpetrators of terrorism are not likely to be students at the school being attacked. In other types of teenage violence, administrators have the ability to discipline the students involved but, naturally, terrorists are out of their jurisdiction. Terrorist attacks involving schools will probably involve explosions, or chemical or biological attacks. The extent of the casualties and damage might be far more extensive than even the most lethal occurrence of school violence to date. The destruction will probably directly affect the surrounding community. Schools cannot act alone in preventing terrorism in their facilities, since they do not have the tools available to the U.S. government. Emergency preparedness, however, can be initiated and planned by the school itself.

### **Additions to Your School's Preparedness**

Protecting against terrorism requires additional measures, all of which can be implemented with the cooperation of your board of education, school officials, or PTA, or in conjunction with local government at minimal cost. An important safety procedure in the event of a terrorist attack is called "sheltering in place," which means to stay put in a safe, windowless area. This space must be evaluated to determine how long its air supply would last when sealed. "Sheltering in place" supplements the basic lockdown and evacuation plans that your school should already have established to protect against school violence.

### **Further antiterrorist procedures:**

- Do not allow students to open school mail. Staff should handle all mail and be educated to recognize suspicious packages.
- Custodial staff should be part of the school's crisis response team. They should know how to shut down heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.
- Have duct tape and plastic sheeting on hand to seal off windows, vents, and doorways.
- Prepare safety kits in advance. Include battery-operated AM/FM radios; flashlights with fresh batteries; bottled water and adequate food supply; towels; candles; matches; first-aid kit; medicines for students who normally have them at school; charged batteries for cell phones for school's crisis team; personal cleaning supplies and hand sanitizers; etc.
- Create plans for a separate area to quarantine anyone who becomes contaminated. The area should have accessible showers and fresh clothing.
- Meet with HAZMAT officials, fire, emergency medical, law enforcement, emergency management, and other local, county, and/or state officials to establish specific response and prevention protocols, and to educate your school faculty, staff, crisis teams, and community about issues associated with biological and chemical terrorism.

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- Have an emergency communication plan, which can include walkie-talkies, cell phones or multiple phone lines. Receptionists should have emergency numbers posted by their phones, and each classroom should have two-way communication to the school office.
- Be aware of anniversaries or other significant dates that could trigger an attack. An annual meeting of teachers and custodial staff prior to the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks is a good time to review safety procedures.

### **Talking to Kids about Terrorism in Schools**

It is necessary to talk to young people about the possibility of dealing with an emergency such as terrorism. Many parents and school officials are afraid to talk about or prepare for terrorist attacks because they don't want to create a panic. But fear is best conquered by being informed and prepared. And if parents and teachers are prepared, they can educate kids in turn. (Of course, the age and maturity level of a child is a factor in any discussion of terrorism.)

In a non-frightening, calm manner, you should speak with your children about what they should do if they are in a building that sustains an explosion. Tell children that they must try to remain calm. If possible, they should get out of the building as quickly as they can, without stopping to take along books, toys or even to make a phone call. If things are falling, they should get under a sturdy table or desk until it is clear. As they exit the building, they must watch out for weakened floors or stairs.

If there is a fire along with the explosion:

1. Stay low to the ground, since poisonous smoke rises and will gather along the ceiling.
2. If possible, cover your nose and mouth with a wet cloth.
3. If you come to a closed door, feel the door with the back of your hand. If the door is not hot, open it slowly and make sure that fire or smoke are not blocking your exit path. If the path is clear, keep moving. If not, close the

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door quickly and find another way out. If the door is hot, do not open it.

Find a window to climb out of or signal to firefighters that you need help.

If you are trapped under falling debris:

1. Do not move around a lot. You might kick up dust that is harmful to inhale. Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or a piece of clothing.
2. Tap repeatedly on a pipe or wall. The rescuers will hear this and be able to find you more easily. Shout only when you hear rescuers coming. Excessive shouting might cause you to breathe in more harmful dust.
3. Try to think of things that make you feel happy and calm. Remember that rescuers are on their way.

If a school is targeted for terrorism, the surrounding community will be affected. Find out if your community has a disaster plan in place and talk to your kids about it. If there is no plan in place, as is the case in many communities, talk about that too. Kids may have some good ideas themselves, so include them in the planning process. Parents, teachers, administrators, and kids all need to work together in order to best prepare themselves for the grim possibility of a terrorist attack in our schools.

#### **Resource 4 - Schools: School Safety in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

[http://www.schoolsecurity.org/school\\_terrorism\\_NSF.pdf](http://www.schoolsecurity.org/school_terrorism_NSF.pdf)

This resource on Terrorist Preparedness in Schools contains an in-depth report generated from the 2003 Washington, D.C. conference entitled "Schools: Prudent Preparation for a Catastrophic Terrorist Incident." The objective of the conference was to expand the discussion of school emergency preparedness beyond the existing norms to include an "all-hazard" approach. Conference participants included parent groups, school administrators and faculty, school security and safety experts, public health officials, pediatricians, psychiatrists, nurses, representatives of FEMA, DHS and DOE, and counter-terrorism experts. This document covers the wide range of subjects examined at the conference,

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including threats, infrastructure, resource needs, and the emergency preparedness process.

TOMORROW: Day 5 –  
Emergency Planning for  
Students with  
Disabilities

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## **National Preparedness Month –September 2007:**

### **SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS IS FOR *EVERYONE!***

#### **Emergency Planning for Students with Disabilities**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

It is of extreme importance that parents and guardians of students with disabilities make certain that school and daycare providers have emergency response plans which address the individual requirements of each child with special needs. Parents should learn the facility's preparedness policies and inquire how the school will communicate with families during a crisis. Parents should ask if there is an adequate storage of food, water, and other basic supplies. Another important question is whether a facility is prepared to "shelter-in-place" (remain in a secure, windowless area) and, also, where they plan to go if they must evacuate. By knowing the answers to these questions and communicating with school and daycare representatives in advance, parents will be better prepared to safely reunite with their family and loved ones during an emergency.

#### **Medications:**

Many students with special needs require specific medications. According to the Utah State Office of Education's Emergency Preparedness Plan, extensive emergencies may require having medication available for a period beyond that of the school day. Therefore, if possible, medication should be on hand to last a minimum of 24 hours. It is also recommended that specific medical information should accompany the student so it is available during a crisis. Also, it may be necessary to carry medications outside in an emergency situation involving evacuation.

#### **Campus Concerns:**

It is essential that all people on a campus be prepared in the event of an emergency. San Francisco State University lists suggestions for how people with

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disabilities can become better prepared for emergencies and how other faculty/staff/students can assist them.

#### TIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

1. Let instructors or coworkers know if you will need assistance getting out of a classroom and/or building in case of a fire, earthquake or other disaster. Find out the location of the nearest stairwell to your position. Ask for their assistance in working out an evacuation plan.
2. Inform rescue workers of the safest and most comfortable way to assist you in evacuating. If you use a wheelchair and will need to be carried downstairs, let rescuers know how you prefer to be carried and explain any precautions they will need to take in order to avoid causing you any discomfort or injury.
3. If you take prescription medications on a daily basis, carry a three- to five-day supply with you at all times. In an emergency situation, you may not be able to get to your home or to a pharmacy for several days.
4. If you have any medical conditions or drug allergies that emergency personnel should know about, keep written information in your wallet, purse, backpack, etc. Include the names and phone numbers of friends or relatives who can be contacted in the event of an emergency.

#### TIPS FOR FACULTY/SUPERVISORS

1. Inform all students/employees of the nearest exit to use in case of an emergency. Faculty can print this information in the course syllabus and announce it on the first day of class.
2. Encourage students/employees who may need assistance in an emergency to identify themselves and to make an evacuation plan.
3. Develop a "buddy system" by recruiting at least two volunteers to assist each person with a disability who requests evacuation assistance.

## GUIDELINES FOR EVACUATING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- Be aware of all marked exits from your area and building. Building Emergency Coordinators have maps showing emergency exit routes for your building. In all emergencies, evacuate people with disabilities if possible.
- Do not use elevators (unless authorized) since they could fail during a fire or a major earthquake.
- It may be necessary to help clear the exit route of debris (if possible) so that a person with a disability can move out to a safer area.
- Always ask someone with a disability how you can help before giving assistance. Ask how the person can be best assisted and whether there are any other considerations to take or items that need to come with the person.
- Do not grasp a visually impaired person's arm; ask if he or she would like to hold on to your arm to exit. Warn the person about steps. Be specific in your verbal instructions (i.e., "to the right," rather than "this way"). Keep guide dogs together with their owners whenever possible.
- Attempt a rescue evacuation only if you have had rescue training or if the person is in immediate danger and cannot wait for professional assistance. Evacuating a disabled or injured person yourself should be considered a last resort. Evaluate your options and the risks of injuring yourself and others in an evacuation attempt. Do not make an emergency situation worse.
- Once outside, move to a clear area that is at least 500 feet away from the affected building. Keep streets and walkways clear for emergency vehicles and personnel.

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From pre-school to college, communication and awareness are the key elements in emergency planning for students with disabilities.

## **Resource 5 - Schools: Preparedness and Planning Links**

### **Emergency Preparedness in Schools**

<http://www.emergencyinfoonline.org/emereprep.php>

Bridge Multimedia's free directory, Emergency Information Online, offers a webpage with information on school related preparedness resources provided by government agencies, non-profit organizations, commercial enterprises, and concerned citizens. This page also features a section called School Accessibility Resources, with links to sites such as Gallaudet University's "How can Deaf and Hard of Hearing People know about Emergencies?" and the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities' "Creating Accessible Schools."

### **Emergency Preparedness for Children with Special Health Care Needs**

<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/epcovrltr.htm>

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Emergency Physicians offer a downloadable form, designed to assure prompt and appropriate care for Children with Special Health Care Needs. This form is to be filled out and filed at a child's school in case of an emergency.

TOMORROW: Day 6 – Community Based Action Plans: Best Practices

### **About The Authors**

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **PARTNER FOR PREPAREDNESS:**

#### **Community Based Action Plans: Best Practices**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

School principals, administrators, board members, parents, teachers, and anyone with input into the operational policies of a school, take note: A community can only truly be prepared for an emergency when *all* citizens are involved in the disaster planning process. It takes cooperation between the various members of a community to develop a thorough plan that efficiently spells out the responsibilities of each sector of the population. In order for a community's emergency plan to function properly, it must depend on the participation of households, schools, businesses, the police and fire departments, and other local organizations. People are beginning to realize that it is essential not only to plan for your family, but also to make sure that the entire community will be prepared for a disaster. After all, should an emergency occur, the more people working together under an organized plan, the more effective the community's response effort will be.

The city of Spokane, Washington, a leader in community based action plans, offers five tips that can help to build preparedness into the workings of a community. Those in charge of educational facilities should pay particular attention to the logistics of these suggestions. Schools exist at the very heart of a community and stand to benefit greatly from communication and cooperation with other key institutions within a community, especially in preparing for an emergency.

#### **Community Based Preparedness Tips:**

**1. Establish Relationships with Emergency Responders.** It is especially important to have an open communication network with emergency workers such as paramedics, the police and fire departments, and EMS. Each of these agencies should be familiar with the community's action plan. Take the time to get to know your emergency responders personally, along with their strengths, weaknesses and areas of specialized knowledge. A common mistake that many

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communities make is having only the Police Chief or the Fire Chief be familiar with the emergency plan, thus depending on him or her to direct the rest of the crew. In unexpected emergency situations, this cannot always be counted on. Also, a one-on-one familiarity establishes a “comfort level” that will be helpful when it comes time to implement your emergency plan.

**2. Regular Review of Emergency Plans.** Many times, an emergency plan is created and then forgotten about, making it essentially useless as time goes on. Communities should set an annual date to review their emergency plan. It is important to regularly review emergency plans, because situations change: People with designated positions retire and are replaced, contact information needs to be updated, and availability of new resources or loss of old ones must be accounted for. Current information is absolutely essential to emergency planning. A regular review also keeps emergency plans fresh in people’s minds, so that they will not be forgotten, even at a time of great stress.

**3. Transportation and Shelter.** These are two of the most important factors in an emergency: a safe place for people to stay, and a safe way to get people there. Considerations for transportation and shelter must be planned out in detail and updated constantly. Be in touch with local bus companies to make sure that they can be on hand if large numbers of people need to be transported. Communicate with other schools or large municipal buildings that can be used as shelters. Make sure that *all* staff members of these buildings—from head administrators to custodial staff—are familiar with the procedures to be followed in an emergency. Specific plans should be in place for each emergency situation, and there should be backup plans for each in case something goes wrong. A key element to remember for every emergency plan: Expect the unexpected.

**4. Reach Beyond Your Own Community.** Only positive results can come from sharing resources and experiences with other communities. The best way to learn is to network with other communities that are also concerned about emergency preparedness. Invite another town’s officials to your emergency preparedness meetings; you should make sure that neighboring towns are prepared too, as the same disaster may affect the entire area! Similarly, try to

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meet with officials from communities that have already experienced disasters or emergency situations, and get their advice on forming an emergency plan. Surrounding communities should make sure they are “on the same page”, because you never know if you will need to help each other out in an emergency.

**5. Training and Drills.** Encourage all people involved with the community’s emergency plan to receive special training for the different situations that may arise. Hold drills to make sure that everyone on the team is prepared— and get the word out to citizens of the community, so that they can get acquainted with the plan too. The best way to make sure everyone is comfortable with an emergency plan is to practice it and go over it on a regular basis! If people on the emergency response team have specialized roles, make sure that they have at least one or two “backups” who would be able to perform the duty if necessary.

### **Partnerships with Schools**

According to 2007 congressional testimony by Cathleen Henning, president of Region 3 of the International Association of Emergency Managers, the strongest and most important partnerships that are fostered and nurtured in the best-prepared communities involve Emergency Management and schools. Henning spoke of her 30 years as an Emergency Manager and her history of responding to all types of emergencies and disasters, including hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, ice storms, power outages, fires, chemical spills, and explosions, as well as acts of terrorism. Henning said, “This wide variety of events has taught me the importance of a strong emergency management system flexible and capable of responding to all types of hazards and including all parts of the community under an integrated response system.” She went on to stress that cooperation between school administrators, social workers, public health professionals, voluntary organizations, and first responders is essential in developing an effective community emergency response plan.

In addition, schools can serve as effective shelters for the general public during emergencies. Since most people in a community are aware of where schools are located, people often do not have trouble finding them. Additionally, school buildings are usually large and stable, making them an excellent resource to temporarily house large numbers of people. All schools should have plans in

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place to provide a safe haven for their students and faculty. Schools should also arrange plans with the community in case they will be required to act as emergency shelters for the general public. Many schools are built with this purpose in mind, and have a fallout or bomb shelter in their basements. If schools work together with other local agencies, together they can form the most efficient emergency plans for the public.

## Resource 6 - Schools:

### Designing a Community Disaster Preparedness Plan

[http://nationalservicerresources.org/epicenter/practices/index.php?ep\\_action=view&ep\\_id=948](http://nationalservicerresources.org/epicenter/practices/index.php?ep_action=view&ep_id=948)

The Corporation for National and Community Service, in conjunction with the National Crime Prevention Council, posts a website with information on how to institute a disaster preparedness plan within your community. These tips can also be modified to create a disaster preparedness plan within your organization.

TOMORROW: Preparing for  
Pandemic Flu in Schools

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **NOTHING TO SNEEZE AT:**

#### **Preparing for Pandemic Flu in School**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Seasonal flu is a contagious illness that is caused by influenza viruses that are similar to those of previous years. Some people may have built up immunity and there also is a vaccine for each year's flu season. A pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new form of influenza virus emerges in the human population. It is spread easily from person to person and causes serious illness. Since most people have not been exposed to the new influenza strain, there is little or no pre-existing immunity. There have been three pandemics in the last one hundred years, in 1918, 1957 and 1968. While no one can predict the arrival or severity of the next pandemic, many doctors believe that it is only a matter of time before the next one occurs.

### **Worse Case Scenario...**

A particularly serious influenza pandemic could lead to alarming levels of illness, death, societal disorder, and economic cost. Normal life would be disrupted because so many people in various positions would become seriously ill simultaneously. Disruptions would range from school and business closings to the interruption of basic public services such as transportation, food delivery, and medical services. Since a substantial number of the population would require some form of medical care, there could result in a shortage of hospital staff, beds, ventilators, and other supplies. Service and care at non-traditional sites, such as schools, may need to be created in order to cope with the situation. The demand for antiviral drugs would likely surpass the supply of the vaccine. The death rate would be determined by four factors: the number of people who became infected; the strength of the virus; the vulnerability of the affected populations; and the effectiveness of preventative measures.

It is certain that individuals, businesses, corporations, schools, and other organizations will be asked to take certain steps to help limit the spread of a pandemic, diminish the number of victims, lessen the economic impact, and maintain the effective functioning of society. In short, we will all be called upon to do our part. As usual, schools are a critical factor the community equation. If students are dismissed from school but educational facilities remain open, school and education-related assets, including school buildings, school kitchens, school buses, and staff may continue to remain operational and be of value to the community in other ways. Also, faculty and staff may be able to continue to provide lessons and other services to students by television, radio, e-mail, Internet, telephone, or other media. Schools have the potential to play a crucial role in protecting the public's health and safety when an influenza pandemic occurs. However, these beneficial elements are unlikely to be utilized unless serious pandemic preparedness planning occurs now.

### **School Action Steps for Pandemic Planning:**

As with any emergency situation, success in coping with a pandemic depends upon the planning that takes place before the fact. The Illinois Department of Public Health has developed a list of important actions that schools should take to prepare for a pandemic influenza outbreak. These include:

1. Create a pandemic flu plan.
2. Work with local health and emergency preparedness officials. They may want to use schools as a way to disseminate information to families.
3. Train nurses and staff in flu-symptom recognition. Ensure that standard surveillance/disease recognition procedures are in place and implemented.

4. Improve the hygiene of students and staff.
5. Decide to what extent you will encourage or require children and staff to stay home when they are mildly ill.
6. Identify students who are most vulnerable to serious illness (immunity compromised, chronic illness, etc.). Review the health needs of students. Some students may have a greater risk of infections. Encourage those families to talk to their health care provider. Some parents may need to be more cautious in keeping their children out of school.
7. Through consultation with your regional office of education and local authorities, develop alternative learning strategies, which may involve collaborative agreements (television or other local cable stations, teleconferencing, lessons on DVDs, etc.).
8. Educate staff, students, and parents about: the differences between seasonal flu, bird flu and pandemic flu; best hygienic practices to prevent any sort of flu; what could occur in a pandemic.

## **Resource 7 - Schools:**

### **Emergency Planning: Pandemic**

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/index.html>

The U.S. Department of Education is collaborating with health experts and agencies across the federal government to ensure that, in the case of pandemic flu, educational operations and services would continue. This resource offers tools designed to assist educators, administrators, and local officials in disseminating health information, planning for staff and student absences, and maintaining a learning environment in the wake of a pandemic outbreak.

TOMORROW: Tips from Gallaudet University: Campus-Level  
Accessible Notification

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## National Preparedness Month – September 2007:

Today Emergency Information Online is proud to present a 'special guest article' by Carl Pramuk. This article is taken from a 2005 presentation Mr. Pramuk made at the Accessible Emergency Communication and Notification Conference, hosted by Gallaudet University, the world leader in liberal education and career development for deaf and hard-of-hearing undergraduate students. Special thanks to Dr. Judy Harkins for making that conference, and this special feature, possible.

### **TIPS FROM GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY: Campus-Level Accessible Notification**

By Carl Pramuk, Guest Contributor

I have been asked to talk specifically about campuses and how they deal with different issues that they confront in dealing with emergencies. I am happy to provide our perspective here at Gallaudet University. I am the Dean of Students; I am responsible for the campus in terms of the dorms and the residence halls, and I'm also a member of the university's Crisis Management Team. With those two roles there are a variety of issues that present themselves. I'm happy to see that there's a variety of products available on the market that can help provide solutions to those issues. But we still face some of the same types of issues that you have.

Gallaudet is a four-year liberal arts college. It was established in 1864 by an act of Congress. Our programs and services are specifically designed to accommodate deaf or hard-of-hearing students. There are 1,800-plus students, primarily deaf or hard-of-hearing, and 60-plus students and employees also have vision impairments. Our campus is different than other campuses, so that presents the first point: You can't adapt a plan to fit a place without observing the environment first, who the population is. Some Federal agencies have a lot of employees. Their solutions might be different than a workplace that has one employee; it depends on what the particular environment is. So what you will see in this presentation is how we have dealt with issues on our campus. I want to preface this by saying that our solutions might not be applicable to all campus environments.

In the '70s and '80s the most serious emergency that we had was perhaps a trashcan fire, and you had to crawl to get out. It was very minor, even though back then it would have been classified as major. More recently we've had murders on our campus; the D.C. - area sniper; September 11 that hit New York and the Pentagon. We've had a variety of things that impacted our campus and the surrounding area. So we had to review our emergency plan and realize that we had to do a lot more work.

Prior to that, our notification system included strobe light notification, which works great when you are awake, but when you're asleep that is another issue. We do have door bell alarms so that if someone is at the door, you know that by a flashing door light. Also we have an alert notification that was through pager, cell

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phone, or e-mail. You have to subscribe or sign up for the service and one department sends out the messages, so if there is a snow-closing or other emergency, that notification would be done through e-mail, cell phone, or pager.

Now, I am going to talk about issues that we were confronted with 9/11 and post-9/11. We had realized we had new issues had emerged, for example, 9/11 network congestion. The network traffic was very high, and communication between Crisis Management Team members was not functional. There was so much traffic that the messages arrived hours later. When an emergency meeting was called, we weren't aware of it.

The second point is the issue of signal strength with pagers. In my office, the signal strength was not very good. In my office, my desk is in one corner and on the opposite side of my office there is a conference table. With the layout of my office, there are only two positions where the pager will work. I have to either put it on the printer, which is near my desk in the corner; or I have to sit on one of the chairs on the opposite side of the room. If I am wearing it in a different location within the room, it won't work. So that's a serious issue. It's very limiting to have just two very specific locations where I can use my pager.

We've researched notification systems. In other universities, voice based systems such as a public address system is often used for the notification system. Here, that is not helpful. If there was an emergency in the campus there would be a visual alarm, usually for fire. If you have a biological or chemical threat, that will not work: The reason is that we as deaf people have learned from the elementary school all the way to the college level, that when you see the strobe alarm go off, it means fire and you exit the building, that is the procedure that everyone follows. If students leave their building during a chemical or biological threat, it makes matters worse. It is important to have a different solution when you need to communicate to shelter in place.

Students who are in wheelchairs present another issue. We've addressed that by means of having a sub-committee that has proposed different solutions. One is that wheelchair users will go to a safe area, and the police or fire department will carry them downstairs. But many of these students did not like this solution, this type of intervention. We're revising the policy on having people who need help with steps having to wait for security to arrive.

Our Crisis Management Team met and we laid out many different types of solutions and recommendations. We developed a manual that talks about different procedures. But really, the key issue we talked about was communication: specific methods of how we provide information that should be good and reliable instead of relying on one solution. You need to have different means of notification. If the first one doesn't work, then there is a secondary backup. As I explained about my pager that doesn't work in certain areas, we need to have a back-up system.

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We're looking for different technological solutions. Some things that we have either applied or are considering applying:

**Cable TV interrupt:** We have campus cable TV and cable lines throughout the campus, and we have control centralized in one place. We are able to interrupt the programming to let them know something is happening. That's really a great solution. That was one of the first things that we did. So for example, if students are in the cafeteria watching ESPN, we can let them know something is happening. That is one back-up solution.

**Improved signal strength for mobile devices:** We also have new network towers set up by such carriers as NexTel, Cingular, and T-Mobile, on campus. This has greatly improved our reception. So instead of having to worry about my pager working only in two positions in my office, I can walk around and use my pager in many areas of my office. It's much better.

**Computer interrupt:** We work a lot with our computers, as many of you do, and while on the computer there can be a pop-up with emergency information. Let's say that I am working on the presentation for this conference, and there is some kind of warning. I wouldn't know that. So there is an interrupt, and even though I am not working online, with this notification system from TCS Associates and NXi, it will automatically pop up with the emergency information.

Sometimes there is a red flag about such systems – we must also worry about Internet security where hackers outside can come in do serious damage. So it's really important for our Information Technology Department to be able to learn from these companies that have been involved with agencies such as the Department of Defense. If the Department of Defense can trust this company to implement something, we feel that we can trust the company also.

Another product I've learned about in my research for the Crisis Management Team is the Pb World Com Alert Emergency Notification System. This is connected with NOAA alerts, Amber Alert messages, and civil emergencies. It can also include your own internal organizational announcements. It can be sent to your computer, and also can be used on strategically placed LCD screens throughout campus.

**Color coding visual signals:** At the Texas School for the Deaf, they had a visual strobe, and there were three colors attached to the strobe for three different purposes. Blue was to let you know that class is over, it's time to change classes; yellow was emergency; white was all clear – that meant it's okay. They could see it via television, or via the computer, that is the interrupt system for both of those. People knew that color coding by heart. I mean, I'm not a student there now, but I can still remember from my day being in a school system and having these color codes

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**Special transmitters and individual receivers:** This is a solution that we're looking at now in terms of mobility disabilities and being able to allow people to get to safety. How can a deaf person in a deaf environment, who is a wheelchair user, communicate if there is no one there to help them down the steps? If everyone has left, or if a person is working alone in a lab and an emergency happens, and the lab is on the fourth floor, and that person starts going down the steps and encounters a wheelchair user. We need to have a plan and place those emergency chairs so they can be readily used in case of a situation like that. We need to have a sensor or a button that can be pushed when they need help, so that someone can come and assist. Perhaps you remember what college is like in terms of alcohol used, or people want to go out and have a fun time, they want to go play with the button. You can't lock up the equipment; it needs to be accessible. If the sensor is set off, and there is no emergency, then security will know that someone has tampered with it or is playing with the wheelchair.

This is, in brief, our experience. We appreciate working with you, talking with you, analyzing these different things for consideration, looking for possible solutions, and we look to see what can come ahead.

## **Resource 8 - Schools:**

**The Accessible Emergency Notification and Communication Website**  
<http://tap.gallaudet.edu/emergency/nov05conference/EmergencyCommConf.asp>

In 2005 the RERC on Telecommunications Access sponsored a state of the science conference on the accessibility of emergency communications to people with disabilities. This timely seminar brought together experts in accessibility, mass media, emergency communications, telecommunications, Internet, and government policy to analyze barriers and technological solutions for effective emergency communications with and for people with disabilities. This website features informative talks, resources, and videos from that conference.

TOMORROW: Emergency Preparedness for Businesses

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**Carl Pramuk** is currently the Dean of Student Affairs at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. Mr. Pramuk is also a member of the University's Crisis Management Team. He graduated from Gallaudet University with a B.A. in Sociology, and received a M.Ed. from The American University in Student Development in Higher Education.

John Cavanagh and Anne Malia co-edit Emergency Info Online and *30 Resources, 30 Days*.



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**National Preparedness Month, September 2007**  
***30 Days, 30 Resources***

## **II. Business Preparedness**

- **GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS:**  
Emergency Preparedness in the Workplace
  
- **SMALL BUSINESSES, BIG RESPONSIBILITIES:**  
Emergency Preparedness for Small Businesses
  
- **THE ONLY PLAN WORTH HAVING:**  
Emergency Plans that Include Workers with Disabilities
  
- **ECONOMIC EPIDEMIC:**  
Pandemic Preparedness for Businesses
  
- **DOOM SERVICE:**  
Emergency Preparedness in the Hospitality Industry
  
- **FIRST THINGS TO DO:**  
Work Related Emergencies
  
- **THE BUCK STOPS HERE:**  
Employer Responsibilities in Emergencies

## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS:**

#### **Emergency Preparedness in the Workplace**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Whether one works part time, overtime, or all the time, a good deal of most people's hours are spent at their place of employment. Employers and employees take note: Should a disaster strike, there is a real probability that it will occur during work hours. The Department of Homeland Security has designated the second week of National Preparedness Month "Business Preparedness Week." Its premise is that America's businesses form the backbone of the nation's economy. Therefore, if businesses are prepared to withstand and recover from disasters, the nation and our economy will be more secure. In 2006, the United States Small Business Administration reported that up to 25 percent of businesses do not reopen after a major disaster. The reason given is that these businesses are unprepared for a disaster because they have no emergency plans in place. No business, small or large, should risk operating unprepared for an emergency.

#### **When developing a plan...**

When developing an emergency plan, it is advisable to contact others who have already instituted risk or contingency management plans. Another progressive step is to attend seminars and seek out information from local risk management associations or chapters. The Red Cross recommends that, when a business begins to develop a disaster plan, there should be consideration as to how a disaster could affect employees, customers and the workplace. Consider scenarios in which your business could continue operating if the area around the facility was closed or the streets were blocked. Another useful precaution is to designate and educate one employee from each work shift to serve as a safety coordinator. This person will make all decisions relating to employee, customer, and facility safety. Safety coordinators should know how to contact the owner or

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operator of the business at all times. Further suggestions from the Red Cross include:

- Keep phone lists of employees with you, and provide copies to key staff members.
- If you have a voice mail system at your office, designate one remote number on which you can record messages for employees in case of emergencies.
- Install emergency lights that activate when the power goes out.
- Use surge protectors and battery backup systems to add protection for sensitive equipment and to help prevent a computer crash in case of a power outage.
- Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio with a tone alert feature. Keep it on, and when the signal sounds, listen for information about severe weather and protective actions to take.
- Stock a minimum supply of the goods, materials and equipment you would need for business continuity.
- Keep emergency supplies handy, including:
  - Flashlights with extra batteries
  - First aid kit
  - Tools
  - Food and water for employees and customers to use during a period of unexpected confinement at your business

## **Emergency Management**

“Emergency management” is the vigorous process of preparing for, responding to and recovering from a disaster. Emergency planning is essential, but it is not the only necessary action. Training, conducting drills, testing equipment and coordinating activities with the community are essential.

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Emergency management calls for executive support. Upper management sets the stage by authorizing planning to occur, and by instructing senior management to carry out the initiative. When presenting the need for emergency management, emphasize the positive consequences of preparedness, such as the facilitation of compliance with regulatory requirements of federal, state and local agencies. It also enhances a company's public image and credibility with employees, customers, and the community in general, and may also reduce a company's insurance premiums. Emergencies do not "punch the clock"—they can happen at any time, so it is imperative that everyone in a place of business is prepared.

### **Resource 9 - Businesses:**

Emergency Preparedness Guide for Businesses  
<http://www.fema.gov/business/guide/index.shtm>

FEMA offers an online guide that provides step-by-step advice on how to create and maintain a comprehensive emergency management program. The guide can be used by manufacturers, corporate offices, retailers, utilities or any organization where a sizable number of people work or gather.

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| TOMORROW:      Emergency Preparedness for Small Businesses |
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### **About The Authors**

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## **National Preparedness Month: September 2007**

### **SMALL BUSINESSES, BIG RESPONSIBILITIES:**

#### **Emergency Preparedness for Small Businesses**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

According to the Red Cross, over 40% of small businesses hit by a natural disaster do not reopen after the emergency. This is not surprising: When disasters occur, they can strike unexpectedly, and they can strike hard. Small businesses often are already stretched to their financial limit, even *before* having to contend with a catastrophe. While a corporation can easily maneuver funds for recovery purposes, a small business is vulnerable because it usually does not have access to the amount of instant capital available to a larger company. In short, a small business can't afford to be unprepared. In dealing with emergencies, the key to survival is always preparedness. There are precautions that every small business owner can take, and that might just make the difference between failure and success, should a disaster occur.

#### **Recommendations**

The Palm Desert Chamber of Congress offers tips on emergency preparedness for small businesses. Some of their suggestions include:

- Keep staff roster and home, cell phone and emergency contact numbers in the trunk of your car or another place outside of your business.
- Keep hard copies of all necessary forms for the daily operation of your business (i.e., order forms, receipts, sales forms, claim forms, etc.) That way, they can be accessible in use in case of electricity loss.
- Develop a business emergency kit (i.e., blank paper, carbon paper, sharpened pencils, hand-operated pencil sharpener, duct tape, scissors, cord, markers, etc.).
- Develop an emergency survival kit for your office (i.e., flashlights, batteries, water, food, paper cups, first-aid supplies, toilet paper, zip-lock bags, blankets, manual can opener, etc.).

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- Have all staff members keep personal emergency kits, including change of clothes and tennis shoes, on-site or in the trunk of their car.
- Know location of gas and water shut-offs, and have tools to turn them off.
- Know how to manually open your cash register, or have a cash box handy. (Do you have enough small bills on hand in case of emergency?)
- Develop a relationship with a sister business in another city. (For emergency contact and/or to keep your business running on a night shift.)
- Know which staff in your organization knows first aid, CPR, etc. If there is no one, have a staff member trained.

## **Risk Analysis**

The Coordinating Committee of New York recommends that, when planning for a disaster, special attention be given to risk analysis (the process of identifying credible threats that could cause an interruption in a business). Certain risks can come from within a business, for example, an organization that has a kitchen on its premises or one that stores hazardous cleaning chemicals onsite. Other risks come from external forces such as flood, fire, loss of power, or a natural disaster. A detailed risk analysis should consider an organization's physical surroundings, and include elements such as security, emergency lighting in halls and stairways, fire escape routes and exits, storing of toxic chemicals, etc. There are organizations and professionals that can be hired to help with this process. Additionally, most insurance brokers have experts that they can recommend as well. The National Fire Protection Association ([www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)) publishes codes and standards intended to minimize the possibility and effects of fire and other risks.

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## **Preparations and Recovery**

Insurance could be the crucial factor in a small company's ability to recover from a disaster. Therefore, it is imperative that you make certain to keep your business insurance current. Consider "business interruption" and "extra expense" coverage. Make sure to keep copies of important insurance papers offsite. Also, keep off-site copies of inventory, equipment list, tax returns, and computer back-ups. Take "before" photographs of your business, building and inventory. Keep these photos off site, as well. Following the disaster, it is a good idea to maintain a daily log of all actions taken (insurance adjuster visits, visit to FEMA office, temporary shelter costs), including all expenses. Keep all records of estimates of repairs, invoices, receipts, canceled checks, etc. Take photographs (or a video) of the building and its inventory to compare with the photos you took before the disaster. If appropriate, file for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Small Business Administration (SBA) assistance.

## **Resource 10 - Businesses:**

### **Open For Business**

<http://www.ibhs.org/docs/OpenForBusiness.pdf>

The Institute of Business and Home Safety produced this disaster planning toolkit to protect small business owners, their employees, and their customers from disaster loss. The publication also provides information on protecting a small business's critical resources, developing a business continuity plan, and an incident response and recovery checklist.

TOMORROW: Emergency Plans that Include Workers with Disabilities

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **THE ONLY PLAN WORTH HAVING:**

#### **Emergency Plans that Include Workers with Disabilities**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Every company should have an emergency plan in place in the event of a disaster. When determining whether or not your company's emergency plan would be effective for individuals with disabilities, there are many questions for an employer to consider. For example, in the event of an emergency, would employees with mobility impairments be trapped if they worked above the ground floor? Would employers be able to inform emergency response workers about the medical needs of any injured employees with disabilities? What if employees with special medical requirements were stranded in the workplace?

According to the Job Accommodation Network, "The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that employers, public services, and public accommodations and services operated by private entities modify their policies and procedures to include people with disabilities. This means that employers may be required to provide reasonable accommodations to employees so they can evacuate during emergencies. If visitors are allowed on the work site, a business may want to invite voluntary disclosure about whether they require assistance in an emergency."

#### **Recommendations:**

The United States Department of Labor offers suggestions to consider when developing, implementing and maintaining a workplace emergency plan:

- Ensure that all phases of emergency management consider the needs of people with disabilities. Involve individuals with disabilities at the planning stage in order to ensure that the needs of individuals with disabilities are adequately addressed in the plan.
- Obtain support and commitment from senior-level management to assure appropriate financial and personnel resources.

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- Involve key personnel in emergency management activities, including building managers, safety and security personnel, first responders, managers and the disability community.
- Educate all necessary staff as to the steps for evaluating an emergency and taking subsequent action. With regard to shelter-in-place, establish plans that facilitate communication with all staff and visitors, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Ensure that necessary procedures, equipment, signage and supports are in place to safely evacuate all employees. Remember to consider individuals with various types of disabilities. Talk with employees, other employers, community-based organizations and local emergency response personnel to determine the most appropriate solutions for your workplace and employees.
- Ensure that all employees and visitors, including those who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision, have access to the same information in a detailed and timely manner.
- Develop a support network of several individuals without disabilities who are willing to assist employees with disabilities in an emergency.

### **Practice Makes Perfect**

Once you have developed a viable emergency plan, practice it regularly. Practice is a crucial element of emergency preparedness. Run drills for various forms of emergencies. Each drill should be conducted as seriously as if it were an actual emergency. Practice provides the opportunity to “work the bugs out” of your emergency plan so you can develop the most effective plan possible. Remember that planning is an ongoing effort, and plans (and associated documents) should never be regarded as final or complete. They must be evaluated on a regular basis and updated as required. The Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Policy states that “while employers bear much of the responsibility for emergency preparedness planning, employees with disabilities must also take the initiative to ensure their safety. Employees should not assume plans have or will be put in

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place for them. Regardless of the circumstances, emergency preparedness plans must be flexible. It is a very real possibility that not everyone who needs assistance in an emergency has self-identified. In addition, there may be instances when an emergency exacerbates existing impairments or creates new ones, affecting an individual's ability to evacuate. Effective practice helps build flexibility into an agency emergency preparedness plan and improve the safety and security of all employees.”

## **Resource 11 - Businesses:**

### **STEPS FOR INCLUDING EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES IN EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLANNING**

<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/emergency.html>

Interest in emergency evacuation planning has increased dramatically since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. In turn, the Job Accommodation Network posts an online publication designed to answer employers' questions about their legal obligation to develop emergency evacuation plans and how to include employees with disabilities in such plans.

TOMORROW: Pandemic Preparedness for Businesses

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **ECONOMIC EPIDEMIC:**

#### **Pandemic Preparedness for Businesses**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

An influenza pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population. A global influenza pandemic could have a disastrous effect on the world economy. Preparations for pandemic influenza by business and industry are essential to minimize a pandemic's impact. Companies that provide critical infrastructure services (power, food, water, medicine, and telecommunications) have a special responsibility to plan for continued operation in a pandemic, and should plan accordingly. Unlike natural disasters, an influenza pandemic would be widespread, hitting multiple areas of the United States (and other countries) simultaneously. A pandemic will also be an extended event, with multiple waves of outbreaks in the same geographic area; each outbreak could last from 6 to 8 weeks. Waves of outbreaks may occur over a year or more. A workplace is likely to experience absenteeism and interrupted delivery as shipments from outbreak areas may be delayed or cancelled. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, "In the event of an influenza pandemic, employers will play a key role in protecting employees' health and safety as well as in limiting the impact on the economy and society. Proper planning will allow employers in the public and private sectors to better protect their employees and lessen the impact of a pandemic on society and the economy."

#### **OSHA's Pandemic Plan Recommendations**

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recommends that businesses develop a disaster plan that includes pandemic preparedness.

Suggestions include:

- Review federal, state and local health department pandemic influenza plans. Incorporate appropriate actions from these plans into workplace disaster plans.
- Prepare and plan for operations with a reduced workforce.
- Work with your suppliers to ensure that you can continue to operate and provide services.
- Develop a sick-leave policy that does not penalize sick employees, thereby encouraging employees who have influenza-related symptoms (e.g., fever, headache, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, or upset stomach) to stay home so that they do not infect other employees. Recognize that employees with ill family members may need to stay home to care for them.
- Identify possible exposure and health risks to your employees. Are employees potentially in contact with people with influenza, such as in a hospital or clinic? Are your employees expected to have a lot of contact with the general public?
- Minimize exposure to fellow employees or the public. For example, will more of your employees work from home? This may require enhancement of technology and communications equipment.
- Identify business-essential positions and people required to sustain business-necessary functions and operations. Prepare to cross-train or develop ways to function in the absence of these positions. It is recommended that employers train three or more employees to be able to sustain business-necessary functions and operations, and communicate the expectation for available employees to perform these functions if needed during a pandemic.

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- Plan for downsizing services, but also anticipate any scenario that may require a surge in your services.
- Stockpile items such as soap, tissue, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies and recommended personal protective equipment. When stockpiling items, be aware of each product's shelf life and storage conditions and incorporate product into your stockpile management program.
- Make sure that your disaster plan protects and supports your employees, customers and the general public. Be aware of your employees' concerns about pay, leave, safety and health. Informed employees who feel safe at work are less likely to be absent.
- Develop policies and practices that distance employees from each other, customers and the general public. Consider practices to minimize face-to-face contact between employees such as e-mail, websites and teleconferences. Policies and practices that allow employees to work from home or to stagger their work shifts may be important as absenteeism rises.
- Organize and identify a central team of people or focal point to serve as a communication source so that your employees and customers can have accurate information during the crisis.
- Work with your employees and their union(s) to address leave, pay, transportation, travel, childcare, absence and other human resource issues.
- Provide your employees and customers in your workplace with easy access to infection control supplies, such as soap, hand sanitizers, personal protective equipment (such as gloves or surgical masks), tissues, and office cleaning supplies.

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- Provide training, education and informational material about business-essential job functions and employee health and safety, including proper hygiene practices and the use of any personal protective equipment to be used in the workplace. Be sure that informational material is available in a usable format for individuals with sensory disabilities and/or limited English proficiency. Encourage employees to take care of their health by eating right, getting plenty of rest and getting a seasonal flu vaccination.
- Work with your insurance companies, and state and local health agencies to provide information to employees and customers about medical care in the event of a pandemic.
- Assist employees in managing additional stress factors related to the pandemic. These are likely to include distress related to personal or family illness, life disruption, grief related to loss of family, friends or coworkers, loss of routine support systems, and similar challenges. Assuring timely and accurate communication will also be important throughout the duration of the pandemic in decreasing fear or worry. Employers should provide opportunities for support, counseling, and mental health assessment and referral, should these be necessary. If established, Employee Assistance Programs can offer training and provide resources and other guidance on mental health and resiliency before and during a pandemic.

### **Homeland Security Resource**

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security(DHS), “eighty-five percent of critical infrastructure resources reside in the private sector, which generally lacks individual and system-wide business continuity plans specifically for catastrophic health emergencies such as pandemic influenza.” The DHS is committed to educating the nation’s business owners about preparing for a

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pandemic. The DHS maintains that understanding the overall context of pandemic planning offers business contingency planners a practical framework in which to develop and execute their plans. To this effect, Homeland Security has produced a publication entitled “Pandemic Influenza Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Guide for Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources.” This publication addresses questions such as:

- How will a pandemic affect my business and those that depend on me?
- Where will it appear first?
- How will government help to inform and support my business?
- How can my business help to support my business sector, my community and our nation?

This 84-page document is available online and can be accessed and downloaded by visiting

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/pdf/cikrpandemicinfluenzaguide.pdf>

## **Resource 12 – Businesses:**

**The Business Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist**  
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/businesschecklist.html>

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have developed a checklist for businesses. It identifies important, specific activities that businesses can do now to prepare for a pandemic. Many of these actions will also help in other emergencies.

TOMORROW: Emergency Preparedness in the Hospitality Industry

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## **National Preparedness Month: September 2007**

### **DOOM SERVICE:**

#### **Emergency Preparedness in the Hospitality Industry**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

The massive power outage that occurred on August 14, 2003, left some 50 million Americans and Canadians without electricity for as long as 48 hours. It also left hotels in the Northeastern United States and Canada without electricity for an average of sixteen hours—a situation that could just as easily have been caused by an earthquake, an ice storm or even a terrorist attack. This event provided the opportunity to examine the hotel industry's response to a crisis that would render their facilities powerless. A study of nearly 150 hoteliers was performed by surveying selected participants in the Smith Travel Research database. The study revealed that the hotels often did not have backup power to maintain critical systems after emergency power failed. Some hotels lost access to a consumable water supply, including running water for sanitary facilities. Nearly 50% of the hotels did not have emergency power for the entire period of the outage. A relationship existed between the type of emergency power system used (battery as opposed to generator) and whether emergency systems were functional throughout the event. Fifteen percent of battery backup emergency systems lasted, while 85 percent of generator-driven systems stayed on.

### **Employee Safety**

During the 2003 blackout, it was widely reported that hotel staffs went above and beyond the call of duty to care for their visitors' needs and safety. In order for this kind of response to occur during an emergency, the employees of the property must first remain safe themselves. Hotel managers should review, and update when necessary, employee evacuation and notification plans. Management should also make sure that all hotel employees are aware of all emergency plans and policies. Employees who are remaining at a property during an emergency

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should be supplied with drinkable water, non-perishable food items, first aid kits, communication devices and flashlights. Management should institute procedures to account for employees and to disseminate information to them.

### **The Terrorist Threat**

According to a 2004 survey of hotels, convention centers, airlines and cruise lines, 55% of hotel general managers and security managers said their emergency plans could not handle a terrorist attack. Seven out of ten said their employees were not adequately trained to respond to such an emergency. The Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International, (HSMAI) an organization of sales and marketing professionals representing all segments of the hospitality industry, has been emphasizing the need for education regarding emergency preparedness, particularly in protecting hotels and guests from terrorism.

According to HSMAI, such a severe threat requires serious attention, especially in matters of security. Traditionally, “hotel detectives” operated undercover. In the post-9/11 environment, security should be high profile, as both a deterrent to terrorists and as a reassuring presence for guests. Also, other hotel employees should be trained to be alert to unusual or suspicious activities, and to take appropriate action if required. Finally, it is extremely important that thorough background checks are run on all employees and applicants—especially those with access to rooms and food. Make certain that you are secure in your use of suppliers and services, as well.

### **Emergency Preparedness Essentials**

Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration runs the Center for Hospitality Research (CHR). This establishment is dedicated to conducting studies and providing forums to improve the connections between academia and industry.

The CHR has developed “Emergency Preparedness Essentials,” a management tool that provides hospitality executives and managers with a resource to prepare for the loss of electrical power in an emergency or natural disaster. A key feature of the tool is an emergency preparedness checklist that includes these elements:

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performing crisis simulations and planning appropriate responses; knowing where your hotel is vulnerable if power goes down; and knowing which systems are on emergency or standby power and which are not. The tool is available from the Cornell Center for Hospitality Research via the CHR website. You must register to access the feature, but the service is free. Visit <http://www.hotelschool.cornell.edu/research/chr/pubs/tools/tooldetails-13629.html>

## **Resource 13 - Businesses:**

### **The AH&LA Preparedness Resource Page**

<http://www.ahla.com/prepare.asp>

The American Hotel and Lodging Association posts a comprehensive webpage that features informative links designed to help the hotel industry prepare for emergencies, including hurricanes, floods, pandemics, terrorism, fires, biochemical disasters, and earthquakes. There are also links to pertinent organizations, such as OSHA, FEMA, and the Red Cross.

**TOMORROW: First Things to do in Work Related Emergencies**

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **FIRST THINGS TO DO:**

#### **Work Related Emergencies**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Due to their unexpected nature, emergency situations are often chaotic. People react to different situations in different ways, and it is very common for an individual to lose his or her composure during a crisis and forget the appropriate actions to take. Although it is necessary to have a detailed emergency plan, one should also have a very basic concept of what to do in the event of an emergency. By making a “First Things To Do” list, businesses can be confident that members of the work force will be able to handle themselves properly in the event of a disaster. Each emergency situation is different, but there are basic guidelines that can help you through any incident that might occur. The following list of the first things to do in any emergency contains overall tips that could fit most situations.

#### **First Things to Do in Any Emergency**

- Stay calm. This will allow you to think clearly and use common sense.
- Access the scenario for danger. Decide whether it is safer to evacuate or shelter-in-place.
- Once safely evacuated or sheltered-in-place, call for help using 911 and clearly explain what you know about the situation.
- Provide first aid for any injured people. Move any people who are injured away from further danger.
- Obtain as much information about the emergency as possible, without putting yourself in danger. Pass the information on to emergency responders when they arrive on the scene.

The most common office emergencies are fires, so it is important that all businesses and offices have a plan for what they would do in the event that a fire starts in their building. Each employee should be familiar with the following list in order to know what to do in case of an evacuation. While the above mentioned

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steps will help in *any* emergency, these more specific actions could make the difference between life and death during a fire.

### **First Things To Do in a Fire**

**1. Know your escape routes.** Make sure that employees are aware of the easiest escape route. Elevators should always be avoided, as they are often unreliable or even dangerous to use during an emergency. If there is only one exit route or if the business is in a high-rise building, employees should be familiar with the location of the fire escapes and how to safely exit the building using them. Do not forget to plan usable escape routes for employees who have disabilities, and designate someone to assist them in the event of an evacuation.

**2. Stay low.** As we are taught at a young age, smoke rises, and it is important to stay low to ground in order to avoid it. This is an easy step that every employee should remember, because it will make evacuation easier (since the escaping employee will be able to see more clearly and will be breathing in less smoke.) Feel doors for heat to judge whether fire is on the other side. If fire *is* on the other side, make sure that the door is completely closed and wave a towel or piece of clothing out the window to get the attention of a firefighter or a rescuer.

**3. Call for help.** Never stop while inside a burning building to call 911—get out first! In many cases, a neighbor or passerby might have called 911 while you were in the process of evacuating the building. However, if responders still have not arrived on the scene, it is important to make sure that someone *has* called. If the fire was small, people from the outside of the building might not have been able to detect it. Never assume that someone else has called rescuers. Waiting even a few minutes before making that 911 call could cost lives.

**4. Get to a meeting spot.** Most likely, your business has a meeting place set up where employees will meet if the building is evacuated. If your business doesn't have such a spot, take the initiative to set one up! As soon as you get out of the burning building, get to the meeting spot. Once there, employees can survey who is safe and who might be trapped inside the building. Employees can then alert firefighters as to where their co-workers may be located.

## Resource 14 - Businesses:

### Fire Safety Directory

<http://www.firesafety.gov/directory/>

This free online directory contains links to residential fire safety resources available on the websites of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the U.S. Fire Administration. A brief description of each resource is provided, along with a link to the resource webpage.

TOMORROW: Employer Responsibilities in Emergencies

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **THE BUCK STOPS HERE:**

#### **Employer Responsibilities in Emergencies**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Employers have to follow certain regulations regarding emergency preparedness. The U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is charged with issuing these obligations to employers in order to ensure that their office or place of business is prepared to handle an emergency situation. These responsibilities include:

1. Posting clear and visible signs that label exits and show routes of emergency exits.
2. Establishing an emergency plan and communicating it to employees.
3. Eliminating possible hazards from the workplace.

It is important for employees and employers alike to be aware of these rules and make sure that they are followed. While OSHA provides legal guidelines for employers and business owners, there are certain practices that are important, but are not legally required. It is important that employers *and* employees stay up-to-date on the most current federal and industry recommendations for emergency preparation and planning. When it comes to emergency preparedness, simply meeting the bare minimum of requirements is unwise, because so much more can be done in order to be fully prepared for any situation that arises.

#### **Recommended Preparedness Tips for Employers:**

**1. Being informed.** Any number of emergencies and disasters can occur at any time. Employers should spend time looking into which emergencies are most likely to strike their company, based on several factors: location, size and the nature of the business. Look at other businesses like yours, and other businesses in your general area to see which emergencies you should be preparing for. A common mistake made by business owners is having a plan for only one type of emergency. For instance, a business might have a thorough fire

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evacuation plan, but no plan whatsoever regarding a situation that calls for a shelter-in-place response.

**2. Communication between employers and employees.** There should be a clear emergency plan that is understood by all employers and employees—regardless of their level in the business. People panic when they do not know what is happening, and that is why it is important for every employee to have a clear idea of what would take place in any given emergency. Employers should have knowledge of any special needs or disabilities that their employees have which would require special assistance. The emergency plan should be discussed often on a regular scheduled basis, as well as when a new employee is hired.

**3. Creating emergency supply kits.** Of course, a large corporation cannot be expected to create specialized emergency kits for each and every person who works at the company. However, employers and employees can work together to decide what should be the responsibility of the company, and what should be the responsibility of the employee. Companies may decide that they will be responsible for basics that each employee will need (i.e., keeping on hand a supply of food and water that could last each person at least three days), while employees will agree to keep any extra or specialized supplies in their own portable emergency kit.

**4. Safety of employees.** As in any emergency situation, at home or at a place of business, the first and foremost concern is the safety of everyone involved. Much like schools and households, businesses can follow these same rules: Have a meeting place outside your office building or store where every employee of the company can meet; have a complete list of all workers to check each off when they are confirmed to be okay, and; have a telephone number (on an outside answering message system) that employees can call and leave a message letting the company know that they are okay.

### **When Tragedy Cannot be Avoided – What Employers Can Do**

Emergencies and disasters are a fact of life. No matter how prepared we are, they will still happen, and as most people spend a majority of their day in the workplace, it is obvious that the potential for disaster will follow them there.

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It is important for employers to remember that people can be emotionally affected by a disaster or emergency even when it does not seem that they have a direct connection to it. We have seen from national events such as the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina that the effects of a disaster reach much farther than the immediate surrounding area. The following are three suggestions for employers for dealing with people who, in one way or another, have been affected by an emergency.

**1. Provide communication opportunities.** People react to disasters and emergencies in different ways. Although many people may not be in the mood to be sociable after a tragedy takes place, it can be helpful for them to be able to vent feelings of frustration or stress. Even something as simple as an office-wide lunch meeting may create a sense of community and encourage people to grieve socially. A charity social event is a wonderful opportunity for this, because people will be able to get together to better communicate about the event, while also contributing to a worthwhile cause.

**2. Be honest and open with information.** During any type of emergency, people will constantly be exchanging information that may or may not be factual. It is important for employers to communicate the same information to everyone. People deserve to know the truth, and should be informed of all information possible without breaking any confidentiality standards. Knowing all of the straight facts can calm people down and increase productivity because people may be less inclined to seek information via the Internet or inter-office gossip.

**3. Understand peoples' feelings.** Employees are naturally going to feel upset, sad, or stressed after a major emergency or disaster occurs. Understand that people take differing amounts of time to adjust to situations; while one person may be able to return to work with full productivity, someone else may need more time. The most important thing to remember is that people will adjust to the situation in their own ways, and that is why it's necessary for employers to be kind and understanding during and after emergency situations.

## **Responsibilities**

Being in a position of leadership in a company comes with many responsibilities. One of the most important ones is knowing how to handle emergency situations.

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Taking the appropriate steps towards emergency preparedness might save not only your business, but the lives of your employees and yourself.

## **Resource 15 - Businesses:**

### **READY Business**

<http://www.ready.gov/business/index.html>

READY Business, a division of READY.gov under the Department of Homeland Security, provides tips and suggestions, as well as legal mandates that employers have when it comes to preparing their business for emergency situations.

TOMORROW: Emergency Preparedness in Rural Communities

### **About The Authors**

**John Cavanagh** is Communications Director for Bridge Multimedia and Chief Researcher for Emergency Information Online.

**Anne Malia** writes about technology and emergency preparedness for people with special needs and has contributed to the production of

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**National Preparedness Month, September 2007**  
***30 Days, 30 Resources***

### **III. Multicultural and Regional Preparedness**

▪ **THE BIG COUNTRY:**

Emergency Preparedness in Rural Communities

▪ **THE ONCOMING STORM:**

Emergency Preparedness in Coastal Communities

▪ **A RATTLESNAKE'S TAIL:**

Emergency Preparedness in the American Southwest

▪ **FORCE OF NATURE:**

Emergency Preparedness in the Interior Plains

▪ **SAFE CITIES:**

Emergency Preparedness in Urban Centers

▪ **BLIZZARD WARNING!**

Emergency Preparedness in Northern Communities

▪ **EVACUATE! Urban**

Evacuation Preparedness

## **National Preparedness Month: September 2007**

### **THE BIG COUNTRY:**

#### **Emergency Preparedness in Rural Communities**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Although rural communities across America vary greatly in terms of economy and geography, there are important similarities within these communities, particularly when considering emergency preparedness. For instance, many rural areas are subject to extreme weather conditions, such as blizzards, tornados or flash floods. Also, many rural communities report having limited personnel with experience responding to large-scale disasters or emergencies. In terms of biohazards and chemical emergencies, rural areas often have limited access to hazardous materials (HAZMAT) equipment and resources and have limited facilities to quarantine and decontaminate small or large groups of people. According to the Office of Rural Health Policy, "Adequate emergency preparedness in rural communities depends on public health departments, hospitals and emergency medical services (EMS) providers. However, rural public health departments tend to have less capacity and resources than their urban counterparts. For example, mental health providers are much more common in metropolitan public health agencies. In addition, hospitals are often the nucleus of health planning, activity and resources in rural communities. However, national policy changes have encouraged hospitals to downsize bed capacity in an effort to contain costs and, as a result, rural hospitals lack surge capacity for personnel and beds. Furthermore, rural EMS often relies on volunteers and may lack funding and adequate equipment."

#### **A Question of Priorities**

According to the Michigan Rural Health Association, in rural communities there are fewer financial and staff resources to assist in compliance with the numerous federal and state-level emergency preparedness activities. In spite of its importance, participation in emergency preparedness planning is viewed as an

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“unfunded mandate” in many rural communities. Also, excepting communities near nuclear or hydroelectric plants, most rural Americans believe themselves to be much less at risk from terrorist activity. Their health system leaders express ambivalence about emergency preparedness and perceive it as a low risk in comparison to the significant burdens they face in financial, human resource, and regulatory matters. The Michigan Rural Health Association reports that hospital administrators in particular express additional ambivalence about investing time and resources into emergency preparedness while facing so many other pressures in finance, staffing, quality and regulatory compliance. The perceived low risk of a terrorist event places emergency preparedness quite low on rural hospital administrators’ list of priorities list.

### **Recommendations**

The National Rural Health Association, a national nonprofit membership organization that provides leadership on rural health issues, maintains that, while tenets for preparedness can be legislated and resources centrally collated, funding and requirements need to be flexible enough to accommodate appropriate solutions, in accordance with rural local needs. Also, the rural health infrastructure (which includes workforce, EMS, laboratory and information systems) and components of the public health system (which includes education and research) must be strengthened to increase the ability to identify, respond to, and prevent problems of public health. Further recommendations from the National Rural Health Association include:

- Health professionals, volunteers/ first responders, and the public must be educated to better identify, respond to, and prevent the health consequences of terrorism and promote the visibility and availability of health professionals in the communities that they serve.
- Mental health needs of populations that are directly or indirectly affected by terrorism must be addressed.

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- The protection of the environment and food and water supplies, and the health and safety of rescue and recovery workers must be ensured.
- Clarification and communication of roles, relationships and responsibilities among health agencies, law enforcement and first responders must be assured.
- Simultaneous and coordinated systems planning must occur at the local, regional and state levels.
- Hospitals must be included as first responders in planning, funding and training.
- Hospitals and health systems cannot be expected to absorb the costs of disaster preparedness alone, and will need additional resources to fulfill their role in the emergency response system.

The National Rural Health Association concludes with a reminder that “not all areas are directly served by hospitals, therefore flexibility in funding will also be needed. In addressing these rural needs, the variability of health infrastructures, capacity, capabilities and needs must be taken into consideration. Furthermore, the most rural frontier areas may lack even the basic health and infrastructure access. Federal legislation addressing national preparedness must recognize that public health threats can emerge anywhere at any time. A basic level of care for a national response must be developed and funded to ensure our national and rural preparedness.”

## **Taking Action**

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Rural participants in regional planning must be assertive in identifying obstacles in newly-developing emergency plans, and in presenting alternatives that accommodate rural situations and the unique needs of rural communities. In addition, communities in rural areas should develop coalitions to facilitate planning and communication between multiple counties, and should seek to plan in conjunction with any nearby urban centers, if possible. It is also crucial that rural communities vigorously participate in the development, execution and review of disaster drills. These drills *must* be designed as a realistic test of rural capacities. An emergency drill can be a large-scale enactment or a smaller, less dramatic exercise. Drills are essential in preparing communities for unfamiliar scenarios.

## Resource 16 – Regional Preparedness:

### **Rural Communities and Emergency Preparedness**

<ftp://ftp.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/RuralPreparedness.pdf>

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Rural Health Policy posts a report developed to address rural emergency preparedness by describing rural public health infrastructure and an overview of rural emergency preparedness. The document also highlights the experiences of State Offices of Rural Health in responding to emergencies and in enhancing the responsiveness of rural communities in their states.

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| TOMORROW: Emergency Preparedness in Coastal Communities |
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## **National Preparedness Month: September 2007**

### **THE ONCOMING STORM:**

#### **Emergency Preparedness in Coastal Communities.**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

In 2005, the number of Americans living in coastal counties passed the 150 million mark. This means that the coastal population is now larger than the entire U.S. population was in 1950. It also means that today, more than half of the U.S. population lives in coastal areas. The population growth of coastal areas of the United States heightens the importance of emergency preparedness for these areas, which often are vulnerable to severe weather conditions. All Atlantic and Gulf coastal areas are subject to hurricanes, as the U.S. Pacific Islands are to typhoons and tropical storms. Because of a limited number of evacuation routes, hurricanes are especially dangerous to barrier islands such as the Outer Banks of North Carolina and areas like the Florida Keys and New Orleans, Louisiana. Although rarely struck by hurricanes, parts of the Southwest and the Pacific Coast can experience heavy rains and floods from the remnants of hurricanes coming up the coast from Mexico. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recommends that if you live in an area prone to hurricanes, you should:

- Know the hurricane risks in your area
- Learn safe routes inland.
- Find out where official shelters are located.
- Develop a family hurricane action plan.
- Ensure working condition of emergency equipment, such as flashlights and battery-powered radios.
- Make sure to have enough non-perishable food and water supplies on hand.
- Trim trees and shrubbery on your property.
- Buy plywood or shutters to protect doors and windows.

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- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Designate a safe place to store your boat in an emergency.
- Check insurance policies to determine whether you have flood and wind coverage.
- Know your community safety plan.

### **Coastal, River, and Flash Flooding**

Although flooding is a common occurrence in coastal communities, it can be a deadly serious matter. A major flood can become a catastrophe. Federal agencies estimate that 125 people die every year in the United States because of flooding. Preparation and effective response to flood conditions can reduce the dangers they create. There are many different types of floods, including *river flooding*, *coastal flooding* and *flash floods*. River flooding occurs when heavy rains or rapid snowmelt causes river levels to rise. Flash floods usually result from intense storms that bring heavy rainfall within a brief period. Flash floods occur with little or no warning, can reach full peak in just a few minutes, and can have dramatic effects, since terrain cannot always absorb the sudden downpour quickly enough. Coastal flooding can happen due to tidal surges or flash flooding. During hurricanes or other large storms, waves may be much higher than normal, and in a storm surge, low atmospheric pressure often forces seas to rise above normal. A combination of these conditions can create widespread flooding in low-lying coastal areas.

### **Before a Flood**

If you live in an area at risk of flooding, make long-range preparations, including elevating and reinforcing your home (or at the very least, elevating the furnace, water heater, and electric panel, if susceptible to flooding). Also, install “check valves” in sewer traps to prevent water from backing up into the drains of your home. Construct barriers—levees, beams, or floodwalls—to stop water from entering the building. Seal walls in basements with a waterproofing compound to avoid seepage. If a hurricane or major storm is imminent, monitor for official

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bulletins of the storm's progress via radio, TV or NOAA Weather Radio. Have preparations ready to cover all windows and doors with shutters or shielding materials. Bring lightweight objects, such as garbage cans, garden tools, toys and lawn furniture, inside. Check batteries and stock up on canned food, first-aid supplies, drinking water and medications. Have extra cash on hand.

Make sure that family vehicles are fueled and serviced. Plan to evacuate if a storm is extremely severe and you live on the coastline; on an offshore island; near a river or a flood plain; or in a mobile home, which are unsafe in high winds, no matter how well anchored to the ground. If you are instructed to leave the area, *do not* ignore the order! If you are directed by authorities to evacuate:

- Take only essential items with you.
- If you have time, turn off the gas, electricity, and water.
- Unplug appliances to avoid electrical shock when power is restored.
- Follow the designated evacuation routes and expect heavy traffic.
- Do not attempt to drive or walk across creeks or flooded roads.

### **During a Flood**

During a severe storm, listen to the radio or television for information. Be aware that flash flooding is possible. If there is any chance of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move. Be aware of streams, drainage channels, and canyons; these areas are prone to sudden flooding, and flash floods can occur in these areas with or without typical warnings, such as rain clouds or heavy rain. In case of strong winds:

- Stay away from windows and doors, even if they are covered.
- Take refuge in a small interior room, closet or hallway.
- Close all interior doors.
- Secure and brace external doors.
- In a two-story house, go to an interior first-floor room, such as a bathroom or closet.

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- In a multiple-story building, go to the first or second floor, and take shelter in an interior room away from windows.
- Lie on the floor under a table or other sturdy object.

During a flood, stay away from moving water. As little as six inches of moving water can sweep you away. Do not allow children, especially under age 13, to play in flooded areas; they often drown or are injured in areas that appear safe. If someone needs to be rescued, call professionals with the right equipment to help. Many people have been killed or injured trying to rescue others in flooded areas. Remember to stay away from standing water because it may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines. Always use a flashlight for emergency lighting; never use candles or other open flames indoors, as there may be a gas leak. Do not use tap water for drinking and cooking until local officials say it is safe to do so. Use the telephone only for emergency calls to notify neighbors and a family member outside of the affected area of your evacuation plans. When you leave, take pets with you. Leaving pets behind is likely to result in their being injured, lost or killed. Move to a safe area before your escape route is cut off by floodwater.

### **After a Flood**

After a flood, listen to radio, TV or NOAA Weather Radio to keep aware of road conditions. Wait until an area is declared safe before entering. Do not attempt to drive across flowing water. As little as six inches of water can cause you to lose control of your vehicle. Two feet of water can carry most cars away. If you see water flowing across a roadway, *turn around and find another route!*

FEMA recommends that the following steps be taken after a flood occurs:

- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.

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- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage. Water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Avoid moving water.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- Stay away from downed power lines, and report them to the power company.
- Return home only when authorities indicate that it is safe to do so.
- Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
- Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are serious health hazards.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and chemicals.

## Resource 17 – Regional Preparedness:

### FLOODS

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/guides/floods.html>

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration posts an informative webpage about preparing for flood conditions and responding to them effectively. It is free and features answers to frequently asked questions to help workers understand how floods and flood response may affect their health and safety.

TOMORROW: Emergency Preparedness in the American Southwest

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## **National Preparedness Month: September 2007**

### **A RATTLESNAKE'S TAIL:**

#### **Emergency Preparedness in the American Southwest**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

The American Southwest is home to some of the most astonishing areas in the country, including burning deserts and otherworldly canyons. Although breathtaking, the terrain can be stark and unforgiving. The Native Americans who live in the region have survived there for over a thousand years, and have a unique understanding of the land and its wonders—and dangers. There is a Navaho proverb that states, “There is nothing as eloquent as a rattlesnake’s tail.” This illustrates perfectly the proper attitude to take towards emergency preparedness. Having knowledge and respect for warning signs can often help avert potential disaster.

The Navajo Nation consists of twelve counties, which span across three states: Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. For such a large area, contending with emergency response issues—often without proper technology for communication—can raise a number of challenges. Addressing emergency preparedness is very important for the Navajo Nation, which has suffered a number of disasters, including wildfires, floods, and outbreaks of disease among both humans and animals.

The Global Disaster Information Network (GDIN) is a non-profit coalition of international professionals and organizations dedicated to providing disaster information. GDIN recently announced a plan to create a specialized disaster information network designed and managed by Native Americans. The network would be made up of offices established on Native American land for the purpose of helping to alert the various tribes of impending disasters. GDIN’s plan also

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includes providing recovery information and education regarding emergency information challenges faced by certain communities. So far, participants in the Native American network have included the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Department of the Interior and the National Congress of American Indians.

Herman Shorty, director of the Navajo Nation Office of Environmental Health, is excited about the plan. “As we become more knowledgeable of the hazards out there and identify them, we’re recognizing the need of partnership with neighboring responders. Whether it’s natural or biological, [emergencies] know no boundaries or color—we need to stand unified,” said Shorty, who also chairs the Navajo Nation Emergency Management Committee. The committee is made up of 13 people, including the police chief, fire chief, various health workers, and other emergency officials. It also works with members of the Pueblo Nation, a tribe that is seeking to establish one of the network’s “nodes” within its territory.

Whether signals of possible danger are delivered on a small scale or a large scale—through a rattlesnake’s tail or a technical communications network—it is essential they be received and understood so that an effective response can be put into effect.

## Resource 18 – Regional Preparedness:

### **Emergency Management Training for Tribal Representatives**

<http://www.fema.gov/government/tribal/training.shtm>

FEMA offers a course that provides tribal leaders and representatives with a basic understanding of emergency management principles and defines their role in leading and directing their tribes in developing and implementing comprehensive emergency management systems. Specific topics include definition and analysis of hazards, developing an emergency operations plan, assuring readiness through training and exercises, forming partnerships in the

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public and private sectors, and upgrading and sustaining emergency management capabilities.

TOMORROW: Force of Nature: Emergency Preparedness in the Interior Plains

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## **National Preparedness Month: September 2007**

### **FORCE OF NATURE:**

#### **Emergency Preparedness in the Interior Plains**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

The Interior Plains of the United States extend over 1,000 miles, from the Appalachians to the Rocky Mountains. Water drainage for most of the region is provided by the Mississippi-Missouri river system. The Interior Plains can be divided into two sections: the Central Lowlands, agricultural 'breadbasket' of the U.S.; and the Great Plains, a treeless plateau that gently slopes upward from the Central Lowlands toward the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The Black Hills of South Dakota form the region's only upland area. Within these vast boundaries there exists an area with the unofficial yet ominous name of "Tornado Alley." Tornado Alley is commonly defined as the location where the strongest tornadoes happen most frequently—usually stretching from Northern Texas up through Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and into South Dakota. It is important to remember that tornadoes can occur in many parts of the country (and the world)—but in the U.S., most occur in the Interior Plains during the spring and summer months.

#### **Tornadoes!**

A tornado is defined as a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground. Annually, on average, 800 tornadoes are reported nationwide. These severe windstorms result in an average of 80 deaths and over 1,500 injuries every year! Most tornadoes travel at wind speeds of up to 110 miles per hour, are approximately 250 feet across, and travel a few miles before dissipating. However, the most violent tornadoes are capable of incredible destruction, at wind speeds of 250 mph or more. The path of damage they create can be in excess of one mile wide and up to 50 miles long. When such an awesome force of nature is a part of life, emergency preparedness becomes an

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absolute necessity. Knowing exactly what to do when you see a tornado, or when you hear a tornado warning, can help save your life and the lives of your family. When tornadoes approach, people will face hazards from the extremely high winds, as well as from flying and falling objects. After the disaster, the wreckage left behind can cause additional injuries. Nothing can be done to prevent tornadoes, but there are precautions you can take to help ensure your safety.

### **Before a Tornado**

Make tornado preparedness effective by taking precautions before the fact. Tornadoes often accompany thunderstorms, so pay close attention to changing weather conditions during severe thunderstorm alerts. Make sure to keep a battery-powered radio or TV and fresh batteries on hand. Electrical power is often interrupted during thunderstorms—exactly when weather warnings are most needed. Here are other important measures to take before a storm develops:

- Make a tornado emergency plan with your family. Sketch a floor plan of where you live, or walk through each room and discuss where and how to seek shelter.
- Find a second way exit from each room or area. If you will need special equipment, such as a rope ladder, mark where it is located.
- Mark where your first-aid kit and fire extinguishers are located.
- Mark where utility switches or valves are located so they can be turned off—if time permits—in an emergency.
- Teach your family how to administer basic first aid, how to use a fire extinguisher, and how and when to turn off water, gas, and electricity in your home.
- Learn the emergency dismissal policy for your child's school.

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- Make sure your children know about tornado preparedness and how to take shelter, whether at home or school.

It is important to learn about the tornado warning system in your county or locality. Most tornado-prone areas have a siren system; learn how to distinguish between the siren's warnings for a *tornado watch* and a *tornado warning*. A tornado watch is issued when weather conditions favor the formation of tornadoes—for example, during a severe thunderstorm. During a tornado watch, stay tuned to local radio and TV stations or to NOAA Weather Radio for further weather information. Also, keep an eye on weather conditions and be prepared to take shelter immediately if they worsen. A tornado warning is issued when a tornado funnel is sighted or indicated by weather radar. During a tornado warning, *you should take shelter immediately*.

### **During a Tornado**

Some tornadoes strike quickly, without time for a tornado warning, and sometimes even without a thunderstorm in the vicinity. When you are watching for rapidly emerging tornadoes, it is important to know that you cannot depend upon seeing a funnel, because clouds or rain may block your view. Look for the following weather signs, which may indicate that a tornado is approaching:

- A dark or green-colored sky
- A large, dark, low-lying cloud
- Large hailstones
- A loud roar that sounds like a freight train

If you do see a funnel cloud nearby, take shelter immediately. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) makes the following recommendations:

**At Home:** Pick a place in the home where family members can gather if a tornado is headed your way. Above all, *AVOID WINDOWS* because an exploding window can cause injury or death. The safest place in the home is the interior part of a basement. If there is no basement, go to an inside room, without

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windows, on the lowest floor. This could be a center hallway, bathroom, or closet. For added protection, get under something sturdy such as a heavy table or workbench. If possible, cover your body with a blanket, sleeping bag, or mattress, and protect your head with anything available—even your hands. Avoid taking shelter where there are heavy objects, such as pianos or refrigerators, on the area of floor that is directly above you. They could fall through the floor if the tornado strikes your house.

**In a Mobile Home:** *NEVER STAY IN A MOBILE HOME DURING A TORNADO!*

Mobile homes are liable to turn over during strong winds. Even mobile homes with a tie-down system cannot withstand the force of tornado winds. Take precautions. If you live in a mobile home, plan to go to a nearby building, preferably one with a basement. If there is no shelter nearby, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert, and shield your head with your hands.

**Long-Span Buildings:** A long-span building, such as a shopping mall, theater, or gymnasium, is especially dangerous because the roof structure is usually supported solely by the outside walls. Most long-span buildings hit by tornados cannot withstand the enormous pressure; they simply collapse. If you are in a long-span building during a tornado, stay away from windows. Get to the lowest level of the building—the basement, if possible—and away from the windows. If there is no time to get to a tornado shelter or to a lower level, try to get under a door frame or get up against something that will support or deflect falling debris. For instance, in a department store, get up against heavy shelving or counters. In a theater, get under the seats. Remember to protect your head.

**On the Road:** The least desirable place to be during a tornado is in a motor vehicle. Cars, buses, and trucks are easily tossed by tornado winds. Do not try to outrun a tornado in your car! If you see a tornado, stop your vehicle and get out. Do not get under your vehicle. If you are caught outside during a tornado and there is no adequate shelter immediately available:

- Avoid areas with many trees.
- Avoid vehicles.

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- Lie down flat in a gully, ditch, or low spot on the ground.
- Protect your head with an object or with your arms.

### **After a Tornado**

A recent study of injuries after a tornado in Illinois showed that 50% of the tornado-related injuries were suffered during rescue attempts and cleanup. Nearly a third of the injuries resulted from stepping on nails! Other common causes of injury included being hit by falling objects and heavy, rolling objects. Because tornadoes often damage power lines, gas lines, or electrical systems, there is a risk of fire, electrocution, or an explosion. Protecting yourself and your family requires promptly treating any injuries suffered during the storm and using extreme care to avoid further hazards. Never attempt to move seriously injured people unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Get medical assistance immediately. According to the CDC, these general safety precautions could help you avoid injury after a tornado:

- Continue to monitor your battery-powered radio or television for emergency information.
- Be careful when entering any structure that has been damaged.
- Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves, and gloves when handling or walking on or near debris and be aware of hazards from exposed nails and broken glass.
- Do not touch downed power lines or objects in contact with downed lines. Report electrical hazards to the police and the utility company.
- Use battery-powered lanterns, if possible, rather than candles to light homes without electrical power. If you use candles, make sure they are in safe holders away from curtains, paper, wood, or other flammable items. Never leave a candle burning when you are out of the room.

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- Never use generators, pressure washers, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices inside your home, basement, garage, or camper—or even outside near an open window, door, or vent. Carbon monoxide (CO)—an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death if you breathe it—from these sources can build up in your home, garage, or camper and poison the people and animals inside. Seek prompt medical attention if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseated.
- After a tornado, be aware of possible structural, electrical, or gas-leak hazards in your home. Contact your local city or county building inspectors for information on structural safety codes and standards. They may also offer suggestions on finding a qualified contractor to do work for you.
- In general, if you suspect any damage to your home, shut off electrical power, natural gas, and propane tanks to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- If it is dark when you are inspecting your home, use a flashlight rather than a candle or torch to avoid the risk of fire or explosion in a damaged home.
- If you see frayed wiring or sparks, or if there is an odor of something burning, you should immediately shut off the electrical system at the main circuit breaker if you have not done so already.
- If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open all windows, and leave the house immediately. Notify the gas company, the police or fire departments, or State Fire Marshal's office, and do not turn on the lights, light matches, smoke, or do anything that could cause a spark. Do not return to your house until you are told it is safe to do so.

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## Resource 19 – Regional Preparedness:

### **Tornadoes**

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/tornadoes/>

The Center for Disease Control's Department of Health and Human Services posts a website that offers free tornado preparedness information and links.

TOMORROW: Safe  
Cities: Emergency  
Preparedness in Urban  
Centers

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## **National Preparedness Month: September 2007**

### **SAFE CITIES:**

#### **Emergency Preparedness in Urban Centers**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Nearly two thirds of Americans spend most of their lives in urban environments—an interesting fact when one considers that these urban areas occupy less than two percent of the nation's land area. With such a vast population living and working in metropolitan areas, it is imperative that these cities remain secure, and the key to security is emergency preparedness. Despite all of the resources available to a city (money, supplies, workforce, etc.), urban areas have their own unique vulnerabilities to both natural and planned disasters. According to Ubanicity.org, an organization specializing in the study of urban development, there are several significant factors that make a city vulnerable to disasters, including:

- **Hazardous Exposure of the Location**

Sixty-five percent of the world's cities with a population of more than 2.5 million are located directly on a coastline. Port cities are particularly vulnerable because of the increased frequency and severity of storms and any potential rise in sea level.

- **Economic and Political Relevance of a City**

A city's concentration of political, economic and administrative activities has become another important factor in determining its vulnerability, as it makes these areas potential terrorist targets.

- **.Physical Vulnerability**

The physical characteristics of buildings and infrastructure of a city itself can create hazards in a disaster situation.

- **Density of the Population**

Population density is one of the variables that determine the severity of a

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disaster. Where people are concentrated in a limited area, any single disaster event can cause massive injuries and deaths.

- **Poverty Level**

People with different income levels are likely to be affected differently by the same event. An individual's vulnerability to disaster tends to lessen with increasing income. The poorest people often live in the most vulnerable housing and in the most hazard-prone locations. In many cities, the population of poor is expanding, which aggravates this trend.

### **Urban Search and Rescue:**

In large cities there are many structures that could collapse during a disaster and trap people underneath. Many cities also have extensive subway systems in which people could be trapped during an emergency. Urban search-and-rescue (US&R) missions involve the location, rescue and initial medical treatment of victims trapped in confined spaces. Urban search-and-rescue is considered a "multi-hazard" discipline, as it may be required for a variety of emergency or disaster situations, including:

- Earthquakes
- Hurricanes
- Typhoons
- Storms
- Tornadoes
- Floods
- Dam Failures
- Technological Accidents
- Terrorist Activities

If a disaster calls for national US&R support, FEMA will send out the three most closely located task forces within six hours of notification, and will deploy additional teams as needed. The role of these task forces is to support state and

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local emergency responders in their efforts to locate victims and manage recovery operations. Each task force consists of two 31-person teams, four canines, and a comprehensive equipment cache. US&R task force members work in four areas of specialization:

- **Search:** Experts trained to find victims trapped after a disaster.
- **Rescue:** Specialists sent to safely dig victims out from under tons of collapsed concrete and metal.
- **Technical:** Structural specialists who make rescues safe for the rescuers.
- **Medical:** Specialists who care for the victims before and after a rescue.

In addition to search-and-rescue support, FEMA provides hands-on training in search-and-rescue techniques and equipment, technical assistance to local communities, and in some cases, federal grants to help communities better prepare for urban search-and-rescue operations. FEMA views these first responders as a national resource that can be deployed to a major disaster or structural collapse anywhere in the country, while possessing knowledge that can serve their local communities as well.

### **Cities Unprepared**

Surprisingly, even six years after the tragedy of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, most cities are still not prepared for disasters. A recent survey from the U.S. Conference of Mayors reveals that eight in 10 cities report that their first responders do not have communications interoperability, and 44 percent of cities report that they have not created or updated emergency evacuation plans. Nearly 200 cities participated in the survey. Of this number, 104 had populations of fewer than 100,000 people and 30 cities had populations greater than 300,000. Almost seventy-five percent of participating cities said they were not prepared to handle an influenza pandemic, and most said federal homeland security funding does not adequately meet their needs. This is a warning that must be heeded. Every individual city dweller can help their cities take a step in a positive direction by learning personal preparedness essentials and then volunteering their services where needed.

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## Resource 20 – Regional Preparedness:

### Education for Emergency Preparedness

<http://www.nycepce.org/default.htm>

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response has established an organization called The New York Consortium for Emergency Preparedness Continuing Education. The mission of this group is to extend and strengthen the competency of health professionals in New York to respond effectively to emergency events of all kinds. Their website contains information regarding the competency-based continuing education offered through the Consortium,

TOMORROW:  
Blizzard Warning!  
Emergency  
Preparedness in  
Northern Communities

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **BLIZZARD WARNING!**

#### **Emergency Preparedness in Northern Communities**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

In Northern communities, everyone is familiar with the dangers that a severe winter storm can bring. Although winter storms can often be predicted in advance, they can still strike unexpectedly. Being prepared for blizzards means not only preparing your home for the possibility of being snowed in, but knowing what steps to follow if you *do* need to go outside during a storm.

#### **Before the Storm**

Always take weather reports seriously. It is always better to err on the side of caution, rather than not being prepared enough. When you first hear predictions of any significant amount of snow, prepare for the worst. Winter storms can often be more severe than predicted, so it is a good idea to check your home and emergency supplies as soon as you hear of a potential blizzard. The following steps should be taken not only when you hear predictions of snow, but also at the start of each winter season:

1. **Head to the store.** First check the food, water, and first-aid supply in your house. Make a list of items that you need. Be sure that you have enough food and water for one full week. Also, stock up on enough medication, if needed, for one week. Prepare for delays, as stores will be crowded as people anticipate snowy weather.
2. **Gather supplies and check equipment.** Make sure you have extra clothing and blankets on hand. If you have a wood-burning fireplace or stove, stock up on firewood. Be sure that you have a working fire extinguisher. Check that you have a working battery-operated radio, flashlight, and fresh batteries in case you lose phone service or electricity. Fill your home heating fuel tank, if necessary.
3. **Prepare your car.** If for any reason you have to leave during a snowstorm, or travel when a blizzard is expected, you will want to have emergency supplies in your car. Cars should contain all of the things

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that a home emergency kit would contain: food, water, clothing, blankets, and a first-aid kit. You should also fill up your gas tank ahead of time.

5. **“Winterize” your house.** Install storm windows and doors that will withstand pressure from snow buildup or from heavy winds. Check the roof—clear rain gutters and look for leaks. Also, make sure the roof is sturdy enough that it can support a great deal of snow buildup. Insulate the walls and the attic, along with pipes.

### **During the Storm**

During blizzards, it is always best to stay inside. If you need to conserve energy, try to keep the family together in one room towards the center of the home and shut off heat temporarily to other rooms. Listen on your radio or television, if possible, to get storm alerts or evacuation notifications. Have “go bags” ready in case you are told you need to evacuate. Be sure that all animals have been brought inside, if at all possible. After these precautions have been taken, all you can do is stay calm, stay warm, and stay inside unless told otherwise.

If you need to evacuate or leave the house for any reason, be sure to dress appropriately. Wear several layers of loose-fitting clothing, rather than one heavy layer. Wear mittens rather than gloves, because they will keep your fingers warmer. Make sure that your pants, boots and gloves are water-repellant. If you must travel, go during the daylight hours and do not travel alone. Make sure that someone who is not traveling with you is aware of your schedule and route.

### **After the Storm**

As soon as the storm is over, assess your home for damage. If you see any downed power lines or broken gas lines, call for help immediately. Do not attempt to drive anywhere until the roads have been cleared and plowed. However, if it is possible to leave the house, it is a good idea to check on neighbors that may need assistance. Before leaving the house, check weather conditions and further advisories—blizzards are often followed by extremely cold conditions, even if the snow has stopped. This kind of weather can be even more dangerous than the snowfall, so it is important to dress appropriately and stay warm.

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Try to clear snow off of decks, driveways, sidewalks, and even rooftops, if possible. However, don't rush to get it all done at once. The most common deaths that occur in the winter are the result heart attacks caused by strenuous snow shoveling. After a disaster, it is always the first instinct to try to fix and clean up everything at once—but this can be very dangerous. Shovel slowly, take frequent breaks and if you need to, stop shoveling and continue another day.

### **Winter Storm Warnings**

The best way to be prepared for a winter storm or blizzard is to carefully follow emergency warnings that are announced on the radio or television. It is also important to be able to recognize each warning and what it means.

- Winter Storm Watch: Be alert. A storm is likely in your area.
- Winter Storm Warning: Take action. A storm is currently in or approaching your area.
- Blizzard Warning: Take shelter. Expect snow and strong winds, which may cause blinding wind-driven snow, deep snowdrifts, and a dangerous wind chill.
- Winter Weather Advisory: Be cautious. Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous, especially to motorists.
- Frost/Freeze Warning: Below-freezing temperatures are expected and may cause significant damage to crops, plants, and trees.

## **Resource 21 – Regional Preparedness:**

### **Blizzard Tips – What to Do and How to Prepare**

<http://www.chiff.com/a/blizzard-tips.htm>

Chiff.com offers a list of the top ten blizzard tips to help you get through the winter. They are straightforward and easy to follow, making them a useful resource to anyone who lives in a community at risk for blizzards and other winter storms.

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TOMORROW: Urban  
Evacuation  
Preparedness

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **EVACUATE!**

#### **Urban Evacuation Preparedness**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

One of the most challenging aspects of preparing for an emergency is outlining evacuation plans. This can be especially difficult in urban settings, where there are usually too many people for the available transportation to accommodate. It is important when dealing with large groups of people to have organized and pre-planned routes of evacuation. Emergency managers will often dictate specific directions for people who are evacuating a city. For example, many cities try to have separate routes for pedestrians and for cars, to avoid interference.

However, you cannot assume that if an emergency occurs, you can just “go with the flow” and follow the lead of others around you. It is important to be personally prepared for an emergency situation.

#### **Tips for People Who Live or Work in an Urban Area:**

1. Be familiar with the various methods of public transportation around your home or office. If the nearest trains weren't working due to electrical failure, would you know where to find the city buses?
2. Make sure you know several ways to exit your building. Often there are limited ways to exit a high-rise building. Be aware of where fire escapes are located, and how to access them.
3. Realize that the evacuation of a city is a long, slow process. Stress and panic often cause people to be disagreeable and pushy. Be patient and avoid fighting with others, which will only cause more problems for everyone. If evacuating on foot, avoid walking in the streets in order not to slow down vehicular evacuation and the flow of emergency vehicles. If you must take a car, be sure to carpool with neighbors, friends or family.

4. Always opt to temporarily stay with family and friends outside the area, if possible. Evacuation centers quickly become crowded and overwhelmed with people. They should be used only as a last resort, and reserved for people who have no family or friends to stay with in the area.

### **Stay Calm: Formulate a Plan**

The best thing that one can do in any evacuation situation is to stay calm. Clearly, this is easier said than done when faced with danger, but each person's ability to remain in control of him or herself ultimately makes a huge difference in the success of an evacuation.

Often, emergency managers will keep serious details about the situation confidential in order to prevent people from panicking. There are often situations in emergencies when people panic and tempers explode. Frightened people might ignore announcements and exit signs. There have even been occurrences when pushing and crushing in a crowd has led to fatalities.

The best way to keep yourself from losing control is to take three easy steps:

- 1. Assess the situation.** What is happening and where do I need to go?
- 2. Form a plan.** How will I get there?
- 3. Carry it out.** Do not get distracted; keep your goal in mind.

These may seem like simple and obvious steps, but they can make a big difference in the way people handle emergencies. For example, if there were a fire in your office building, it would be wise to think, "I hear a fire alarm. That means there is a fire in my building and I need to get out. The most effective way is down the stairs and out the front door. If that exit is blocked, I will take the fire escape out the window in my office."

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Many people in an emergency situation do not have a clear idea of what they are planning to do and end up wasting time by asking questions instead of moving to action. Through unnecessary investigation, people might unwittingly put themselves closer to the area of greatest danger. Taking a moment to map out your route and formulate a plan can save you from panic, hesitation, and indecisiveness.

**Remember:** Always *first* follow the plan that is given to you by emergency managers, if at all possible.

### **To Help or To Leave?**

Once out of the building, use your best judgment. In most situations, the best thing to do is leave the area. If it was an isolated emergency such as a fire, move to the meeting place designated by your company or family. If it is a larger emergency that requires evacuation from the city, continue on your route.

Many people become torn as to whether or not they should offer assistance during an emergency situation. If you are a doctor, or are trained in first aid and CPR, you can inform an emergency worker and see if they need assistance. If you are not, do not stay around the scene out of curiosity; continue your evacuation. Having large numbers of people gathering at the scene of an emergency can cause more confusion and may make things worse for emergency workers.

When you come across someone who is injured, use your personal judgment. If it is a serious injury, it is better to simply notify an emergency worker rather than trying to help them yourself, if you are not medically trained. If the injury is minor, or the person is walking and only needs slight assistance, try to help. If someone is in immediate danger, it is *always* best to help him or her move away.

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## Resource 22 – Regional Preparedness:

### Managing Pedestrians During Evacuation of Metropolitan Areas

<http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/pedevac/index.htm>

An in-depth report from the U.S. Department of Transportation is found at this website, which provides a look at different urban evacuation situations. It has useful information not only for the public, but for government workers, emergency planners, and industry leaders.

TOMORROW: Emergency Preparedness for  
Owners of Pets and Service Animals

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## National Preparedness Month, September 2007 *30 Days, 30 Resources*

### **IV. Household and Family Preparedness**

- **ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL:**  
Disaster Tips for Owners of Pets and Service Animals
- **OLDER, WISER, SAFER:**  
Emergency Preparedness and the Elderly
- **FIRST THINGS TO DO, PART II:**  
Household Emergencies
- **SAFETY: A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE**  
Emergency Preparedness in Non-English Speaking Families
- **WITH PREPAREDNESS AND SAFETY FOR ALL:**  
Responding to Patients with Disabilities
- **PROMOTING PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS:**  
Universal Design and Health Interventions
- **WHERE DO YOU GET INFORMATION DURING AN EMERGENCY?**  
Emergency Notification
- **EMERGENCY PEPAEDNESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:**
  - Part 1: **SPECIAL NEEDS, BASIC NEEDS:**  
Emergency Planning for People With Disabilities
  - Part 2: **DON'T BE DISABLED BY A DISABILITY:**  
Be Prepared!

## **National Preparedness Month - September 2007**

### **ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL:**

Emergency Preparedness for Owners of Pets and Service Animals

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a service animal as “any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability.” Many people do not realize that these animals are not merely pets—they are living, intelligent, assistive tools. Their duties include:

- guiding people who are blind
- alerting people who are deaf or hearing impaired to doorbells, fire alarms or a infant’s cry
- pulling wheelchairs for people with mobility impairments
- protecting a person who has seizures
- performing a therapeutic function for persons with mental challenges

Most service animals are dogs, but some horses have been trained to guide people who are blind, and a small number of monkeys assist people with quadriplegia. Unlike pets, service animals and their owners may enter a wide range of public accommodations, including shops, restaurants, museums, and transportation systems. The service animal’s owner is responsible for its behavior and for supplying any food, water, or any medication it may need, particularly during a disaster. In times of disaster, a service animal is permitted in a shelter, clinic, or any other facility the situation requires, such as a Federal Recovery Center. During a disaster, a service animal could make the difference between life and death for its owner; therefore the safety of these creatures must be taken into account when considering emergency preparedness.

## **Protecting Animals in the Event of a Fire**

Home fires are the most common as well as the most deadly disaster faced by Americans. Each year, people perish when they re-enter a burning house to save a pet. Do NOT take this brave but foolhardy action. Leave rescues to the firefighters—they are the experts! Your opportunity to be a hero comes through developing a solid emergency plan for your animal's safety. The National Organization on Disability makes the following recommendations:

- Purchase stickers for doors and windows indicating the number, type, and probable location of your animals. Update the stickers as your animal population changes.
- If possible, confine animals to a particular room each time you leave home. That way you will know where they are and may be able to direct firefighters if a fire starts in your absence.
- If you can't keep the animals in one place, remember where they usually go to sleep or hide. That is where they are likely to be in case of fire.
- Make sure your animals wear unbreakable collars with current license and vaccination tags.
- Place muzzles, handling gloves, catch nets, and animal restraints where firefighters can easily find them.
- Keep animal health and ownership records (including a photo of you with your animal) in your "go kit", so you can quickly grab them upon exiting. Keep a copy of the records in a safe location away from your home.

### **In Case of Evacuation:**

If you are forced to evacuate your home, *do not leave your animals behind!* They probably will not survive on their own; and even if they do, you may not be able to find them when you return. Prepare for an evacuation by packing an "animal survival kit" which could be easily deployed if a disaster strikes. This kit should include the following supplies:

- pet food
- dishes

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- can opener
- bottled water
- medication
- veterinary records
- pet first-aid guidebook
- blanket
- long leash

Select evacuation sites in advance. If you board your animals, make certain that the kennel or veterinary clinic is not also in the path of the immediate hazard. If you will be staying with friends or relatives, make sure that they know you are bringing animals. If you do not have a car, arrange evacuation assistance for family and pets with at least two different individuals. If you absolutely cannot bring animals with you, leave them inside with an adequate supply of food and water for several days. Do not tie them up outside.

### **During an Emergency**

If you are not evacuating, bring your pets inside immediately at the onset of an emergency. It is no secret that animals have keen instincts concerning severe weather changes. They will often hide in isolation if they are scared. Bringing them inside early can prevent them from running away. Never leave an animal outside or tied up during a storm. During an emergency, have newspapers available for sanitary purposes. Feed your animals moist or canned food so that they will need less drinking water. Separate dogs and cats; regardless of whether your dogs and cats normally get along, the anxiety of an emergency situation can cause pets to act irrationally. Keep smaller pets away from cats and dogs.

### **After the Disaster**

For the first few days after the disaster, keep your animals on a leash when they go outside. Place them in a fenced yard with access to shelter and water. Always maintain close contact with them. Following a disaster, familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and your pet may become confused and lost. Also, a

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flood can bring snakes and other dangerous animals into the area. Downed power lines are also a hazard to be aware of. Be patient with your pets after a disaster. Try to get them back into their normal routines as soon as possible. Remember that the behavior of your animals may change after an disaster. Pets that normally are quiet and friendly may become aggressive or defensive. Watch animals closely: If behavioral problems persist, or if your pet seems to be having any health problems, talk to your veterinarian.

## Resource 23 – Preparedness for Pets and Service Animals:

### **Disaster Preparedness for Pets**

[http://www.hsus.org/hsus\\_field/hsus\\_disaster\\_center/resources/disaster\\_preparedness\\_for\\_pets.html](http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/hsus_disaster_center/resources/disaster_preparedness_for_pets.html)

The Humane Society of the United States posts a useful webpage regarding emergency preparedness for animals. The site includes resources, links, and articles about evacuations and everyday precautions. Also included is a disaster supply checklist for pets.

TOMORROW: Emergency Preparedness for the Elderly

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007**

### **OLDER, WISER, SAFER:**

#### **Emergency Preparedness and the Elderly**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Elderly Americans—65 and older—have earned the right to feel secure. Throughout their long lives, they have seen, experienced, and handled more crisis situations than most of us could even imagine. Their determination and strength served both their families and their nation. Now the members of this once-unstoppable generation are vulnerable and it is up to us, the beneficiaries of their vitality, to make certain that they remain safe to enjoy their retirement, grandchildren, and place in the sun. According to the United States Administration on Aging (AoA), after an emergency, older people often have difficulty obtaining necessary assistance because of progressive physical and mental impairments. Many older people who live on limited incomes, and sometimes alone, often find it impossible to recover from disasters without special federal assistance services. The AoA goes on to state that elderly people:

- are often slower to register for disaster assistance and, once they are registered, may not follow through and complete the necessary applications to obtain assistance.
- may be at higher nutritional risk in the aftermath of a disaster and may forget to take necessary medications.
- are often targeted by fraudulent contractors and “con men” who financially exploit victims following a disaster.
- may be susceptible to physical and mental abuse as family stresses increase in later stages of the disaster.

Because of problems such as these, it is a good idea to help identify and assist older persons in registering and applying for loans. It is also beneficial to assist in introducing older people in your family or community to federal, state, or local disaster advocacy services.

## **Financial Concerns**

A 2002 article in *Pre-hospital and Disaster Medicine* reported that after an emergency, economic recovery is an area where the elderly fare worse than the non-elderly. Younger age groups are better able to recover financially from a disaster. The inability to recover financially from a disaster can result in a change in the victims' overall standard of living. A study of an area impacted by a tornado found that 32.2% of elderly people reported a drop in their standard of living as compared to 12.5% of the non-elderly. Elderly people have fewer opportunities and less ability to generate income. They are increasingly reliant on Social Security benefits, and are more likely to live near or *at* the poverty level than are the non-elderly.

Another study revealed that almost all of the aid accepted by the elderly was offered rather than requested. Why aren't older Americans asking for the assistance that they are due? Some people speculate that the elderly do not request help because of the perceived stigma that is associated with certain types of aid, such as welfare or mental health assistance. Also, the elderly have expressed an unfounded concern that receipt of aid may impact their other sources of funding, causing a loss of benefits if they exceed a certain income limit. Other elderly, who experienced the Great Depression, have been reluctant to request aid due to their belief that "others could use the aid more."

## **Medication Concerns**

Elderly people should make sure that concerns regarding medication and medical supplies are taken into account during emergency planning. If you take medicine or use a medical treatment on a daily basis, make certain that you have at least a week's supply available, in case of an emergency. If this is not possible, keep as much medicine on hand as possible. Talk to your pharmacist or doctor about what further medical precautions you can take in case of an emergency. Also, keep a copy of your prescriptions and dosage or treatment

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information. If you undergo routine treatments administered by a clinic or hospital or if you receive regular home health care services, speak with your service provider about their emergency plans. They may be able to find backup service providers within the areas that you might evacuate to, in case of an emergency. The Department of Homeland Security recommends that you always have copies of your medical insurance as well as Medicare and Medicaid cards readily available. Also, include copies of important documents in your (waterproof) emergency supply kits. These papers might include family records, wills, power of attorney documents, deeds, social security numbers, credit card and bank information, and tax records. Include the names and numbers of everyone in your personal support network, as well as your medical providers. Be certain to have cash or traveler's checks in your kits, should you need to purchase supplies after a disaster.

## Resource 24 – Household and Family Preparedness:

### **Preparedness Guide for Older Americans**

<http://www.ready.gov/america/downloads/olderamericans.pdf>

The Department of Homeland Security posts a downloadable guide geared toward informing older Americans about the importance of emergency preparedness.

Tomorrow: First Things To Do in Household Emergencies

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## **National Preparedness Month – September 2007:**

### **FIRST THINGS TO DO PART II:**

#### **Household Emergencies**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Emergencies in the home can range from very serious situations that encompass an entire area or neighborhood, to small emergencies that may only effect one person in a family. Either way, emergency situations need to be taken seriously and handled properly. Sometimes, your common sense might tell you to do something that is not the best possible solution in an emergency – which is why it is absolutely necessary to learn the first steps to take in each different type of situation.

#### **First Things To Do In A Thunderstorm or Hurricane**

Unfortunately, many fatalities occur each year from people who do not take thunderstorms seriously. Even in storms that you may not think are very dangerous, there is still a risk of electrical shock or being struck by lightning. Following these simple steps can ensure that you and your family will be safer during storms:

1. As soon as you hear of an oncoming storm, gather all family members inside the house – preferably, as close to the center of the house as possible, away from windows.
2. Secure outside objects, such as lawn furniture or garbage cans, which could blow away and cause damage or injury to others.
3. Gather candles, flashlights, and a battery powered radio so that if the power goes out, you will not have to search for these supplies in the dark. (Ideally, they should already be kept in a place that is known and easily accessible to all family members.)
4. Try to avoid: taking baths and showers, watching television, and running an air conditioner. All of these things put you more at risk for electric shock. Telephones should be used in emergencies only.

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**REMEMBER:** If the power goes out during extreme cold or extreme heat, your home may not be safe to occupy without working heat or air conditioning. Call your town or city's information hotline to see about emergency shelter options.

### **First Things To Do In A Household Fire:**

Home fires are one of the most common household emergencies. Knowing the proper steps to take if fire strikes your home can be extremely important, and may save your life:

1. Take the fastest and least dangerous route out of the house. Do not stop to collect personal belongings or to call the fire department. Shut doors behind you to help contain the flames.
2. Once outside, call 911 or ask a neighbor to.
3. Get to your preplanned family meeting place. Figure out whom, if anyone, is left in the house. Talk to other family members about what room he or she might be in to you can help direct firefighters.
4. Do not go back inside for **anything**. Firefighters, when they arrive, will assist others out of the house.

**REMEMBER:** If a piece of furniture catches fire in your home, especially plastic-foam upholstered furniture, do not attempt to put it out. The smoke and fumes from burning plastic foam are *extremely* toxic and can kill in less than two minutes. Instead, get out of the room immediately! Be sure to close the door behind you to prevent the spreading of smoke and fire. Call 911 and report the fire immediately.

### **First Things To Do About A Burning Appliance or Electrical Socket**

Knowing how to deal with a burning appliance or socket could mean the difference between life and death. This type of fire is small and if dealt with properly, can be put out without causing much damage to your home or family. Following the steps below will allow you to help ensure that a small fire like this does not turn into a larger house fire:

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1. Switch off the electricity in the main fuse box or pull out the plug if it is far enough away from the appliance itself. **DO NOT** use the switch to turn it off.
2. If the appliance is anything other than a TV or computer, you may use a fire extinguisher. Since televisions and computers can hold residual electricity even after the power supply has been cut off, **NEVER** use a fire extinguisher or water, or you risk electrocution. Instead, smother it with a blanket, rug, or fire blanket if one is available.

**REMEMBER:** It is important for every member of the family to know where the fuse box is located and how it works. In an emergency like this, you do not have the luxury of taking your time to find out where the fuse box is in your home.

### **First Things To Do In A Household Chemical Emergency**

Chemical emergencies in the home are very common when families are not careful about where they keep cleaning supplies, pesticides, paints, automotive products, and other toxic chemicals.

In order to prevent chemical emergencies, families should locate possibly hazardous items and lock them carefully out of reach of children, as well as away from heat and flames. Doing this can help stop chemical emergencies before they start; but in the case that one does occur, here are the first things that you should do:

1. If there is danger of a fire or explosion, get out of the house immediately. Call 911 only once you are safely outside. If you think there may be toxic fumes being emitted, stand upwind and away from the house.
2. If a person has been poisoned by or exposed to a household chemical, find any containers of the substance and call the Poison Control Center: (800) 222-1222. Having a container with a label will allow you to provide them with information that can help them to better assist you.
3. Do not simply follow the first aid advice on the label of a substance – it could be out of date or inappropriate. Instead, be sure to call the Poison Control Center and follow the operator's instructions carefully.

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There are an endless number of household emergencies that can occur and it is your responsibility to protect yourself and your family. Preparing is one of the most important steps, but sometimes emergencies occur no matter how prepared we may be – that is why it is important to know the first and most important things to do during any emergency.

## **Resource 22 – Household Emergencies:**

**HOUSEHOLD EMERGENCIES: Be Prepared**  
<http://www.palatine.il.us/publicwrks/emergency.html>

This website offers different steps to take in case of household emergencies. It is organized by the many types of emergencies that can occur, such as gas leaks, power failures, wind damage, tornado warnings, and water emergencies.

TOMORROW: Emergency Preparedness in Non-English Speaking Families

**John Cavanagh** is Communications Director for Bridge Multimedia and Chief Researcher for Emergency Information Online.

**Anne Malia** writes about technology and emergency preparedness for people with special needs and has contributed to the production of [EmergencyInfoOnline.org](http://EmergencyInfoOnline.org) and [EdTechOnline.org](http://EdTechOnline.org).

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## **National Preparedness Month - September 2007**

### **SAFETY: A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE**

#### Emergency Preparedness for Non-English-Speaking Communities

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Non-English speakers are those who speak a language other than English at home. This group fits into our National Preparedness interests because the ability to communicate with government agencies, service providers, schools, businesses, and emergency personnel often hinges upon the ability to speak English. According to the census report, in 2000, approximately 47 million people in the U.S. spoke a language other than English at home. There were also 4.4 million “linguistically isolated households,” meaning that no person over 14 years of age speaks English very well in these households. The states with the largest population of non-English-speaking people are California, New York, and Florida.

#### **A Dramatic Exercise**

Established in 1972, Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC) is one of the oldest and largest community “federally qualified health centers” in the United States, providing health care to over 70,000 people annually through its offices in Connecticut. In April of 2005, CHC tested the ability of its staff to care for non-English-speaking patients during a large-scale disaster preparedness drill, which was coordinated by U.S. Department of Homeland Security to simulate a terrorist attack. The event featured a mock chemical attack triggered by a bomb hidden in a vehicle in Fort Trumbull State Park, while similar “attacks” occurred in New Jersey, Canada, and the United Kingdom. CHC participated in the drill because it is a major provider of primary health care to much of Connecticut’s non-English-speaking population.

The focus of the exercise for CHC was on the care of non-English speakers during a crisis. CHC hired 15 actors to play the roles of English-speaking and non-English-speaking patients visiting one of the company’s health centers during the mock terrorist attack. Among the languages spoken by the actors

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during the exercise were Spanish, French, and Chinese. One of the reasons that CHC fared well during this dramatic drill was their experience dealing with non-English speakers. Many members of the CHC staff are bi-lingual. According to Mark Masselli, CHC's president and CEO, "Patients who spoke 80 different languages used our services last year. Either through our staff or our language line service, we spoke to those patients in their native tongue. That's why we want to ensure that in any public health crisis, we are prepared to help and that we are included in the broader community response."

### **Ideas from "Down Under"**

Like America, Australia is a "melting pot" country with many non-English-speaking residents. Recently, Emergency Management Australia (EMA) conducted a national workshop entitled "Emergency Management for Australia's Non-English-Speaking Communities." One of the main points to emerge from this seminar was the importance of an active Emergency Management presence within generally non-English-speaking communities. This willingness to interact with non-English-speaking peoples establishes credibility within their communities. This, in turn, enhances the ability to communicate information and to elicit and understand a response. The EMA recommends that Emergency Management personnel "get to know" their communities by visiting schools, hospitals, and local ethnic clubs. Attend social functions and listen to what people are saying about the area. Once you have demonstrated your willingness to listen, you will often find that people are more receptive to what you have to say. Once that connection has been made, there are some practical ways that Emergency Managers can involve the community in Emergency Preparedness. These include community education on hazards and risk, community participation in risk management, and education on the role and purpose of emergency services. Communication can take many forms; information can be disseminated by means of ethnic radio, local newspapers, bulletins, local religious groups or clubs, hospitals, and community centers.

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## Resource 26 – Household and Family Preparedness:

### **Disaster Services: Foreign Language Materials**

[http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0\\_504\\_00.html](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_504_00.html)

The American Red Cross posts a webpage of disaster preparedness materials that are available in over twelve different foreign languages, including Spanish, Chinese, French, Russian, Japanese, and Korean.

TOMORROW: Responding to Patients With Disabilities

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## National Preparedness Month: September 2007

### **WITH PREPAREDNESS AND SAFETY FOR ALL: Responding to Patients with Disabilities**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

Change is at the center of the human experience. Nothing is permanent. Any one of us can be safe and comfortable one day and the victim of a disaster the next. Even the strongest person can find themselves a patient in a hospital or health care establishment. The measure of a society's worth can be determined by how well their most vulnerable populations are looked after. In considering Emergency Preparedness, it is essential that we address the needs of patients during a disaster.

By federal law, a nursing home must have an emergency evacuation plan. The facility is required to "tailor its disaster plan to its geographic location and the types of residents it serves." A nursing home is also required to review its evacuation plan, train new employees in emergency procedures and hold drills and periodic reviews with staff members. According to the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform, other types of facilities may or may not be required by state law to have a comprehensive plan in place, therefore clients (and their families) should inquire about the facility's emergency preparedness and evacuation plans. Questions should address the following topics:

- **The plan:** What is the facility's emergency plan for evacuation and for "sheltering in place?" Plans will be different for hurricanes, tornados, and terrorist attacks.
- **Staffing concerns:** Will there be enough staff to carry out the evacuation plan during all shifts? What are the training procedures for staff related to emergency evacuations?
- **Coordination with other resources:** Are there contracts in place with transportation and other facilities to provide housing for displaced residents? How has the plan been coordinated with community resources and city, county, and state Emergency Management facilities?

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- **Supplies:** What type and how much emergency supplies (food, generators, flashlights, water, oxygen, medicines etc.) does the facility have on hand? If the facility needs to be evacuated, are there plans for supplies to be transported? How can residents have their own emergency supplies in their rooms, if they wish?
- **Resident information:** How does the facility discuss the plan with residents? How will residents be identified in an evacuation? How will information about the resident be communicated? Will supplies such as medications be transported with the resident or separately?
- **Role of the family:** How and when will family members be notified about evacuation plans? How can family members be helpful in an emergency situation? Can family members meet the residents at a designated location and/or can they come to the facility to assist? If family members live out of town, is there an off-site phone number to call to get information?

### **Crisis Situations**

When it comes to Emergency Preparedness, health care facilities have a number of factors in their favor. Management is no stranger to crisis situations and staff members tend to keep cool heads and an ample amount of logic and common sense. Despite these elements, disasters can often overwhelm health and nursing facilities when they are required to contend with both injuries caused by the emergency as well as the chronic conditions of their patients. Another problem faced by facilities during an emergency is the influx of people, with and without disabilities, who, due to the disaster, have been unable to obtain the normal care needed to manage their conditions at home. As the result of an emergency, facilities are usually required to operate above their intended capacity for an extended time period, causing a severe financial impact.

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## **The National Disaster Medical System**

The National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) is the primary federal program that supplements state and local emergency response capabilities by supporting the evacuation of patients in need of hospital care during disasters, such as hurricanes. NDMS has agreements with participating hospitals to receive patients needing hospital care in the event of an emergency. The program helped evacuate almost 3000 people during recent hurricanes, including Hurricane Katrina. Unfortunately, the program was not designed, nor is it currently set up, to move nursing home residents.

## **Resource 27 – First Responders, Doctors and Emergency Management Officials:**

### **Disaster Preparedness for Emergency Physicians**

<http://www.acep.org/webportal/PatientsConsumers/HealthSubjectsByTopic/DisasterPreparedness/disprep.htm>

The American College of Emergency Physicians posts a webpage with a Question-and-Answer forum that deals with many preparedness-related topics. Also included in the online document is their 10-Point Plan to increase capacity and alleviate overcrowding in the nation's Emergency Management facilities

TOMORROW - Promoting Personal Preparedness: Universal  
Design and Health Interventions

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## National Preparedness Month – September 2007

### Promoting Personal Preparedness: Universal Design and Health Interventions

By Garrett Simonsen, guest contributor

#### Introduction

Personal and family preparedness are critical elements of any community or organization's emergency planning. Despite various motivators, such as actual events and public information, individuals and families remain largely unprepared to respond to emergency and disaster situations.

The emergence of public health threats – measles outbreaks, pandemic influenza, anthrax, severe weather – have spurred greater planning participation by public health officials, including promoting preparedness planning at home. In 2006, the Cambridge Public Health Department's Advanced Practice Center for Emergency Preparedness (APC) developed a comprehensive, community-based approach to promoting personal preparedness planning.

This approach expands access to preparedness information through use of Universal Design principles and utilizes tools, such as a personal preparedness display and survey, for community outreach. The purpose of this article is to explain this approach to promoting personal preparedness, share resources, and consider how this approach might influence future emergency communication practice.

#### Expanding Access to Preparedness Messages

With lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, the Cambridge APC sought to overcome barriers to personal preparedness through development of materials incorporating principles of Universal Design. The most often cited barriers to planning are lack of time and know-how, yet for many individuals preparedness planning is complicated by additional factors. A review of numerous preparedness initiatives and tools revealed that making information more accessible was central to overcoming these obstacles. The approach to improved access was two-fold.

First and foremost, by relating preparedness planning across a range of possible emergencies and to personal experiences the topic better resonates with a broader audience. The expectant mother who anticipates her trip to the hospital with a bag of essential items has a sense of what it means to evacuate. The elderly couple who avoids long lines at the grocery store hours before a blizzard understands their specific needs when sheltering at home.

Second, describing preparedness planning concepts with simply-stated messages, illustration of key concepts, predominant language translations, and

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message delivery through trusted sources enhances understanding of these critical messages.

#### Build off of knowledge and experience

Most personal preparedness initiatives are geared toward a long list of potential risks and an even longer checklist of suggested supplies. The view that “we live in a dangerous world” is furthered by easy access to news stories of disasters from around the globe – reporting that is often driven by scary images of situations that most are unlikely to experience.

Regardless of the type of emergency or disaster, or the reach of its impact, there are two basic response options: 1) stay-in-place (also known as shelter-in-place); or 2) evacuate. This approach to promoting personal preparedness improves access by simplifying the task of planning and relying on an individual’s existing knowledge and experience. Instead of developing a plan for 10-20 different hazards, individuals can gather the necessary resources and tools for sheltering or evacuating that apply across a range of emergencies. Instead of being overwhelmed by the unfamiliarity with evacuating a neighborhood, an individual can relate to their knowledge and practice of fire drills.

#### Keep it simple; make it visual

By focusing personal preparedness planning on sheltering and evacuation, the act of becoming prepared seems more manageable and attainable. Further, it focuses preparedness concepts so they can be simply-stated and better illustrated or shown as a pictogram. A simple message can be more easily and quickly translated into other languages. And illustrated concepts serve to better reach those with low-literacy, for whom translation is not available, and with physical or cognitive disability.

#### Speak through trusted sources

The degree to which preparedness and risk messages are accessible will determine their success and ability to reach a broad audience. Another factor in making these messages accessible – particularly for vulnerable population groups – is knowledge of group communication preferences and styles and an understanding of who are their trusted sources of information.

Service providers are often the most direct link to vulnerable population groups. Through their frequent interactions, providers develop a trust relationship, as well as an understanding for their clients’ communication needs. Working in partnership with service providers, local health officials can promote preparedness among service agency staff and support outreach to their client populations. These client interactions allow for an individualized assessment of their level of preparedness, an intervention, and a follow-up assessment.

## **Personal Preparedness as a Health Intervention**

Public health brings significant experience with community health outreach to this work. The Cambridge APC took the view of personal preparedness planning as a need for behavior change where the outcome sought (improved level of preparedness) is achieved through delivery of an intervention and easy to understand messages and resources.

A personal preparedness display was developed for use in community health fairs and meetings. The pictograms and simply-stated planning steps were used in the display. Examples of sheltering supplies, an evacuation kit, and communication plan templates are included with the display to provide additional visual understanding of preparedness planning.

At community events, participants are asked to complete a brief “preparedness survey”. This survey is used to identify what an individual has already done to prepare at home, but more importantly to focus their attention on tasks to be completed. Those tasks become the focus of the intervention. The simple checklist and the example sheltering and evacuation kits become the tools for delivering that intervention.

The following tools are available to share with any community or organization. For more information about these resources and to obtain files please email Garrett Simonsen at: [gsimonsen@challiance.org](mailto:gsimonsen@challiance.org).

- **Brochure** [view](#)  
*Emergency Preparedness Begins at Home* is easily adapted for use in any community and can include community specific resources.
- **Health Fair Display** [view](#)  
This tool, along with sample shelter and evacuation supplies and communication plan templates, can be used at community health fairs and meetings to promote personal preparedness planning.
- **Personal Preparedness Survey** [view](#)  
This brief survey is used to assess an individual’s level of preparedness, identify areas for improvement, and reassess for behavior change. The survey is also available in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese.
- **Personal Preparedness Checklist** [view](#)  
Used with the Personal Preparedness Survey, this checklist applies to everyone. Each individual and family has unique circumstances that can be built into this basic plan. The checklist is also available in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese.
- **Personal Preparedness Slide Show**  
This PowerPoint presentation discusses barriers to preparedness and the simple steps necessary to prepare for a range of emergencies. It includes training objectives and suggested talking points.
- **Video – coming soon**

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*Preparing for an Emergency* was developed in partnership with students at Boston University School of Public Health. This 7 minute video outlines simple steps that each of us should take to prepare at home.

- **Radio Public Service Announcement** [listen](#)  
*You Don't Have to Prepare Alone* was developed in partnership with a student at Harvard School of Public Health. It encourages senior citizens and others who may require assistance with planning to use the buddy system and connect with local emergency planners.

## Conclusion

Disaster response and recovery are facilitated when members of the public have planned in advance. Providing greater access to preparedness messages supports that advance planning. Further, this process of exploring communication accessibility may serve to improve future emergency and disaster communications.

Using lessons learned through the personal preparedness initiative, the Cambridge APC has applied this approach to other public health preparedness initiatives and risk communications. Below we share two other communication efforts to illustrate how this work continues to take form.

### Pictogram-based Signs for Mass Prophylaxis Services

In an emergency that requires mass dispensing of medication, service and process information within a clinic or site must be clearly communicated to clients. Ensuring that information is accessible improves efficiency, decreases client anxiety, and expands usability by at-risk populations.

In 2007, the Cambridge Advanced Practice Center for Emergency Preparedness developed a series of pictograms designed to promote universal access to emergency dispensing sites services. The signs were developed in collaboration with local and state public health professionals, and experts in universal design and accessibility. [View](#)

### Food Recall Alerts

In response to several high profile food recalls a communication tool was developed for use in conducting store inspections and alerting the public. These alerts were distributed through usual media channels, as well as through service providers to reach client populations. The text of the recall notice is simplified, pictograms and photos of the product are incorporated, distinguishing characteristics are highlighted, and translations obtained. Below is a link to the original recall notice and a file of the accessible recall flyer that was developed for community outreach efforts.

FDA Recall Notice [http://www.fda.gov/oc/po/firmrecalls/gerber07\\_07.html](http://www.fda.gov/oc/po/firmrecalls/gerber07_07.html)



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Example of Accessible Recall Alert Example [view](#)

TOMORROW: WHERE DO YOU GET  
INFORMATION DURING AN EMERGENCY?  
Emergency Notification

**Garrett Simonsen** is the Regional Exercise and Training Coordinator at the Cambridge Advanced Practice Center for Emergency Preparedness. The Cambridge Public Health Department is home to one of eight Advanced Practice Centers for Emergency Preparedness funded by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to develop and demonstrate innovative emergency preparedness programs to be shared with other health departments in the country.

**John Cavanagh** and **Anne Malia** co-edit *Emergency Info Online and 30 Resources, 30 Days*.

## **National Preparedness Week – September 2007**

### **WHERE DO YOU GET INFORMATION DURING AN EMERGENCY?**

#### **Emergency Notification**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

It has been said that knowledge is power. During a crisis situation, there is no greater power than to be armed with information regarding the disaster that you are facing. An open communication system is the key to receiving that crucial information. According to the Federal Communications Commission, there are three main components to the nation's emergency communications system:

- 1. 911 telephone call processing and delivery.** Emergency personnel and others often learn about emergencies through 911 calls. 911 is the official national emergency number in the United States and Canada. Dialing 911 quickly connects you to a PSAP dispatcher trained to route your call to local emergency medical, fire, and law enforcement agencies.
- 2. The Emergency Alert System (EAS).** The Emergency Alert System is the national system in the United States that replaced the Emergency Broadcasting System in 1994. EAS is jointly administered by the FCC, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the National Weather Service (NWS). EAS currently provides not only the president of the United States but also national, state, and local authorities with the ability to give emergency information to the general public via broadcast, cable, and wireless cable systems. All broadcast stations and cable systems currently are required to broadcast emergency alerts and messages for national security emergencies initiated by the president.
- 3. Radio and/or broadcast or cable television station news and updates.** In the event of an emergency, many people rely on local radio and/or television stations to receive updates on what is happening and what to do.

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## **National Weather Service**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service is another reliable source of emergency information. NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from the nearest National Weather Service office. NWR broadcasts official Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazard information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Besides featuring EAS warnings, NWR works with federal, state, and local Emergency Managers to broadcast warnings and post-event information for all types of hazards, including natural (such as earthquakes or avalanches), environmental (such as chemical releases or oil spills), and public safety (such as AMBER alerts or 911 telephone outages). The NWR includes more than 940 transmitters, covering all 50 states and their adjacent coastal waters, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the U.S. Pacific Territories. NWR requires a special radio receiver or scanner capable of picking up the signal. Broadcasts are found in the VHF public service band at these seven frequencies (MHz):

- 162.400
- 162.425
- 162.450
- 162.475
- 162.500
- 162.525
- 162.550

## **Digital Communications**

In this age of digital technology, there are sources of information on hand that were not widely available to the public a decade ago. These resources, which include the Internet and satellite radio, can provide emergency information at a time of crisis. Up-to-date disaster information can be posted online, remaining accessible to those with a battery-powered laptop, even if the electricity goes off. Check the websites of your local municipalities or health departments for

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information pertaining to your community. For national emergencies, the Center for Disease Control posts an Emergency Preparedness website at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/>. Also, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration posts an emergency site at <http://www.noaa.gov/emergency.html>. In October 2005, the FCC expanded its rules to require Emergency Alert System participation by digital television (DTV) broadcasters, digital cable television providers, digital broadcast radio, Digital Audio Radio Service (DARS), and Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) systems. Also, satellite radio is required to transmit EAS warnings during an emergency.

### **Emergency Paging Systems and Email Alerts**

Receiving warnings by pager is another way to get information before or during an emergency. This is an extremely beneficial service for those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Pager alerts have the advantage of showing the entire text of a weather warning. The Emergency Email Network ([www.emergencyemailnetwork.com](http://www.emergencyemailnetwork.com)) is a free service that provides weather and natural disaster information in all 50 states, through both email and pager. Consumers register by county, so that they can receive the appropriate local warnings. Local and regional Emergency Management agencies can also sign up to participate in this service. In some communities, county Emergency Management centers provide free weather warnings for consumers via pagers. In addition to the Emergency Email Network, some communities are developing their own response systems. For example, the Emergency Management center for Faribault County will also send out a warning via pager when the sirens are sounded. This was set up since the Minnesota State School for the Deaf is located in the city of Faribault. A similar pager alert system has just been implemented in Sulphur, Oklahoma, the home of the Oklahoma School for the Deaf. The system is currently local, but may expand statewide. The software was provided by Weather Affirmation, an Oklahoma-based company.

## **Wireless Telephones**

A wireless telephone is a useful resource for receiving outside information during an emergency, since a battery-operated cellular phone could still function during a power outage. A wireless phone is also an important tool to use in calling for help. The FCC states that, while wireless phones can be an important public safety tool, they also create unique challenges for public safety personnel. Since wireless phones are by their very nature mobile, they are not associated with a fixed location or address. The FCC recommends that, when calling 911 from a mobile phone:

- Give the emergency operator your wireless phone number so that if the call gets disconnected, the operator can call you back.
- If your wireless phone is not “initialized” (i.e., you do not have a contract for service with a wireless service provider), and your emergency call gets disconnected, you must call the emergency operator back because he or she does not have your telephone number and cannot contact you.
- To help public safety personnel allocate emergency resources, learn and use the designated number in your state for highway accidents or other non-life-threatening incidents. Often, states reserve specific numbers for these types of incidents. The number to call for non-life-threatening incidents in your state can be found in the front of your phone book. You should program them into the memory of your wireless telephone.

## **Resource 29 – Emergency Communication:**

### **Communicating During Emergencies**

<http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/emergencies.html>

The FCC posts information that will help you better understand what happens with the nation’s communications system during an emergency and how best to

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use the various components of the communications system during a crisis or disaster.

TOMORROW: Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities  
Special Two-Part Feature

**John Cavanagh** is Communications Director for Bridge Multimedia and Chief Researcher for Emergency Information Online.

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## **National Preparedness Month: September 2007**

### **SPECIAL NEEDS, BASIC NEEDS**

#### **Emergency Information for People with Disabilities**

By John Cavanagh and Anne Malia

According to the National Organization on Disability, of the 54 million Americans with disabilities, 61% have not made plans to quickly and safely evacuate their homes, in the event of an emergency. Also, 46% of people with disabilities do not know whom to contact about emergency plans for their community. 53% percent say that they have not made plans to quickly and safely evacuate their home and 32% report that plans have not been made to evacuate them from their workplace in case of a disaster. These statistics illustrate the necessity of continuing to promote the importance of emergency preparedness for those with disabilities. According to the Center for an Accessible Society, too few disaster response officials are trained to deal effectively with people with disabilities, and too few disabled Americans have the knowledge that could help them save their own lives. The Center posts a webpage entitled *Disaster Mitigation for Persons with Disabilities*, taken from a report by The Annenberg Washington Program. It lists seven principles that should guide disaster relief efforts:

#### **1. Accessible Disaster Facilities and Services:**

Communications technology is vital for people with disabilities during a disaster to help assess damage, collect information, and deploy supplies. Access to appropriate facilities -- housing, beds, toilets, and other necessities -- must be monitored and made available to individuals with disabilities before, during, and after a disaster.

#### **2. Accessible Communications and Assistance:**

As communications technology and policy become more integral to disaster relief and mitigation, providing accessibility to the technology for people with disabilities becomes more essential.

### **3. Accessible and Reliable Rescue Communications:**

Accessible and reliable communications technology is critical to ensuring fast, effective, and competent field treatment of people with disabilities. Current satellite and cellular technology as well as personal communication networks permit communication in areas with a damaged or destroyed communication infrastructure. Communications technologies can assist field personnel in rescue coordination and tracking and can be combined with databases that house information on optimal treatment for particular disabilities or that track the allocation of post disaster resources.

### **4. Partnerships with the Disability Community:**

Disability organizations must join with relief and rescue organizations and the media to educate and inform their constituents of disaster contingency and self-help plans. A nationwide awareness effort should be devised and implemented to inform people with disabilities about necessary precautions for imminent disaster. In the event of a sudden natural disaster, such a program would minimize injury and facilitate rescue efforts

### **5. Disaster Preparation, Education, and Training:**

Communications technologies are crucial for educating the public about disaster preparedness and warning the people most likely to be affected. Relief and rescue operations must have the appropriate medical equipment, supplies, and training to address the immediate needs of people with disabilities.

### **6. Partnerships with the Media:**

Many natural disasters can be predicted in advance. Disaster preparedness for people with disabilities is critical in minimizing the impact of a disaster. The media -- in partnership with disability and governmental organizations -- should incorporate advisories into emergency broadcasts in formats accessible to people with disabilities. Such advisories alert the public, provide a mechanism for informing rescue personnel of individual medical conditions and impairments, and identify accessible emergency shelters. The creation and repetition of accessible media messages is critical for empowering people with disabilities to protect themselves from disasters.

## **7. Universal Design and Implementation Strategies:**

A universal design approach to meeting the needs of people with disabilities before and after a disaster will benefit many people without disabilities, such as the very young or the aged. A look at existing agreements among relief organizations and local, state, federal, and international governments will offer guidance in developing effective strategies for universal design and implementation plans.

### **Suggestions for Emergency Responders**

According to an article in EMS Responder.com, Emergency responders should follow certain 'rules of thumb' when working with people with disabilities. It is noted that these "rules" cannot apply in every situation but they make a good foundation to begin with.

- Always ask the person the best way to assist them. The answer will usually give you a significant understanding of any disabilities you may be facing.
- Don't assume what a person's abilities are based on outward signs. For instance, just because a person has a white cane doesn't mean that they are completely blind. In fact, "blind" people range from having a severe vision loss to having perfect vision but within a very small field (sometimes called tunnel vision).
- When you're talking to people with disabilities, be sure to do just that: talk to the person. Oftentimes, people end up talking to the disability or any outward sign of it. In other words, they talk to a hearing aid, or they'll talk to a wheelchair and it comes across as condescending. Rather, focus squarely on the person and their responses.
- Be calm, cool and collected. It is OK to admit that you have not been exposed to a certain disability and it is equally OK to ask questions but project an air of confidence and competence.

## **Suggestions for Individuals Who Have a Disability**

The American Red Cross produces a booklet called *Disaster Preparedness for People With Disabilities*, designed to help people who have physical, visual, auditory, or cognitive disabilities prepare for natural disasters and their consequences. Recommendations include:

1. Know what kinds of disasters could happen in your area and consider what your environment might look like after one occurs. Certain resources or utilities may not be available and conditions could hamper your independence.
2. Complete a personal assessment. Decide what you will be able to do for yourself and what assistance you may need before, during and after a disaster (based on the disrupted environment, your capabilities and your limitations).
3. Create a personal support network of family, friends, relatives, neighbors, roommates and co-workers who could assist you at a moment's notice. Discuss your special needs with them, including evacuation plans and medical information lists.
4. Make an emergency information list so others will know whom to call if they find you unconscious, unable to speak or if they need to help you evacuate quickly. Include the names and numbers of out-of-town contacts, as well as everyone in your network.
5. Compile a medical information list that contains the names and numbers of your doctors, your medications, dosage instructions, and any existing conditions. Make note of your adaptive equipment, allergies, and any communication difficulties you may have.
6. Keep at least a seven-day supply of medications on hand. Ask your doctor or pharmacist what you should do if you cannot immediately get more. If you

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undergo treatments administered by a clinic or hospital, ask your provider how to prepare for a disruption caused by a disaster.

7. Identify evacuation routes and safe places to go during a disaster.

8. Complete a checklist to make sure that your personal disaster plan is comprehensive. Be sure to include your medical needs, evacuation routes, care plans for your service animals, an alternative place to stay, etc.

9. Keep a disaster supply kit in your home, car, workplace or anywhere you may spend your time. Include such items as food, water, a first aid kit, adaptive equipment, batteries, and supplies for your pets or service animals.

10. Make your home or office safer by checking hallways, stairwells, doorways, windows and other areas for hazards that may keep you from safely leaving a building during an emergency. Secure or remove furniture and objects that may block your path.

## Resource 30 – Preparedness for People With Disabilities:

### **The Disability Preparedness Resource Center**

<http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov/>

The Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities posts a website that provides practical information on how people with and without disabilities can prepare for an emergency. It also provides information for people with disabilities, their families, and service providers. In addition, this site includes information for emergency planners and first responders to help them to better prepare for serving persons with disabilities.

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**No Person Left Behind**  
<http://www.nopersonleftbehind.org/>

This is the website of a successful emergency preparedness program that is being emulated throughout the country. No Person Left Behind is built upon four principles: 100% accountability of all persons with disabilities; the identification of basic needs for persons with disabilities; the education of persons with disabilities and families on disaster preparedness; and the empowering of persons with disabilities to take control of their disaster planning. This free online resource offers valuable information on a very practical disaster readiness program, and how to participate in it.

TOMORROW: Emergency Preparedness for People  
With Disabilities, Part 2

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**Article inquiries welcome.** On request, we can provide feature-length articles tailored to your audience and requirements. **Please contact John Cavanagh at Bridge Multimedia: (212) 213-3740 or [jcavanagh@bridgemediamedia.com](mailto:jcavanagh@bridgemediamedia.com).**

## National Preparedness Month – September 2007

### **DON'T BE DISABLED BY AN EMERGENCY: BE PREPARED**

By Barbara Ceconi and Kurt Kuss, Guest Contributors

This week, Emergency Information Online is proud to present a special feature article guest written by Ms. Barbara Ceconi and Mr. Kurt Kuss. It was originally printed in Disability Issues: Vol. 27, No. 2.

When an emergency strikes, it is often sudden and frightening. Disasters can range from a blizzard to pandemic flu to a terrorist attack. We are all painfully aware of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina - the images and stories are

fixed in our consciousness. Although official reactions to emergencies vary, all responses involve taking care of people. The hope is that responders have learned from the mistakes of Katrina. However, insuring public safety needs a multi-layered approach including initiating a personal preparedness strategy. While we have no control over a potential disaster, we do have influence to insure that we are prepared in the event of an emergency – whatever it might be.

Advanced planning by individuals will improve the security, safety and health of people who have some type of disability or complicated medical issue. While you need to believe that emergency responders can appropriately react in community-wide crises, recognize that no one is as familiar with your and your family's particular needs as you are. Everyone ought to have a personal emergency plan, but it is critical for anyone with a disability to be personally prepared to shelter at home during an epidemic. It is also important to organize a "To Go" kit when it becomes necessary to evacuate your home.

Being able to gather everything you need during a crisis is almost impossible, particularly when you need to act RIGHT NOW! Systematically preparing in advance can insure your safety and, in fact, save your life. The most effective method you can employ to survive any emergency is to organize your plan yourself, or work with your support network to develop a strategy.

Access Umbrella, Inc. has been working on issues of emergency preparedness with the State of Massachusetts, Region 4b. This region includes the twenty-seven communities surrounding Boston. While our work translates into a

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universal design approach to effective, efficient, and safe emergency treatment for the general population, our focus has been on serving “vulnerable populations.” The groups included in this definition are people who do not speak English as their primary language, people who are elderly, and people who have disabilities.

Regardless of whether you fall into any of these groups, home preparedness is essential. For people with disabilities, more planning is important due to the complexity of needs. It can be daunting to consider all that is involved with organizing and gathering what you might require in the event of an emergency. It can be more difficult if you live alone or have limited resources, but it is not impossible.

When people feel overwhelmed they sometimes choose to do nothing. If you or a loved one has a disability, it is imperative to utilize the following recommendations. Most of what you need is fairly inexpensive. The one exception is an extra supply of medications. We will offer some suggestions about this later. Remember, you don't have to do or purchase everything all at once. Break down the suggestions into easy-to-accomplish segments. The thing that will help you feel better prepared is to initiate and follow-through.

The pamphlet entitled, ***Be Prepared, Plan Ahead*** was developed by Garrett Simonsen and Lynn Shoeff at the Cambridge Advanced Practice Center for Emergency Preparedness. It very plainly outlines how to take control of your own emergency plans. It states, “Planning ahead for an emergency will give you peace of mind and can help keep your family and friends safe. Here are some simple steps you can take to prepare.

- **Family Communication Plan.** Know how your family will contact each other and where you will meet.
- **Food & Water.** Have a 3-day food and water supply for each person in your home. Remember individual dietary needs and plan for your pets.
- **First Aid & Tools.** Have a first aid kit with health products and prescription medicine.
- **Evacuation Kit.** Have supplies ready in your car or in a backpack in case you must leave home. Pack lightly and include basic supplies for 24 to 48 hours.

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- **Review.** Every 6 months, review your plans and supplies with everyone in your home. Replace expired food, water and medicine. Update your communication plan.

Keeping an up-to-date medication list costs no money, just time. This will assist emergency responders whether you are sheltering at home or need to evacuate. Add to the list the assistive devices that you use, e.g. type of hearing aids and batteries, connections for an electric wheelchair, speech board or voice synthesizer, white canes, supplies for service animals, types of mobility devices such as canes/crutches/walkers, or types of special equipment you might need to take medications or for specific medical conditions. Realize that you might forget some specifics, or that equipment can get lost or forgotten during a crisis.

You should have a list of any important contact information. Family or friend's addresses and phone numbers who may need to be contacted after a disaster. Compile a list of contact information for your physicians and other healthcare provider's in case someone needs prescription information or specific medical history. These will be handy resources in case you need to evacuate. Also, by including these people in your emergency communication plan; you will begin to develop a network of support in case you need more help during an emergency.

For people with disabilities, it is vital to self-advocate both prior to and during an actual emergency. If you feel unable to advocate for yourself, speak with your family, or members of your support system to insure that your particular needs will be met. Talk to them about your concerns, and what services are available in your community during a disaster.

Does your town have contingency plans designed for people with disabilities? For example, if you have a sensory impairment, how will you get the pertinent information? Many communities have a system for dealing with this.

Ask your service providers what their preparedness plans are and how services you depend on might be affected. Are local shelters accessible to you? If not, what other options do you have if you need to evacuate your home? We would like to assume that all shelters can accommodate citizens with disabilities, but some emergencies may render the usual shelters unavailable for use.

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You can obtain some of this information from your local Public Health Department or Board of Health. Most communities have an employee in this office whose responsibility is emergency preparedness. Be patient since many employees may not work full-time. This is another reason to prepare in advance.

Obtain documentation for your service animal from the training center where you acquired the animal. Keep an extra supply of food for the animal in your "To Go" kit and in your home in case of an extended stay.

Contact your healthcare insurance provider to discuss what your options are for obtaining extra medications before an emergency happens. Many providers such as MassHealth and some HMOs only give you a thirty-day supply of your prescriptions at a time. If you begin to refill your prescriptions a couple of days earlier every month, you can begin to gather a few extra day's supply. Presently, planning meetings are occurring on the Massachusetts State level to allow prescription refills of three months during a declared state of emergency. This would require a change in legislation. Make this issue known to your federal and state officials. It is not only a problem for people with disabilities, but for the general public.

A good initial expense is an emergency preparedness kit. Currently, there are a couple of pretty good ones available at Target stores and on-line. The Red Cross kit contains supplies for 4 people. Gloves, ponchos, blanket, flashlight, snap lights, radio and batteries, adhesive and roll bandages, ointments, antiseptic wipes, gauze pads, etc. It is a nicely thought out package and is relatively affordable. The cost is \$30, with \$10 donated to the Red Cross until the end of August. Follow this link for details:

[http://www.target.com/gp/detail.html/sr=1-1/qid=1179836841/ref=sr\\_1\\_1/601-1652509-2537719?ie=UTF8&asin=B000A3QLBY](http://www.target.com/gp/detail.html/sr=1-1/qid=1179836841/ref=sr_1_1/601-1652509-2537719?ie=UTF8&asin=B000A3QLBY)

As was mentioned earlier, *you* can be your best advocate. Begin by compiling your important information and documentation. Discuss emergency plans with your support systems; family, friends, and medical professionals. Ascertain what your town's emergency plans are and request information about any specific planning for people who have disabilities.

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A large disaster affects the community as a whole. It does not only strike a person who has a disability, but creates specific areas of concern that may not affect the rest of the population. The numbers of people who fall into the category of “vulnerable populations” are the majority of many communities. It is incumbent upon us to take as much responsibility as we can for ourselves and those we love.

## Resource 31 – People with Disabilities:

### **Access Umbrella**

<http://www.accessumbrella.com/>

Access Umbrella works with corporate, cultural and educational institutions on issues of disability awareness, application of universal design principles, ADA compliance, policy development, and train-the-trainer sessions involving learning style theory. Members of the team combine personal experience with professional expertise to approach the design of programs, services, products, curriculum, and public spaces from a disabled consumer's perspective. Their use of universal design benefits all people whether or not they have a disability.

***Barbara Ceconi and Kurt Kuss** are partners in the consulting firm of Access Umbrella, Inc. Together, they have been working on issues of Emergency Preparedness from a universal design perspective with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Region 4b, which includes the twenty-seven communities surrounding Boston.*

**John Cavanagh** and **Anne Malia** co-edit Emergency Info Online and 30 Resources, 30 Days.