

TerranearPMC Safety Share

Week of September 17, 2012 – September is National Preparedness Month

Would you be ready to cope with the destructive force of an earthquake? Or how about if you heard that a severe storm was headed in your direction? This month marks the ninth annual National Preparedness Month and is sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA was established on April 1, 1979. Its primary purpose is to coordinate the response to a disaster within the United States which has overwhelmed the resources of local and state authorities. In addition to emergency response, the agency focuses on educating the public about how to prepare for emergencies, including natural disasters, mass casualties, biological and chemical threats, radiation emergencies, and terrorist attacks.

Throughout September there will be activities across the country to promote emergency preparedness. More than 3,000 organizations - national, regional and local organizations, are supporting emergency preparedness efforts and encouraging all Americans to take action. A specific focus will be placed on:

- Home and family preparedness, including pets, older Americans, and individuals with disabilities and special needs
- Back-to-school
- Business preparedness

Two other organizations that show support for emergency preparedness are the American Red Cross and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). These organizations have joined forces to prepare a web site called, *Emergency Preparedness and You*. It can be accessed through the CDC Web Site and identifies and answers common questions about preparing for unexpected events, including:

- Developing a family disaster plan
- Gathering emergency supplies
- Learning how to shelter in place
- Understanding quarantine and isolation
- Learning how to maintain a healthy state of mind

The CDC site also offers information and resources under topics such as hurricane preparedness, extreme heat, and bioterrorism. The CDC continuously updates information on recent outbreaks and incidents, and lists emergency resources for the general public as well as for clinicians and public health professionals.

We, as individuals, are capable of doing many things to ensure our safety during times when we may be unexpectedly faced with a potentially disastrous situation. The key ingredients are to be prepared: assemble an emergency supply kit, make your emergency plans, stay informed, and get involved in helping your family, your business, and your community be ready for emergencies.

Get an Emergency Kit: If disaster strikes your community, you might not have access to food, water, or electricity for some time. By taking time now to prepare emergency water supplies, food supplies and a disaster supplies kit, you can provide for your entire family. The CDC web site has a list of items that is recommended for a disaster supplies kit.

Make an Emergency Plan: Make plans with your family and friends in case you're not together during an emergency. Discuss how you'll contact each other, where you'll meet, and what you'll do in different situations.

Read how to develop a family disaster plan or fill out the Homeland Security Family Emergency Plan (on the CDC web site).

Be Informed: Being prepared means staying informed. Check all types of media – Web sites, newspapers, radio, TV, mobile and land phones for global, national and local information. During an emergency, your local Emergency Management or Emergency Services office will give you information on such things as open shelters and evacuation orders.

The American Red Cross launched a program, called *Ready Rating*, which is designed for organizations to assess their readiness capabilities. *Ready Rating* web sites offer a collection of free, online tools to help businesses, schools, and other organizations prepare for emergencies and offer specific steps that organizations can take to be better prepared. This site features:

- An Emergency Response Plan Tool, which enables program members to build a customized plan to help their employees know their roles in the first 24-72 hours of an emergency;
- A *Next Steps* report that recommends specific actions members should take and the level of effort required to execute them;
- A Resource Center that includes preparedness tools including activities and exercises, so businesses, employees and students can better develop and practice preparedness plans;
- A *Ready Rating* Store with emergency supplies at the click of a button; and

Emergencies like power outages, water main breaks, and medical emergencies can disrupt daily operations. Disasters like tornados, floods, earthquakes, and fires have the potential to cause workplaces to fold and schools to close. In an effort to better prepare for such events, *Ready Rating* members complete a confidential assessment of their current readiness level for emergencies and receive immediate, customized feedback with tips and resources for them to improve their readiness scores. The Red Cross says that the *Ready Rating* program is consistent with Private Sector or PS-Prep Standards developed by the Department of Homeland Security.

“Companies and schools realize that contingency planning is a key element to running a successful operation, but getting started can sometimes be intimidating and overwhelming,” said Jim Judge, CEM, member of the Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council and executive director of Lake EMS, Inc. in Mount Dora, Florida. “The new *Ready Rating* program components make it even easier to get started or to enhance current emergency response plans.”

In addition to FEMA, American Red Cross, and CDC, the Department of Homeland Security promotes emergency preparedness all year round through their awareness campaign, Ready America. Checklists, brochures, and videos are available in English and in Spanish online and by phone (1-800-BE-READY and 1-888-SE-LISTO).

We all have heard of stories in which the level of devastation could have been significantly lessened if only a community was properly prepared. Today, we are fortunate that there are so many tools available for us to avoid similar fates. By not taking advantage of such services, we have chosen to leave ourselves open to the possible perils while ignoring history’s lessons. In this respect, we are allowing those who succumbed to past devastations to have done so in vain.

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

George Santayana (Philosopher: 1863- 1952)