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PRESS RELEASE

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Disaster Preparedness for Families

Disasters often times occur without warning and can disrupt lives for several days, weeks or even months. Federal, State and local resources may not be able to respond immediately to your needs in the wake of a disaster. Having a plan and creating a disaster kit to take care of your family for the first 72 hours is important. FEMA's best advice is to: Be Informed, Make a Plan, Build a Kit, Get Involved.

Be Informed

Before the disaster, learn the hazards your community may be vulnerable too and how your family would respond. In Iowa, the typical natural hazards are heavy rains, flooding, tornadoes, high-winds, ice storms, heavy snow and blizzards. Have an understanding how severe weather watches and warnings will be broadcast and how you will receive the needed information. Be informed how your local community, county and State will respond in the event of a disaster.

Make a Plan

Before the disaster, prepare yourself and family by creating a disaster plan. The plan should address how your family will communicate if you are separated during a disaster. Identify a relative or family friend outside your state (if possible) to be a contact person if the family is separated during a disaster. Identify two meeting locations; one close to home and one if you cannot return to your home.

As part of your emergency plan you need to develop a family evacuation plan. Tips for a good evacuation plan:

- Plan routes from your residence to a safe location
- Plan what you need to take with you should you have to evacuate for an extended amount of time.
- Ensure all family members know where to go should you become separated.

FEMA's website www.ready.gov had templates to assist your family in developing a plan.

Prevention

Preparedness

Response

Recovery

Mitigation

Build a Kit

A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items that members of a household may need in the event of a disaster. An effective disaster kit contains enough food, water and other supplies for each person to last three days. Basic items to include in a kit are:

- Water (One gallon per person per day)
- No perishable foods and a can opener
- Clothes, blankets and shoes
- Battery or hand crank radio
- Flashlight & extra batteries
- First Aid Kit
- Whistle
- Cash & coins
- Photocopies of important family documents such as ID Cards, social security cards, and insurance cards.
- Baby needs (formula, diapers, wipes, etc.)
- Sanitation items such as hand sanitizer and toilet paper
- Prescription medication and eyeglasses
- Games to pass the time and keep children entertained

Don't Forget your Pets

While you are creating your plan for the family don't forget to have a kit and a plan for your pets. Red Cross disaster shelters will not accept pets into the shelter unless they are a service animal. Prepare a list of other family members, friends or kennels that may be able to care for your pet if you would have to leave your home. The kit for your pets should include:

- Water & Food for 3 days
- Photos of your pet for identification
- Current vaccination records
- Leashes, collars, carriers and toys
- Bowls & can openers
- Battery operated radio
- First aid kit
- Medicines & medical records.

Maintaining your Kit

Just as important as putting your supplies together is maintaining them so they are safe to use when needed. Here are some tips to keep your supplies ready and in good condition:

- Keep canned food in a cool, dry place.
- Store boxed food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers to protect from pests and to extend its shelf life.
- Throw out any canned good that becomes swollen, dented or corroded.
- Use foods before they go bad and replace them with fresh supplies.
- Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in the front.
- Change stored food and water supplies every six months. Be sure to write the date you store it on all containers.

- **Re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your family's needs change.**

Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supplies kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers, such as an unused trashcan, camping backpack or duffel bag.

Get Involved

In the face of disaster, Americans come together with courage, compassion and unity and ask, “How can I help?”

There are many ways to Get Involved especially before a disaster occurs. The whole community can participate in programs and activities to make their families, homes and communities safer from risks and threats. Community leaders agree the formula for ensuring a safer homeland consists of volunteers, a trained and informed public and increased support of emergency response agencies during disasters. Major disasters can overwhelm first responder agencies, empowering individuals to lend support.

So Get Involved before disaster strikes! Here are a few ways you can help:

- **Volunteer to support disaster efforts in your community. Get trained and volunteer with a Community Emergency Response Team, Medical Reserve Corps unit and/or other Citizen Corps Partner Program or Affiliate organization.** Many local faith-based and community organizations have programs active in supporting disasters too. View more volunteer opportunities.
- **Be part of the community planning process. Connect and collaborate with your local emergency planning group, Citizen Corps Council or local emergency management agency.**
- **Join or start a preparedness project. Find an event or identify local resources, build a team, choose a project, set goals and serve your community by improving the preparedness of your friends, colleagues and neighbors.**
- **Support major disasters by donating cash or goods which may help meet the needs of your community in times of disaster.**

Information on creating a disaster plan and kit can be located on the new Story County website at [Story County Emergency Management](#) under Disaster & Emergency Preparedness. Story County Emergency Management can also be followed through Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/storycountyema> which is being used for public education and Emergency Management activities.