

September is National Emergency Preparedness Month

This National Emergency Preparedness Awareness Month is sponsored by FEMA's Ready Campaign in partnership with the Citizens Corps and the Ad Council. A more detailed description about this partnership is available on the FEMA website at www.fema.gov. A webinar about the special activities planned in nearly every state nationwide will be available September 2, 2010 at www.citizenscorps.gov/news/webcast. This month has been designated to encourage all Americans and communities to improve emergency preparedness.

There are continuous reminders that disasters can happen at anytime and any place and that each event is unique. This past year there have been record breaking winter storms, prolonged and extremely high temperatures, serious floods, a pandemic flu outbreak, tornados, a major oil spill, earthquakes and there is still another two months to go until the end of the hurricane season November 1.

It is a good time for the Aging Network, including State and Tribal agencies, Area Agencies and local services providers, to review, strengthen and update emergency plans. This review should include workplace plans, commonly referred to as continuity of operations or COOP. Emergency plans should be readily available on agency websites with important contact information included. Plans should be developed with user input with prescribed timeframes for training events and updates.

The most critical links are developed at the local level with partnerships and networking within the local community. These partnerships need to include the State and County/local emergency response organizations, State and local health departments, the media, other human services agencies, the American Red Cross, church and charitable organizations and others willing to help. These community partnerships need to be unified in their goals and approach with build-in communication links for the exchange of information. Contact points for broadcasting and receiving information are vital.

Websites which provide valuable technical assistance and materials are:

1. "Ready America, Prepare, Plan, Stay Informed" which includes information about a "To-Go Kit" or Emergency Supply Kit evacuation needs; preparing the family and home; and categorizes the various level of hurricane threats. FEMA has created some 2,445 Citizens Councils nationwide, which brings government and community leaders together for all-hazards emergency preparedness and resilience – <http://www.ready.gov/>
2. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Emergency Preparedness and Response section which addresses health concerns

- associated emergencies, severe weather and environmental issues, and contamination of the food supply – www.cdc.gov
3. Active weather updates – www.noaa.gov
 4. The American Red Cross (ARC) – Is an internationally recognized charitable organization with multiple local chapters that provide shelter, food and water, and emotional support through public support and the use of volunteers– www.redcross.org.
 5. The National Voluntary Agencies Active in Disasters (NVOAD) – is the primary point of contact for non-profit organizations and volunteers who help with disaster preparedness, response, relief, recovery and mitigation – www.nvoad.org.