



AMERICA'S
PrepareAthon!SM
BE SMART. TAKE PART. PREPARE.

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

MATERIALS FOR YOUR OUTREACH AND PROMOTION

SEPTEMBER 2015



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Note: This guide offers general reference information for America’s PrepareAthon! participants, without warranty or guarantee of any kind. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) does not guarantee media coverage or participant attendance for America’s PrepareAthon! events. FEMA does not endorse any nongovernmental entities, organizations, or services.

All nonfederal users of the enclosed templates must include a Service Mark acknowledgment. Visit ready.gov/prepare to download the Logo Usage Guidelines for instructions and guidance.



Introduction

Congratulations! By participating in America's PrepareAthon!, your organization or community is taking an important step toward preparing for disasters.

This communication toolkit is designed to help you make the most of your day of action by raising public awareness through publicity and media coverage. The toolkit includes background information, talking points and messaging, frequently asked questions, preparedness facts, a guide to media outreach, fill-in-the-blank media materials, social media tips, and other tools. These materials are designed to save you time and make your outreach easier before and during your PrepareAthon! Day.

Whether your organization is planning to hold an event, drill, or other activity, you can customize these materials to promote your efforts and participate in America's PrepareAthon!

You can also refer to the *How to Customize Promotional Materials* page, which provides step-by-step instructions on how to use and customize America's PrepareAthon! digital media tools—such as the logo, banner ads, and badges—to help you and your team publicize your America's PrepareAthon! activities. This document is available at [ready.gov/prepare](https://www.ready.gov/prepare).



Overview of America's PrepareAthon!

America's PrepareAthon! is a grassroots campaign for action to get people better prepared for emergencies by conducting hazard-specific group discussions, drills, and exercises. Throughout the year, America's PrepareAthon! helps communities and individuals across the country practice preparedness actions before a disaster or emergency strikes.

Twice a year, a national day of action, called National PrepareAthon! Day, focuses attention on the importance of creating a more resilient Nation by bringing together stakeholders, communities, and individuals to take preparedness action. In the fall, National PrepareAthon! Day takes place on September 30 in conjunction with National Preparedness Month. In the spring, National PrepareAthon! Day takes place on April 30.

Goals

Increase the number of individuals who:

- Understand which disasters could happen in their community;
- Know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage;
- Take action to increase their preparedness; and
- Participate in community resilience planning.

Resources

Find resources such as the following on [ready.gov/prepare](https://www.ready.gov/prepare):

- *How to Prepare* series: These guides for each hazard (earthquake, flood, hurricane, tornado, wildfire, and winter storm) provide information on how to protect yourself and your property.
- *Prepare Your Organization* playbooks: These materials are tailored to each hazard and designed to provide community leaders and employers with tools and resources to get the most out of their participation in America's PrepareAthon!
- Fact sheets, background information, customizable promotional materials, and fill-in-the-blank template outreach materials: These resources are easy to use, and many can be tailored to specific activities within the community.



Key Messages

- America's PrepareAthon! is a grassroots campaign for action to better prepare people for emergencies that could strike their communities. Easy-to-use tools empower families, organizations, and communities to prepare for many common hazards, including earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and winter storms.
- America's PrepareAthon! works to build a more resilient Nation by increasing the number of people who:
 - Understand which disasters could happen in their community;
 - Know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage;
 - Take action to increase their preparedness; and
 - Participate in community resilience planning.
- America's PrepareAthon! is asking everyone to take action, be counted, and spread the word. Visit [ready.gov/prepare](https://www.ready.gov/prepare) to find out how you and your organization can participate and register your actions.
- Year round, millions of Americans participate in America's PrepareAthon!, building the national momentum of preparedness. But twice a year, a national day of action, called National PrepareAthon! Day, focuses attention on the importance of creating a more resilient Nation by bringing together stakeholders, communities, and individuals to take preparedness action. In the fall, National PrepareAthon! Day takes place on September 30 in conjunction with National Preparedness Month. In the spring, it takes place on April 30.
- Disasters and emergencies can happen at any time, often without warning. Know which disasters can happen in your community and how to prepare for them.
- America's PrepareAthon! is coordinated in collaboration with Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments and private sector and nongovernmental organizations. Cities and counties across the country are planning community-wide events for America's PrepareAthon!, bringing together schools, businesses, local government, faith leaders, hospitals, individuals and families, and others to participate in community-wide preparedness drills and activities.

America's PrepareAthon! 10 Ways To Participate

There are many easy and affordable ways for families, organizations, and communities to take action to be prepared for emergencies, including:

1. Sign up for local alerts and warnings, download apps, and/or check access for wireless emergency alerts;
2. Develop and test emergency communication plans;
3. Assemble or update emergency supplies;
4. Learn about local hazards and conduct a drill to practice emergency response actions;
5. Participate in a preparedness discussion, training, or class;
6. Collect and safeguard critical documents;
7. Document property and obtain appropriate insurance for relevant hazards;
8. Make property improvements to reduce potential injury and property damage (mitigation);
9. Hold a scenario-based continuity of operations tabletop exercise for your organization; and
10. Plan with neighbors to help each other and share resources.



Key Research Findings That Support an Action-Based Movement

- A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) survey found that nearly 60 percent of respondents have not practiced what to do in a disaster by participating in a disaster preparedness exercise or drill at work, school, or home in the past year.ⁱ
- Despite the fact that we are seeing more extreme weather across the United States and increases in the costs of natural disasters, FEMA research shows that fewer than half of Americans have developed and discussed an emergency plan with their household.

Preparedness Matters

- When people prepare and practice for an emergency in advance of the event, it makes a real difference in their ability to take immediate and informed action. This, in turn, enables them to recover more quickly. Participation in group discussions, drills, exercises, and trainings helps to establish brain patterns that support quick and effective action during an emergency.

Preparedness in the Community

- Being prepared for disasters is a shared responsibility. It takes all of us working together to effectively prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.
- America's PrepareAthon! calls on all communities to practice preparedness actions now and throughout the year for the types of emergencies that could strike their area.

Preparedness in the Workplace

- The longer it takes local businesses to recover, the longer it takes communities to bounce back.
- Participation in America's PrepareAthon! helps limit a disaster's impact on your business, including loss of life, injury, financial loss, property damage, and lost productivity from missed work.

Preparedness in the School

- Children comprise approximately 25 percent of our Nation's population, and they play an important role in disaster preparedness.
- Households with schoolchildren who brought home preparedness materials were significantly more likely to report preparing than those who did not receive materials: Those children who brought home the preparedness materials were 75 percent more likely to have a household plan they had discussed as a family, and twice as likely to have participated in a home drill. Interestingly, households with children who did not bring home materials were less likely to complete several behaviors than households with no children at all.
- Children who have learned about emergency preparedness experience less anxiety during actual emergencies. The knowledge of what to do during an emergency helps them to act with confidence and empowers them to become active participants in emergency efforts.ⁱⁱ

Preparedness in the Home

- Preparedness begins in the home. Parents can set the example by teaching their children the importance of having an emergency plan.
- In a FEMA survey, fewer than half of the respondents had developed and discussed an emergency plan with their household.ⁱⁱⁱ



Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: What is America's PrepareAthon?

A1: America's PrepareAthon! is a grassroots campaign for action to increase community emergency preparedness and resilience through hazard-specific group discussions, drills, and exercises. The campaign offers 10 actions that can help communities and individuals across the country to practice preparedness before a disaster or emergency strikes.

Q2: What is the goal of America's PrepareAthon?

A2: The goal of America's PrepareAthon! is simple: Build a more resilient Nation by increasing the number of individuals who understand which disasters could happen in their community, know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage, take action to increase their preparedness, and participate in community resilience planning.

Q3: For which kinds of disasters will America's PrepareAthon! help me prepare?

A3: America's PrepareAthon! has materials that will help you prepare for earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and winter storms. Resources about preparing for additional hazards will be added in the future.

Q4: Can we practice for any type of hazard?

A4: Yes. While America's PrepareAthon! currently has materials for six hazards, your local emergency management agency may have additional resources for the other hazards your community may face. The most important things are to start discussing how you will protect yourself if a disaster strikes and to take action to better prepare yourself and those you care about.

Q5: What resources are available and how do I find them?

A5: The campaign provides participation guides that contain information on how to prepare for earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and winter storms. In addition, the campaign provides customizable promotional materials and easy-to-use outreach materials to drive participation and promote involvement. Everything can be found at ready.gov/prepare.

Q6: Who can participate?

A6: Everyone! America's PrepareAthon! calls on the whole community to take action. Organizations such as workplaces, schools, houses of worship, community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, and individuals and families need to take action to get and stay prepared.

Q7: How can individuals and organizations participate?

A7: Participation in America's PrepareAthon! is simple:

Take Action: Visit ready.gov/prepare to learn which hazards can affect your community. Review the list of 10 actions and choose a preparedness activity that fits your hazard.



Be Counted: Create your account and register your action. Go to ready.gov/prepare and join the growing number of individuals who recognize that preparing for disasters is a shared responsibility.

Spread the Word: Download materials such as how-to-prepare guides, implementation guides, and promotional materials to publicize your day of action.

Q8: How can communities participate?

A8: Community leaders, emergency managers, and Citizen Corps Councils and other civic leaders are bringing together key stakeholders in their communities to participate in community-wide drills and exercises to improve their residents' disaster preparedness and overall resilience. Schools, local businesses, houses of worship, hospitals, and civic organizations can join forces to conduct a community-wide drill or activity so that everyone across the community is better prepared.

Q9: How does my participation count?

A9: America's PrepareAthon! activities must be registered in order to be counted. The number of participants in preparedness activities is the total number of participants from approved activities submitted to the America's PrepareAthon! website between January 1, 2015, and the present date.

Q10: I already promote preparedness in my organization or community. Can those activities be a part of America's PrepareAthon?

A10: Absolutely! America's PrepareAthon! is about taking action, so all preparedness actions count.

Q11: Can I customize America's PrepareAthon! materials for my own campaign?

A11: Yes! Organizations and communities can either use the America's PrepareAthon! brand or customize the logo to build their own campaign and to promote greater participation (e.g., Acme's PrepareAthon!, Coastal County's PrepareAthon! for Hurricane Safety). When you create your account, we will ask you to review and agree to the guidelines for using the logo and promotional materials.

Q12: When can I participate in America's PrepareAthon?

A12: Participation in America's PrepareAthon! can take place anytime throughout the year, whenever it is most convenient or practical for the communities, organizations, and families taking part.

Q13: What is National PrepareAthon! Day?

A13: National PrepareAthon! Days take place every April 30 and September 30, and are the two days every year when the national campaign focuses on increasing registrations and expanding media coverage to celebrate the preparedness drills and activities happening around the country. The fall National PrepareAthon! Day culminates National Preparedness Month, held every September.

**Q14: What is the connection between America's PrepareAthon! and the Great ShakeOut earthquake drill?**

A14: America's PrepareAthon! promotes earthquake safety in coordination with the Great ShakeOut. Participants who register for the Great ShakeOut will automatically be counted as part of America's PrepareAthon! Please visit shakeout.org for more information.

Q15: Is there recognition for participating?

A15: Yes. First, please take a few minutes to register your participation at ready.gov/prepare. Once registered, you can download a certificate of participation.

Q16: How will America's PrepareAthon! be promoted?

A16: Promotional efforts for America's PrepareAthon! include working with national and local organizations that support this active approach to preparedness. The campaign will also use earned and social media to focus attention and encourage a national conversation on the importance of taking action to be prepared. Visit ready.gov/prepare to download customizable promotional materials and fill-in-the-blank media templates that you can tailor for your own promotional efforts. We encourage you to use the web banners, web badges, and digital invites, and to join the online Twitter conversation through @PrepareAthon and #PrepareAthon.

Q17: How does America's PrepareAthon! tie in with National Preparedness Month?

A17: September is National Preparedness Month, which culminates with the fall National PrepareAthon! Day on September 30.

Q18: How does America's PrepareAthon! work with the *Ready Campaign*?

A18: The *Ready Campaign* promotes awareness of four universal building blocks of preparedness—Be Informed, Make a Plan, Build a Kit, and Get Involved. America's PrepareAthon! focuses on translating this awareness to action. America's PrepareAthon! provides action-oriented guidance for individuals and organizations to practice the necessary steps that will help them stay safe during a disaster or emergency; learn about mitigation measures; and understand community plans, including alerts and warnings, evacuation, and sheltering.

Q19: How do I register my participation in the America's PrepareAthon! campaign?

A19: Register yourself at ready.gov/prepare to be counted. Start by answering a few short, simple questions, after which you may then add an event. You will be asked to add information on what type of event it is (e.g., workshop, drill, exercise), how many people you expect to participate in the event, and where the event will be located, among other questions. You will have the option to either keep your event private (e.g., only you and America's PrepareAthon! technical support will see the event details) or have it publicly displayed on the America's PrepareAthon! calendar.



Fact Sheet

Get the Facts

- Between 1900 and 2014, the United States experienced 38 earthquakes, 166 floods, and 568 storms (including tropical cyclones).^{iv}
- In 2012, the United States was struck by 936 tornadoes, causing about \$1.6 billion in damages.^v
- In 2014, there were more than 300 fatalities and more than 2,100 injuries related to the weather.^{vi}

The Cost of Being Unprepared

- In 2014, deadly weather caused more than \$5 billion in property damage.^{vii}
- According to the Insurance Information Institute, an estimated 25 percent of all businesses affected by a major disaster never reopen.^{viii}
- Failing to prepare for extreme weather events cost the United States \$1.15 trillion in economic losses between 1980 and 2010, and could cost another trillion dollars in coming years.^{ix}
- Investments in weather preparation cost local governments significantly less than recovery. Preparedness strategies include flood proofing, flood evacuation plans, elevating buildings, purchasing insurance, improving drainage codes, and floodplain standards.^x

Family Preparedness Is Critical

- Based on a 2012 FEMA national survey, 54 percent of the U.S. population do not believe their community will experience a natural disaster.^{xi}
- Based on a 2015 FEMA national survey, less than half of the respondents have a plan they have discussed with their family members.

Preparedness Pays Off^{xii}

Research shows that people are more prepared for a disaster if they:

- Are aware of community alerts and warning systems;
- Talk about their preparedness plan with family and others;
- Attend trainings and meetings; and
- Participate in a drill or exercise.



Media Outreach and Promotion

This section is designed to help you and your team promote and publicize your America's PrepareAthon! drill, activity, or community-wide event. Promoting your drill plays an important role in raising awareness and educating other people in your community about the importance of being prepared.

Whether your organization is planning to hold an event, drill, or other preparedness activity, the information that follows will help you construct a solid game plan for promoting your participation in America's PrepareAthon!

Create Messaging and Publicity Materials for Your Media Event

In publicity and promotional terms, a message is simply a clear, basic explanation of the issue or event you want to communicate to the public and the media. Establish two or three key messages for your event to ensure that target audiences receive the message, and publicity and promotional materials remain consistent. When you have a well-defined message, members and leaders within your organization can effectively communicate about the event, and the media will have more clarity on what you are doing. You'll want to include aspects of this messaging in any materials you use to talk about your event, including press releases, media advisories, press conferences, invitations, newsletters, letters to the editor, or proclamations issued by elected officials.

Creating messaging is simple—all you need to do is to identify and outline the “Five W’s” of your event: **who** your event involves, **what** the purpose of your event is, **where** your event is being held, **when** your event is being held, and **why** the event is important to your community. In short, what do you want the headline or lead to be? What do you want the reporter to focus on? Please refer to the messaging portion of this toolkit to ensure that your message is focused and consistent.

At the end of this section, you will find templates for materials that can be easily tailored for your America's PrepareAthon! event, as well as basic guidelines on how and where to use them.

Develop a Media Event and a Media Plan

Getting your America's PrepareAthon! event covered by the media in your community requires a good strategy; and developing a media plan should be your first step. Start by brainstorming ideas for a newsworthy and visual media event. Be creative as you develop a plan that you think will appeal to your local media, then create a timeline to help execute this plan.

Plan Your Media Event

A planned media event will give your organization an opportunity to proactively promote your America's PrepareAthon! activity and draw attention to your efforts to prepare your community for disasters.

The following are components of a planned media event:

Identify a drill or activity that would be of interest to the media. A successful media event must have a strong visual component and a human interest hook. An event can take place at your business, school, or organization and can highlight an exercise, drill, or other activity you're undertaking to increase your disaster preparedness. Think about how you can incorporate your employees, students, or members to add a human element to the story. The location of the event should be accessible to the media and create a visual setting for your story.



Issue a press release. Create and distribute a media or press release, or a simple media advisory, inviting news cameras to capture photos or video of your event. Identify the “Five W’s” of your event: who your event involves, what the purpose of your event is, where your event is being held, when your event is being held, and why the media should take interest. Send the press release or media advisory a week or two prior to your event and plan to follow up with reminders to the media in the days leading up to the event.

Pitch a feature story. Identify news outlets in your community to pitch a specific and/or unique story as a way to showcase your event. Identify reporters or news outlets that may have a particular interest in an aspect of your event, and offer a subject matter expert or visual that will appeal to that reporter or outlet. Feature stories can run on the days leading up to your event, on the day of your event, or even a day or two after your event.

Support your event on social media. Create posts for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or other social media platforms that your organization uses. You can tailor posts to attract or inform your community about your event or to seek public participation, and/or you can simply use this medium to talk about what your organization is doing to prepare for a disaster. News organizations often use social media to find story ideas, so be sure to follow the media outlets on your social media channels and encourage your followers to share your content. You can refer to the Social Media Outreach section of this toolkit for sample messaging, social media tips, and tools.

Promote your event after the fact. Post information about the success of your event through social media channels after the event. You can also research community newspapers or local blogs that accept prewritten stories and submit a piece on your event. Include photos and quotes from participants or your organization’s leadership. Sometimes the media won’t come to you, but you can still put your event in the public sphere.

Example: The University of Kansas plans a “Ready Campus” tornado drill to promote student and faculty disaster preparedness:

- Visual components include the backdrop of a university campus, a press conference featuring university leaders, and faculty and students as they seek shelter during a mock tornado warning scenario.
- The human interest component focuses on the students and what preparing for a tornado means to them personally, as well as university administrators and what preparedness means for the campus.
- Two weeks prior to the event, the university distributes a media release announcing the campus-wide tornado drill and inviting the local media and students to attend the event.
- The university has identified a student whose family survived a tornado because they practiced going to their protective location. The university pitches a local newspaper reporter on following the student through the campus-wide drill as she explains how her family prepared for the tornado and what it means to practice preparedness at home and school.
- In the days leading up to the event, messages supporting and promoting the event (targeted at both the media and the public) are posted on the university’s social media channels.
- Two or three days before the event, the university sends a followup media advisory, makes phone calls to reporters, or sends email reminders to news outlets about the tornado drill event and the story opportunities available to the media.
- The day after the event, the university shares news stories about the event—or their own pictures, messages, or anecdotes about the success of the tornado drill—on its social media channels.



Create a Media Plan

Once you've decided what your media event is going to be, it's time to put together a plan. The sample timeline and plan below can be tailored and used in executing your media plan. Your timeline should include deadlines for securing your event, creating a media list, and creating and distributing publicity materials, as well as key dates for social media posts and media outreach.

TIMEFRAME	OBJECTIVE
One month prior to the media event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify aspects of your event that will interest news outlets, such as exciting visuals, rarely seen emergency planning operations, human interest stories, a well-known spokesperson, a unique subject matter expert, and information that has mass public appeal. ▪ Identify media outlets in your community that you want to work with in promoting your event. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Think about the news outlets in your community that have the largest reach. Daily newspapers, talk radio programs, and network TV stations are the biggest influencers. 2. Identify secondary news outlets in your community—neighborhood newspapers, public access TV stations, bloggers, or other places that post local information. ▪ Create a media list—research reporters, columnists, talk show hosts, editors, and producers from your list of news outlets and gather their email addresses and phone numbers.
Three weeks prior to your event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify and secure the schedules of spokespeople, subject matter experts, or other individuals who are crucial to your event. ▪ Think about whether there are any feature stories you can pitch to specific reporters. ▪ Create a draft media release, media advisory, invitations, or other announcements for your event and have them approved by your organization's leadership.
Two weeks prior to your event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reach out to reporters or news outlets and ask your media contacts how they prefer to receive media releases. Let them know you'll be following up with more information soon. ▪ Once you've identified who you'll be working with and how they wish to receive information, begin talking with them about your ideas and deliver your pitch. ▪ Distribute an initial media or press release, media advisory, and/or invitation for your event. ▪ Begin talking about your event on your organization's social media channels.
One week prior to your event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confirm and schedule interviews, photo opportunities, or other components of your feature stories with the reporters who've accepted your pitches. ▪ Prepare a media advisory and emails to remind reporters about your event. ▪ Continue talking about your event on your organization's social media channels. ▪ Address remaining logistical or technical issues and create a timeline for the day of your event to share with your organization's leadership, speakers, and other crucial participants. ▪ Prepare your spokespeople, or anyone else from your organization who may be featured in media coverage, so they know what to expect, what to say, and how to present themselves.
Two or three days before your event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Email a reminder media advisory and email/call news outlets, reporters, editors, or producers to confirm their plans to attend your event. ▪ Continue talking about your event on your organization's social media channels.
The day of your event and the days following your event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with the media who attended to ensure they have what they need for their stories. ▪ Post photos and anecdotes about the success of your event on your organization's social media channels. ▪ Monitor media coverage to ensure its accuracy; share links to this coverage with your organization's leadership and on your social media channels.



Develop a Media List, Contacts, and Relationships

When you don't normally work with the media, the thought of reaching out to news outlets can be a little intimidating. In this section, we've outlined information, tips, and best practices to help guide you in identifying news outlets to work with and then beginning to develop contacts and relationships with local journalists.

Finding the media outlets in your state and your specific market is easy. A simple Internet search is the best way to start. For example, type in the keywords "TV stations in Michigan" and a number of websites come up with this information. For one-stop shopping, you can also try U.S. Newspapers Lists (USNPL) at www.usnpl.com. This website provides a comprehensive list of daily, weekly, and college newspapers, as well as TV and radio stations for every state. The site provides a direct link to each outlet's Facebook and Twitter pages, and it's easy to navigate and can save you time searching. Other resources include:

NewsLink: www.newslink.org

Radio Locator: www.radio-locator.com

Print

Many major market newspapers have downsized, reduced their paper size, or gone out of business completely. In recent years, traditional newspapers have become more competitive by offering web or Internet-based services and online newspapers.

Television

In most TV markets, there are five news-affiliated stations: NBC, CBS, ABC, FOX, and Univision. In some larger markets of the United States, regional cable news outlets operate on a local level (e.g., New England Cable, Tampa Bay Cable), but most local TV stations are broadcast affiliates of the big five mentioned above.

Radio

In some larger markets, radio stations will have an internal local news operation. In medium and smaller markets, the news operation could be the responsibility of one person or could be provided to the station by an outside news service. In some markets, the same company owns both a local radio and a local TV station.

Digital Media

Digital media refers to online news sources and social media platforms. Websites such as Yahoo! and Google are leading suppliers of Internet news, but all media outlets have an online presence in today's news landscape. In addition to traditional news outlets, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest are also important to the media world because they efficiently bring together people of shared interests and are a vehicle for quickly spreading information. Digital media can also include blogs and websites that don't necessarily belong to a traditional news outlet but help spread news just the same. All traditional local and national media outlets push out news content and information through their own websites and social media channels, so it's important to ask your media contacts how you can access their digital media resources to tell your story.

Develop a Media List and Identify Media Contacts

Before you begin cold-calling media outlets, check whether someone in your organization has a local media list. If not, start identifying news outlets in your community that cover general news or specific stories related to weather, disasters, and emergency preparedness. Think about the major newspaper in town, and major TV and radio stations, as well as smaller community news organizations, websites, or blogs that you may be able to tap for coverage.



After you've made a list of the news organizations in your community that you'd like to target, research their websites to find the following information:

- The name and type of media outlet (e.g., print, radio, television, and online/new media) and the outlet's main phone number and website address.
- Names, phone numbers, and email addresses of reporters who cover general news, city/town issues, weather, disasters, or emergency preparedness.
- Names, phone numbers, and email addresses for news desks, producers, or editors of TV or radio programs you think would be a good fit for your story, or specific newspaper sections or columns that would similarly provide a good fit.

Contact the Media and Build Relationships

Once you've created a list of local news organizations, you can begin contacting them. It's worthwhile to send out an email or make phone calls as an introduction. Doing this will help your local media contacts become familiar with your name and the event that you're going to be promoting. A short, basic introduction is all that's needed. Ask your media contacts how they prefer to receive media releases and other communications, and let them know you'll be following up with more information soon. It's also a good idea to follow the news outlets and specific reporters you're hoping to work with on Twitter and Facebook. Taking this simple step is an easy way to monitor what these outlets and reporters are covering. You'll be able to get a feel for how your contacts report their stories and what kind of information might be of interest.

It's important to be persistent without becoming a nuisance. After making an initial introduction to your media contacts, follow up when you have a concrete timeline for your event (in the suggested timeline, this would occur about two weeks prior to your event); if you're not making any headway with your contacts, feel free to check in again after a few days, but try to avoid pestering your contacts with daily calls or emails. When sending emails, make sure your contacts know what you're writing about. Avoid using vague subject lines and get right to the point in the body of the email. If you're sending a media release or media advisory, be sure to paste the information into the body of the email so that it's immediately accessible to the reporter.

Below are some additional tips to help you determine the best ways to contact specific types of media outlets.

Contacting Print Media

Most daily newspapers have a news assignment editor who reviews media releases and media advisories. It's also common for newspapers to have identified staffers with regular "beats" (e.g., education, city police/fire, health, sports). A newspaper in a larger market might have someone assigned to cover homeland security and disaster preparedness. Smaller newspapers or weeklies may cover more community events.

It's a good practice to call or email the print media contacts you've identified and ask who would most likely cover your type of event. You can score extra points by asking what time of day reporters are generally on deadline to file their stories; avoid calling during these timeframes and you'll stand a better chance of getting the reporter's full attention.



Contacting a TV Station

Stations with early morning and late evening newscasts are usually staffed 24 hours a day. Small- and medium-sized market stations may have reduced hours based around news times. Media events that occur before 11 a.m. are usually covered on the noon and early afternoon newscasts, between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. Know your local TV stations' broadcast schedule and avoid contacting the station in the hour leading up to those times; reporters and assignment editors will be focused on their deadlines and won't be interested in chatting about upcoming stories. Additional coverage may also be included on the station's website. It is important to understand the limitations and preferences of your local TV stations before scheduling a news conference or press event. Another way to generate coverage is to establish a partnership with the station's meteorologist or weather personality.

Contacting a Radio Station

Like TV stations, radio outlets generally have news or assignment desks and producers who oversee the content of specific shows. When contacting a radio station, it's important to first take a look at the station's website and determine what kind of stories they cover and what their featured shows are. You should also be able to find contact information for assignment desks and producers on the station's website. Because radio is heard and not seen, most radio station news operations conduct interviews over the phone versus in person or in the studio. Most radio stations have a small news staff and can't always send a reporter to cover news events in person. However, you can ask if the station is able to offer an interview before or after your event. Unless you're contacting an all-news station, most news programs or interview opportunities are provided during the peak morning and afternoon "drive times." Peak drive times typically fall between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m., and between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Contacting an Online Outlet

When you work with traditional media outlets, it's likely that your event will be covered on those outlets' websites. When thinking about identifying other new media organizations that aren't affiliated with a traditional news source, you're likely to have better luck getting coverage on websites and blogs that are specific to your community.

Checklist for Planning a Media Event

1. DETERMINE WHAT YOUR MEDIA EVENT WILL BE

- Brainstorm ideas for a newsworthy media event with visuals and of significant interest to the general public.
- Determine whether your event will include a high-profile stakeholder or other partners and reach out to these partners to collaborate on an ideal timeframe and location.
- Determine whether your event will include a press conference, or whether it will be a photo opportunity with a subject matter expert who is available for on-camera interviews.
- Select a location that will showcase some type of action, and can be easily accessible to the media.
- Identify pertinent agencies and organizations to include as partner presenters and organizers.

2. LOCK IN YOUR MEDIA EVENT

- Confirm the date, time, and location for your media event.
- Avoid holding your media event during the major news cycles (i.e., mornings between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m. or after 4 p.m. in most news markets). In larger TV markets, 11 a.m. is a desirable time to conduct an event. This will increase the likelihood of live coverage during the mid-day newscasts, followed by additional coverage during the early evening newscasts.



- Check community calendars in your area, chamber of commerce business calendars, and/or dates for other major events in your region to make sure the date of your media event doesn't conflict with other significant, newsworthy happenings.
- Identify a spokesperson(s) or official(s) who will speak at the event and/or serve as a subject matter expert for interviews on air or in print.
- Confirm your speaker's availability and lock in the date and time on his or her calendar.
- Have an initial internal discussion about event logistics. Start thinking about whether you'll have access to electrical power. Are there specific things you need to plan for when using an indoor versus an outdoor location? Is a podium, microphone, or sound system needed? Are there costs associated with the location? Consider a location with adequate parking spaces to accommodate media vehicles.

3. ANNOUNCE YOUR MEDIA EVENT

- Create an initial media release outlining your event and include a succinct, compelling message that describes why the event is newsworthy.
- Allow enough time for content approval from your organization's leadership and any partners you're working with. (Note: A customizable media release template is provided in this guide.)
- Identify appropriate contacts to send the media release to, and build a media list.
- Send your media release via email two to three weeks in advance to the contacts on your media list.
- If possible, post a link to the media release on your organization's website and social media channels.
- Ask partners or staff to share or retweet these posts and/or post links and information about the event.
- Follow up the media release distribution with personal phone calls or emails to key media and gauge their interest in covering the event.
- Provide reporters with additional background information to help make their decision to cover the event easier.

4. PRIORITIZE ACTIVITIES FOR 7 TO 10 DAYS PRIOR TO YOUR EVENT

- Reach out to key media and ask if reporters, editors, or photographers are interested in setting up a one-on-one interview with a speaker, subject matter expert, or spokesperson before or after your event.
- Create brief talking points and/or a script outline highlighting the key elements of your event for speakers to use in preparation for your event.
- If more than one person will speak at your event, divide up the key elements so that each person has something important to say.
- Create a media advisory highlighting the photo opportunity involved, to remind news outlets about your event. Distribute the advisory two or three days prior to your event. (Note: A customizable media advisory/photo opportunity template is provided in this guide.)
- Create an internal event timeline to inform speakers and your organization's leadership on the flow of events.
- Two or three days prior to your event, review talking points and the event timeline with speakers and make any necessary adjustments. And finalize event logistics.



5. FOCUS ON THE FINAL DETAILS FOR THE DAY OF YOUR EVENT

- Make sure that staging or setup is completed at least one hour before anyone is expected to arrive, including setting up the podium, sound system, tables, chairs, and banners.

6. MANAGE ALL MOVING PARTS DURING THE MEDIA EVENT

- Ask your spokesperson, speakers, and/or partners to arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the event, and provide a quick briefing on the timeline of the event, the topics that will be discussed, photo opportunities, and any other important issues.
- If possible, let these participants know which media outlets are expected to attend, and pass along any helpful information about whom they might find themselves talking to.
- Appoint a representative from your organization to greet the media as they arrive for the event, and to keep track of requests for followup photo opportunities/interviews with your spokesperson, speakers, or event attendees following the formal announcement/remarks.
- Begin your media event at its appointed starting time.
- Invite the media to ask followup questions before the formal portion of your event ends.
- After a few minutes of questions from the media, bring the Q&A to a close and thank the media for coming.
- Ensure that a spokesperson from your organization, a featured speaker, or a subject matter expert is available after the press conference to verify information, answer any remaining followup questions, and/or provide one-on-one interviews if needed.
- If there is an action or photo opportunity planned following the press conference or formal remarks, schedule it to begin immediately following the remarks, and you or your organization's spokesperson should plan to stay at the media event until all of the media have departed.

7. FOLLOW UP

- Send thank you notes to key media representatives who covered or attended your event, asking for feedback, which strengthens your media relations.
- Post photos, information, and/or news stories about your media event on your organization's website and social media channels.
- Ask partners, participants, and staff to share or retweet these posts, or post the links and information about the event on their own platforms.



Templates

ANNOUNCEMENT TEMPLATE

This PrepareAthon! announcement template can be tailored and distributed in newsletters, bulletins, email communiqués, and so forth.

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] Wants YOU To Be Better Prepared for Disasters!

According to a recent Federal Emergency Management Agency survey, nearly 60 percent of Americans have not participated in a preparedness drill or exercise in their home, school, or workplace in the past year.

As a proud participant in America's PrepareAthon!, [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] wants to share important information that will help you and your family be better prepared in case of a disaster.

America's PrepareAthon! is a grassroots campaign for action to increase individual and community preparedness and resilience through hazard-specific group discussions, drills, and exercises for hazards relevant to their area. At [NAME OF ORGANIZATION], our goal is to help you:

- Understand which disasters could happen in your community;
- Know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage, such as making property improvements to reduce potential injury and property damage;
- Practice drills and share information to better prepare your employees, affiliates, and the communities you serve; and
- Participate in community resilience planning.

To reach these goals, we at [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will:

1. [LIST ANY NEW PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES/ACTIONS AND PROVIDE RELEVANT START DATES]; and
2. [DESCRIBE EXISTING PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES/ACTIONS THAT YOUR ORGANIZATION WILL CONTINUE TO CONDUCT].

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] encourages you to visit ready.gov/prepare to learn more about America's PrepareAthon! and how you can improve your preparedness plan for your family and your community.

If you have any questions about our efforts, please contact [ORGANIZATION POINT-OF-CONTACT NAME FOR PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES/ACTIONS].

**MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE****For Immediate Release:** [TODAY'S DATE]**Contact:** Media/Community Relations Director
[TELEPHONE]
Subject Matter Expert, Secondary Contact
[TELEPHONE]**MEDIA ADVISORY****[NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION] JOINS NATIONAL
PREPAREDNESS MOVEMENT**

*Emergency preparedness campaign engages
[STUDENTS/EMPLOYEES/ORGANIZATION'S MEMBERSHIP] in America's PrepareAthon!*

[CITY, STATE]—[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is holding a [DRILL OR INSERT OTHER ACTIVITY] on [DATE] to prepare its [EMPLOYEES, CONGREGANTS, STUDENTS, ETC.] for a [NAME OF HAZARD].

During the event, [NAME OF ORGANIZATION'S CEO, PRINCIPAL, MAYOR, ETC.] will commit to conducting a preparedness activity at least twice a year to emphasize the importance of being disaster resilient. [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will be joined by other disaster planning and preparedness partners, including [LIST OTHER ORGANIZATIONS] in an event in [CITY, COUNTY, STATE, AND/OR FACILITY].

America's PrepareAthon! is a grassroots campaign for action to increase individual and community preparedness and resilience through hazard-specific group discussions, drills, and exercises. Throughout the year, organizations, schools, individuals, and communities around the country practice for relevant, local hazards. The goals of the campaign are to increase the number of people who understand which disasters could happen in their community, know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage, take action to increase their preparedness, and participate in community resilience planning.

What: [PROVIDE DESCRIPTION OF EVENT/ACTIVITY.]

Who: [LIST SPEAKERS AND OTHER IMPORTANT GUESTS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS.]

When: [GIVE DATE/TIME OF YOUR MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT.]

Where: [PROVIDE THE LOCATION OF YOUR MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT (E.G., CITY HALL, CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS, INCLUDING THE STREET ADDRESS AND ROOM NUMBER).]

###



MEDIA RELEASE TEMPLATE

For Release: [DATE/TIME]

Contact: [NAME/TELEPHONE]

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] Joins America's PrepareAthon!

Nationwide campaign helps people prepare for disasters.

[CITY, STATE]—[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is holding a [DRILL OR INSERT OTHER ACTIVITY] on [DATE] to prepare its [EMPLOYEES, CONGREGANTS, STUDENTS, ETC.] for a [NAME OF HAZARD]. While everyone knows it's important to prepare, this [DRILL/ACTIVITY] will ensure that everyone knows exactly what to do in the event of a disaster.

[INSERT QUOTE FROM LOCAL SPOKESPERSON.]

[INSERT MORE DETAILS ABOUT YOUR PREPAREDNESS DRILL OR ACTIVITY.]

A recent Federal Emergency Management Agency survey found that nearly 60 percent of American adults have not practiced what to do in a disaster by participating in a disaster drill or preparedness exercise at work, school, or home in the past year. Further, less than half of these adults have developed an emergency plan and discussed it with their household. With the number and severity of weather-related disasters on the rise, America's PrepareAthon! is an opportunity for individuals, organizations, and communities to take action to prepare for specific hazards through group discussions, drills, and exercises.

America's PrepareAthon! is a grassroots campaign for action to increase individual and community preparedness and resilience. The goals of the campaign are to increase the number of people who understand which disasters could happen in their community, know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage, take action to increase their preparedness, and participate in community resilience planning.

[INSERT QUOTE FROM YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGER.]

[FOCUS ON THE HAZARD(S) MOST RELEVANT TO YOUR COMMUNITY AND CITE EXAMPLES OF RECENT LOCAL DISASTERS. EXPLAIN WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO HELP PEOPLE PROTECT THEMSELVES.]

On [DATE], individuals, families, workplaces, schools, and organizations will come together to practice simple actions to stay safe before, during, and after emergencies relevant to their area. Examples include:

1. **Sign up for local text alerts and warnings and download weather apps to your smartphone.**
2. **Develop an emergency communication plan for your family.** This will help you be in touch if a disaster strikes and family members are in different locations.
3. **Collect important documents and keep them in a safe place.** This will help you evacuate without delay and get back on track after the disaster passes.
4. **Gather emergency supplies.** Pack a "go bag" to evacuate quickly, and have supplies in the home in case water and power are unavailable.

For more information about America's PrepareAthon!, please visit ready.gov/prepare. Join the Twitter discussion: @PrepareAthon.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR TEMPLATE AND TIPS

A letter to the editor is an easy way to make a big impact. Editors don't publish every letter, but they do pay attention—especially to letters that are well-written or connected to an article they just published. Below are a few helpful tips, as well as a template and sample letter.

1. WRITING YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- **Make it relevant.** Relate your letter to a recent natural or manmade disaster in your state, or perhaps one that happened elsewhere but made national news.
- **Be concise.** The first sentence should summarize your position and reason for writing. One of the biggest mistakes people make in writing letters to the editor is using the first paragraph (or the entire letter) to build to the point. Most editors read two to three sentences before making a decision.
- **Mind your word count.** Check the guidelines for the publication you're targeting. If they give a word count, follow it. If they don't, 200 to 300 words are generally considered the maximum length. Many publications will not consider letters that exceed this word count.

2. SUBMITTING YOUR LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Follow the guidelines. Many publications have specific formatting requirements, so check the publication's website before submitting your letter. Always include full contact information for the author(s). Follow the publication's rules regarding letters to the editor. Spell everything correctly and pay close attention to grammar—letters are not usually edited; rather the outlets select well-written letters that meet their guidelines. Email your letter to ensure timeliness. To do this, paste the text into the body of an email.

Do not send your letter as an attachment. Paste the text into the body of an email.

Follow up. Once you've submitted your letter, follow up with a phone call 24 hours later to find out if it will be printed.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR TEMPLATE

[NAME OF MEDIA OUTLET OR PUBLICATION]

Attention: [NAME OF EDITOR]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]

Dear Editor:

[STATE YOUR REASON FOR WRITING. IF YOU'RE RESPONDING TO ARTICLES OR EDITORIALS BY THE MEDIA OUTLET, USE THE FIRST SENTENCE TO REFERENCE THE TITLE OF THE ARTICLE, THE NAME OF THE PUBLICATION, AND THE DATE IT APPEARED. SEE EXAMPLE CONTENT BELOW.]

I'm writing in response to the article "After the Flood," published by *The Denver Post* on September 17. Communities all across the United States have seen a higher frequency of severe weather and natural disasters in recent years. Coloradans have experienced the effects of disasters firsthand, with devastating wildfires and destructive flooding in the last two years alone. There is a new opportunity to help motivate people here in Denver to take steps to increase their personal safety in case of an emergency.

[MAKE A CALL TO ACTION, ASKING READERS TO FOLLOW UP WITH SOME ACTIVITY, SUCH AS JOINING IN CALLING ON POLICYMAKERS TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE.]

Disasters—manmade and natural—aren't going away. It's time to act. America's PrepareAthon! is a grassroots campaign to increase individual and community preparedness and resilience through hazard-specific drills, group discussions, and exercises. Throughout the year, schools, universities, houses of worship, businesses, and civic organizations across the country are organizing PrepareAthon! Days in their communities to discuss, practice, and train for relevant hazards. These events and activities often happen at times when disasters are most likely to occur, in conjunction with existing events, or during weather awareness weeks.

[STATE YOUR CASE; HIGHLIGHT FACTS, REFERENCES, OR RESEARCH TO ESTABLISH CREDIBILITY.]

According to a recent Federal Emergency Management Agency survey, nearly 60 percent of surveyed American adults have not practiced what to do in a disaster by participating in a disaster drill or preparedness at work, school, or home in the past year. In addition, less than half of respondents have developed an emergency plan and discussed it with their household.

[END WITH A STRONG, POSITIVE STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF YOUR CASE.]

I urge *The Denver Post* and its readers to participate in America's PrepareAthon!; help expand the dialogue on disasters; expand our knowledge of our risks; and, in doing so, create a more resilient Nation.

Sincerely,

[WRITER'S SIGNATURE]

[NAME OF WRITER]

[WRITER'S TITLE]

[WRITER'S ORGANIZATION AND CONTACT INFORMATION]



SAMPLE LIVE ANNOUNCER RADIO SCRIPTS TEMPLATE

Share these scripts with your local radio stations and ask that announcers read them during their broadcasts. The 10- and 15-second scripts are perfect following a weather or traffic report. Feel free to customize these scripts to include your local activities and information.

60-SECOND SCRIPT

Communities all across the United States are seeing higher frequencies of severe weather and the devastating effects of natural disasters. But many Americans still haven't taken crucial measures to increase their personal safety in case of an emergency. America's Prepare-A-thon! is asking schools and universities, businesses, houses of worship, and families, just like yours, to practice simple steps to prepare for disasters. It's easy! Go to ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare for free information, resources, and guides for hazard-specific group discussions, drills, and exercises. Know the hazards in your area, create a family plan, gather supplies, and more! Be smart, take part, prepare, and join the movement at ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

30-SECOND SCRIPTS

You can't control when a disaster will strike, but you can be prepared where you live, work, and play. Americans are coming together to practice simple steps to prepare for disasters. Know the hazards in your area, create a family plan, gather supplies, and more! Go to ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare for free information. Be smart, take part, prepare!

#####

Bad weather can become dangerous very quickly. Are you and your family prepared to evacuate if you have to? By having all of your personal, medical, and legal papers in one place, you can evacuate without worrying about gathering your family's critical documents at the last minute. Visit ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare to download an easy checklist that will help prioritize the information you need in case of an emergency. Having these papers in a secure location will help you and your family get on the road to recovery after a disaster. Visit ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare for more information.

#####

When the next disaster hits, will you be ready to act? A recent survey by the Federal Emergency Management Agency found that nearly 60 percent of us have not practiced how to respond to a disaster. America's Prepare-A-thon! is working to change that. Sign up for local text alerts, download weather apps, create an emergency plan, and collect important documents in a safe place. For more ideas to prepare you and your family, visit ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

15-SECOND SCRIPTS

Be smart, take part, prepare! America's Prepare-A-thon! is bringing together people like you to practice simple steps to prepare for disasters. Join the movement at ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

#####

Do you know what to do when you hear or receive a weather alert? Getting timely information about weather conditions can make all the difference for your safety. Don't leave the safety of you and your loved ones to chance. Download *Be Smart. Know Your Alerts and Warnings* at ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

#####



Bad weather can become dangerous very quickly. Are you and your family prepared to evacuate if necessary? By having all of your personal, medical, and legal papers in one place, you can evacuate without worrying about gathering your family's critical documents at the last minute. To learn more, visit ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

Whether you are ready or not, disasters will strike. Everyone needs an emergency plan. Remember to practice your plan by taking part in a drill. Talk through your plan, step by step, with each member of your family. It is a way to be sure that you aren't missing something important. You can find information for creating your family communication plan at ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

#####

Each disaster is different. Each family's needs are different. Start by knowing the risk for your community. Create your emergency plan to include the actions you will take before, during, and after a disaster. Do all you can today to make sure you are prepared for tomorrow. To learn more, visit ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.

10-SECOND SCRIPT

America's Prepare-A-thon! is bringing together people like you to practice simple steps to prepare for disasters. Join the movement at ready-dot-gov-slash-prepare.



PROCLAMATION FOR LOCAL/STATE GOVERNMENT TEMPLATE (OPTION 1)

Customize and present either of these proclamation templates to your town, city, county's local governing body, or your State Governor's Office, and ask them to declare a National PrepareAthon! Day in your community.

_____ 's PrepareAthon! Proclamation

WHEREAS [STATE/LOCAL NAME]'s PrepareAthon! creates an important opportunity for residents of _____ to be prepared for any type of emergency where they live, work, and play; and

WHEREAS taking steps toward personal preparedness and ensuring that our households, workplaces, schools, institutions of higher learning, houses of worship, and community-based organizations are prepared for disaster can reduce fatalities and economic devastation following a major crisis; and

WHEREAS participating in _____'s PrepareAthon will increase the number of citizens who understand which disasters could happen in our community; and

WHEREAS our citizens will know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage; and

WHEREAS the citizens of _____ will take action to increase their preparedness; and

WHEREAS our [INSERT STATE, CITY, TOWN, COUNTY, ETC.] will participate in community resilience planning; and

WHEREAS the [LOCAL DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, AMERICAN RED CROSS, FEMA REGIONAL OFFICE, ETC.] _____ and other Federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, private, and volunteer agencies are working to increase public activities in preparing for emergencies and to encourage individuals to take action; and

WHEREAS emergency preparedness is the responsibility of every citizen of _____ and all citizens are urged to make preparedness a priority and work together to ensure that individuals, families, and communities are prepared for disasters and emergencies of any type; and

WHEREAS participating in [STATE/LOCAL NAME]'s PrepareAthon! will ensure that our community becomes a leader in preparedness and contributes to our Nation's resilience.

Therefore, I, [NAME/TITLE OF ELECTED OFFICIAL] _____,

do hereby proclaim [DATE, WEEK, OR MONTH] _____ as

[STATE/LOCAL NAME]'s PrepareAthon! Day.

***PROCLAMATION FOR LOCAL/STATE GOVERNMENT TEMPLATE (OPTION 2)***

_____’s PrepareAthon! Proclamation

Commending [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s PrepareAthon! and recognizing [DATE] as [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s PrepareAthon! Day.

WHEREAS [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s PrepareAthon! creates an important opportunity for residents and businesses of [STATE/LOCAL NAME] to be prepared for any type of emergency where they live, work, and play; and

WHEREAS the event helps residents take steps toward personal preparedness and ensures that families, workplaces, schools, early childhood learning institutions, houses of worship, and community-based organizations are able to increase their ability to survive a disaster and reduce economic devastation following a major crisis; and

WHEREAS the [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s Emergency Management Agency, Citizen Corps Council, and other Federal, state, local, private, and volunteer agencies are working to increase public activities in preparing for emergencies and to encourage individuals to take action; and

WHEREAS emergency preparedness is the responsibility of every citizen of [STATE/LOCAL NAME] and all citizens are urged to make preparedness a priority and work together to ensure that individuals, families, and communities are prepared for disasters and emergencies of any type; and

WHEREAS all citizens and businesses of [STATE/LOCAL NAME] are encouraged to participate in preparedness activities and are asked to visit ready.gov/prepare and register to become more prepared; and

WHEREAS participating in [STATE/LOCAL]’s PrepareAthon! will ensure that our community becomes a national leader in whole-community preparedness.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE [STATE/LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE BODY] that the members of this body commend [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s PrepareAthon! and recognize [DATE, WEEK, OR MONTH] as [STATE/LOCAL NAME]’s PrepareAthon! Day.



Social Media Engagement

You can use your social media channels to promote, document, and start a conversation about your America's PrepareAthon! activities. Spread the word through Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and other social media sites and blogs to show your commitment to safety. It's also a great way to encourage your coworkers, customers, friends, family, and community to participate.

Strategies and ideas about how to promote your event using social media are included below. You'll also find tips on holding an effective Twitter chat, as well as sample tweets, Facebook posts, and blog language that you can quickly use via your channels.

Getting Started

- Tell your social media followers to register for America's PrepareAthon! at ready.gov/prepare.
- Start the conversation several weeks before your America's PrepareAthon! event. Promote the details of the event, as well as actions your audience can take. Use #PrepareAthon so communities across the Nation can get insight on your event and be inspired to plan their own.
- Respond to questions and share your goals for disaster preparedness.
- Add images and videos to your messages that highlight your event or tell a story. Images can be moving and more engaging than words.
- Encourage your followers to use images on social media sites such as Instagram and Twitter and use the #PrepareAthon hashtag with images to show what preparedness actions they are taking. People can get inspired and motivated, and can see how easy an action is to do if their social influencers show them how.
- Create a "Preparedness Action" board on Pinterest and tell your followers to do the same. This Pinterest board could include pins of emergency preparedness tips and photos of preparedness in action to help people get better prepared.

Building Your Network

- Build your network of supporters and followers, and follow influential voices on Twitter, such as FEMA Administrator [Craig Fugate](#). Post to LinkedIn groups you belong to that focus on preparedness.
- Ask for responses from others by asking open-ended questions. For example, "The best way for me to prepare for a disaster is _____. What's yours?"
- Thank new followers and those who participate in your event.
- Tailor your messages so they are relevant to local stakeholders and reflect local disaster risks.

Maintaining Interest

- Share information about emergency preparedness at least once a month to keep the dialogue fresh. Try focusing your content around themes throughout the year. For example, you could promote preparedness information and America's PrepareAthon! activities during hurricane season.
- End each message with a simple call to action. For example, "Join me in a preparedness activity and register for America's PrepareAthon! today."
- Post interesting preparedness facts and stories about preparedness hazards facing your community. Share them on Trivia Tuesdays, Wisdom Wednesdays, and Throwback Thursdays. You can simply retweet those from @PrepareAthon.
- Appoint someone on your staff to manage and monitor your social media outreach.
- Use the #PrepareAthon hashtag and the ready.gov/prepare URL in your posts where relevant.



Raise Awareness About America's PrepareAthon!

SAMPLE TWEETS

- Are you one in a million? We're part of the millions taking action for America's #PrepareAthon. [insert "Count Us In" image].
- Follow @PrepareAthon today to learn what to do when an emergency comes your way. ready.gov/prepare #PrepareAthon
- As part of America's #PrepareAthon, we are committed to doing preparedness actions for emergencies. Learn more: ready.gov/prepare.
- Prepared > Scared. Make sure you're prepared for the next emergency with America's #PrepareAthon ready.gov/prepare
- Learn from others! Check out firsthand videos of disaster survivors at <http://bit.ly/1nwuDXu> #PrepareAthon
- Registering for America's PrepareAthon! is easy as 1, 2, 3. Sign up & be counted for the day of action at ready.gov/prepare

SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS

- We're part of the millions of people taking action for America's PrepareAthon! Be counted and add your preparedness activities today at ready.gov/prepare. #PrepareAthon [insert "We're In. Are You" image]
- Are you part of a national preparedness movement? America's PrepareAthon! is a movement to increase community preparedness and resilience through hazard-specific drills, group discussions, and exercises. Visit ready.gov/prepare to learn more. #PrepareAthon [insert generic America's PrepareAthon! poster]
- Save the date! [insert appropriate date, September 30/April 30] is National PrepareAthon! Day. Join with communities across the Nation for preparedness events like tornado drills and tabletop exercises. Learn what to do before, during, and after disasters. For more information about America's PrepareAthon!, visit ready.gov/prepare.

Share Your Preparedness Action for America's PrepareAthon!

SAMPLE TWEETS

- This month, we [insert preparedness action] to be prepared for the next [insert hazard] #PrepareAthon [insert "Count Us In" image].

Example Tweet: This month, [we are testing our communications plan] to be prepared for the next [hurricane]. #PrepareAthon

- This month, I will _____ to make sure I'm prepared for an emergency in my state. #PrepareAthon #FillInTheBlank

Example Tweet: This month, I will [participate in local CERT training] to make sure I'm prepared for an emergency in my state. #PrepareAthon #FillInTheBlank

Your stakeholder is expected to complete this "Fill in the Blank" tweet.

- I monitor weather alerts and warnings with [insert preparedness tool]. This helps me stay prepared for an emergency like a [insert hazard]. #FillInTheBlank

Example Tweet: I monitor weather alerts and warnings with a NOAA radio. This helps me stay prepared for an emergency like a flood.



- Do you have the FEMA app? It's preparedness at your fingertips! Download it today. #PrepareAthon [insert FEMA app image]
- ALWAYS have an emergency plan for your family in case a disaster strikes! #PrepareAthon
- Drills aren't just for your toolbox. Practice emergency drills with your family regularly. #PrepareAthon ready.gov/prepare
- Ready, Set, Action! Disasters don't just happen in the movies. Be prepared today with America's #PrepareAthon. ready.gov/prepare
- Host or participate in an emergency preparedness drill near you! Find events at ready.gov/prepare #PrepareAthon
- Visit ready.gov/prepare to learn actions you can take to prepare for emergencies. #PrepareAthon [insert "We're In. Are You?" image]
- You still have time to register for America's PrepareAthon. Do it today! ready.gov/prepare
- Join millions of Americans participating in PrepareAthon. Register today at ready.gov/prepare #PrepareAthon

SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS

- Know your local hazards and take action to prepare. Participate in America's PrepareAthon! Register at ready.gov/prepare #PrepareAthon [insert "Count Us In" image]
- The America's PrepareAthon! website lists activities to help prepare your family for disasters. Which of the activities will you do? Find a list of activities here: ready.gov/prepare #PrepareAthon [insert "We're In. Are You?" image]
- Be Smart. Take Part. Prepare. Register now to participate in America's PrepareAthon! and provide details about the activities you're planning. Share the steps you are taking to get yourself and your community prepared. Visit ready.gov/prepare for more information!

Join the National Conversation and Illustrate Your Preparedness Action for America's PrepareAthon! With Visuals

SAMPLE TWEETS

- Today, we [insert action] to be prepared for the next [insert hazard] #PrepareAthon [insert photo or "Count Us In" image].
Example Tweet: Today, [we are testing our communications plan] to be prepared for the next [hurricane]. #PrepareAthon
- Today, I am [insert action] to make sure I'm prepared for an emergency in my state. #PrepareAthon [insert photo].
Example Tweet: Today, I am [participating in local CERT training] to make sure I'm prepared for an emergency in my state. #PrepareAthon
- Community challenge! See how many people you can get to take action and do a preparedness activity ...and share a pic! #PrepareAthon
- A community in action tends to stay in action. Send us your pictures of your community taking action. #PrepareAthon
- Get on the right track to preparedness! All roads lead to the #PrepareAthon day of action on [insert appropriate date September 30/April 30]. ready.gov/prepare



- Re-tweet this now! I'm involved in today's Nat'l PrepareAthon! Day. ready.gov/prepare #PrepareAthon
- America's PrepareAthon! is finally here. What are you doing to get prepared? Show us using #PrepareAthon
- Host or participate in an emergency preparedness drill near you! Find events at ready.gov/prepare #PrepareAthon

SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS

- We're glad you're taking action to prepare for earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and winter storms with America's PrepareAthon! Since a picture is worth a thousand words, snap a photo of your preparedness-in-action moments and SHARE. #PrepareAthon
- Get ready for National PrepareAthon! Day on [insert appropriate date September 30/April 30]. Visit ready.gov/prepare today to register and take action to prepare your community for earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and winter storms.
- Today is National PrepareAthon! Day. Make sure that you're prepared for hazards relevant to your community. Being prepared requires simple steps such as having three days of food and water on hand. It can make a big difference! Learn what you can do to prepare yourself and your community. Visit ready.gov/prepare #PrepareAthon



Tips for Effective Twitter Chats

What's a Twitter Chat?

Twitter chats are planned virtual gatherings hosted in real time on Twitter. They're normally moderated, or guided, by one user to start a conversation on a certain topic. The chat is given a hashtag, such as #PrepareAthon, to make it easy for anyone to identify the chat and participate. Think about hosting a Twitter chat to share your emergency preparedness expertise and build excitement around your PrepareAthon! activities. Here's how to get started:

Choose a Topic

Start by thinking about which hazard is most relevant to your area and would have the greatest impact on you and your community. Next, determine who you want to participate in the conversation. For example, you may want to invite your employees and customers to join the chat. Think about specific topic areas to focus on, like signing up for local alerts and warnings or collecting important documents to keep in a safe place.

Know Your Audience

Is your intended audience active enough on Twitter to carry on a lively discussion? If so, think about preparedness questions they'd find interesting to best engage them. If your audience isn't active on Twitter, it may be best to participate in other Twitter chats rather than host your own.

Pick a Date and Time

What date and time is your target audience most likely to participate? If your audience works a 9-to-5 job, then lunchtime or early to mid-evening may be the best time.

Promote Your Twitter Chat

Publicize your chat to increase participation. Publish the details on your website and social media channels. Be sure to include the date, time, topics, and #PrepareAthon hashtag.

Set the Format and Moderate

Think of your Twitter chat as a guided conversation with you as the guide. As the moderator, you can help structure the discussion by asking specific questions about a topic. Number the questions as Q1, Q2, etc. Ask participants to reply with answers using A1, A2, etc. For example:

- Q1: To prepare for a flood, what important documents should you have ready? #PrepareAthon
- A1: I have my driver's license, Social Security card, birth certificate, and kids' medical records and IDs in a waterproof box! #PrepareAthon

The Role of the Moderator

The moderator guides the conversation and should have specific tweets and topics available to post during any lulls in the chat.

Pick a Tool for Moderation

Use HootSuite, TweetDeck, or another Twitter dashboard that allows you to publish tweets and follow the discussion by monitoring the #PrepareAthon feed.

Activities To Promote the Twitter Chat

- Send invitations via Twitter direct message or email.
- Include the hashtag in your email signature block.
- Ask Twitter followers to retweet the invite.
- Advertise on other channels (e.g., Facebook, blog, website).
- Promote in traditional places (e.g., office lobby).
- Always include the time, date, and hashtag!



Each question gets 15 minutes on average, and chats usually last approximately one hour. Decide on your Twitter chat topic and questions in advance so that you can promote them beforehand.

Use the #PrepareAthon Hashtag

If you host a Twitter chat, use #PrepareAthon as part of your branding.

Announce Chat Guidelines

Every Twitter chat has its own rules. The start of a chat is a good time to establish guidelines and the chat format discussed above. For instance, you might say:

- This #PrepareAthon chat is a time to discuss emergency preparedness. Please refrain from offensive language and product promotion.
- We have four questions: Q1–Q4. Answer questions using A1–A4. Don't forget to add #PrepareAthon to your tweets to be part of the chat.

Follow Up After the Chat

Thank everyone for their participation. Follow up with a summary of the conversation for those who were unable to join. And please share it with us at @PrepareAthon.



Evaluate and Learn

Evaluate the success of your chat by the number of participants and tweets (including retweets, mentions, and favorites). Also, look at the total reach and impressions of your chat. At the end of your chat, ask: What would you like to see next time? Now, use that feedback in the next chat you host or participate in.

We want to hear what you have to say. Please share any results or feedback at PrepareAthon@fema.dhs.gov.

Sample Facebook Posts

The following are sample Facebook posts you can use to promote America's PrepareAthon! Feel free to customize them to fit your needs.

- Be Smart. Take Part. Prepare. Register now to participate in America's PrepareAthon! and provide details about the activities you're planning. Share the steps you are taking to get yourself and your community prepared. Visit ready.gov/prepare for more information!
- Are you registered for America's PrepareAthon? America's PrepareAthon! is a grassroots campaign for action to increase community preparedness and resilience through hazard-specific drills, group discussions, and exercises. #PrepareAthon ready.gov/prepare
- Save the date! [insert appropriate date September 30/April 30] is National PrepareAthon Day! Join with communities across the Nation in events, like drills, exercises, and training, to learn what to do before, during, and after disasters. For more information about America's PrepareAthon!, visit ready.gov/prepare. Get prepared!
- Communicating with your friends and family when a disaster occurs is important to make sure everyone is doing well. This is why having both an evacuation and communication plan is important. Have peace of mind when a disaster strikes and create your emergency plans. #PrepareAthon ready.gov/make-a-plan
- Today is PrepareAthon! It's a national day of action. Make sure that you're prepared for hazards relevant to your community. Being prepared requires simple steps such as having three days' worth of food and water on hand. It can make a big difference! Learn what you can do to prepare yourself and your community. ready.gov/prepare #PrepareAthon
- Get ready for the America's PrepareAthon! National PrepareAthon Day on [insert appropriate date September 30/April 30]. Visit ready.gov/prepare today to register, and take action to prepare your community for earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and winter storms.
- Knowing what hazards are likely to occur is only part of being prepared for them. Once the hazards are identified, know the risks associated with the specific hazard and the steps to prepare for their occurrence. Check weather.gov each day to find out if any weather hazards are expected in your area. #PrepareAthon



Sample Blog Post Template

Posted by: [INSERT NAME OF AUTHOR/ORGANIZATION]

Join us for America's PrepareAthon!

This year was an important reminder to all of us that disasters can strike anytime and anyplace. Nearly every region of the country experienced some form of extreme weather event, including [INSERT NAMES OF EVENTS].

As with many life events, preparation is the key to success. When you prepare and practice for an emergency in advance, it makes a real difference in your ability to take immediate and informed action when it matters most. Early action can also help you to recover more quickly.

That's why thousands of individuals, organizations, schools, houses of worship, and local governments across the Nation are actively participating in America's PrepareAthon! (ready.gov/prepare), a campaign to increase individual and community preparedness and resilience through hazard-specific drills, group discussions, and exercises. This year, [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] is supporting this action-based initiative by conducting its own PrepareAthon! Day on [DATE].

Can't participate on [DATE]? Preparing for disasters is a year-round activity. So, pick a date that works for you and register to be counted. And be sure to post your preparedness activities on the national calendar.

It's not a matter of if the next disaster will happen, but when. Start taking action and prepare now! Simple steps such as having a discussion and/or conducting a quick drill can help determine what you need to do next to become more prepared. Be smart, take part, and prepare for emergencies before they strike!



Sample Instagram Posts

All poster images can be found under the corresponding disaster on the America's PrepareAthon! website. Visit this page, ready.gov/prepare to pull promotional materials for each America's PrepareAthon! hazard.

- All of our employees have [Insert action. Ex: downloaded the FEMA mobile app] to prepare for an emergency. What action will you take?
Note: Insert a photo representing the action you will take for America's PrepareAthon!
- We held a "Drop, Cover, and Hold On" exercise as our preparedness action for America's #PrepareAthon.
Note: Insert a photo showing your specific preparedness activity, such as your group practicing how to "Drop, Cover, and Hold On."
You can also create a fun 15-second video to post showing your preparedness action, or share it with an original photo of your organization taking action.
- What would you do in a tornado? Be prepared and register for America's PrepareAthon! [insert America's PrepareAthon! tornado poster]
- Think of America's PrepareAthon! as your Oz. If you sign up and follow our yellow brick road, we are sure to lead you to better tornado preparedness! [insert America's PrepareAthon! tornado poster]
- Flooded with so much preparedness information you don't know what to do? Make it simple and check out America's PrepareAthon! resources. [insert America's PrepareAthon! flood poster]
- Hurricane season isn't over yet! Get prepared before it's too late and register your action with America's PrepareAthon! [insert America's PrepareAthon! hurricane poster]
- What would you do if a hurricane were headed toward your home? Learn how to protect and prepare your home this season with America's PrepareAthon! [insert America's PrepareAthon! hurricane poster]
- Do you know how to protect your home and family from wildfires? Learn what actions you can take for a wildfire with America's PrepareAthon! [insert America's PrepareAthon! wildfire poster]
- Don't be caught in the hot seat and find yourself unprepared for a wildfire. Check out America's PrepareAthon! to learn how you can prepare. [insert America's PrepareAthon! wildfire poster]
- Earthquakes can occur at any time. Would you be prepared if one happened now? Check out America's PrepareAthon! today and stay one step ahead of disasters! [insert America's PrepareAthon! earthquake poster]
- Don't be left in the cold when it comes to winter storm preparedness. Learn how to be prepared for whatever comes your way with America's PrepareAthon! [insert America's PrepareAthon! winter storm poster]
- Something as fun as snow can easily turn hazardous. Do you know what to do during a severe winter storm? Check out America's PrepareAthon! [insert America's PrepareAthon! winter storm poster]



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^{xii} Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2013). *Personal preparedness in America: Findings from the 2012 FEMA National Survey*. Retrieved from www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/83190