

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

September is National Preparedness Month. National Preparedness Month was founded after 9/11 to increase preparedness across the United States. The 2018 theme: “Disasters Happen. Prepare Now. Learn How.” focuses on planning. We are reminded to take the opportunity to plan and prepare ourselves and our families for all hazards and emergencies before they happen. Emergencies can occur anytime and anywhere without advance notice.

Take time to learn lifesaving skills – such as CPR and first aid, check your insurance policies and coverage for the hazards you may face, such as flood, earthquakes, and tornados. Make sure to consider the costs associated with disasters and save for an emergency. Also, know how to take practical safety steps like shutting off water and gas.

In our area power outages are a common occurrence this time of year after a thunderstorm. Be prepared for outages by having enough food, water and medicines to last for at least 72 hours. To receive advance warnings of thunderstorms or other emergency alerts, consider signing up for a community warning system. In Franklin County, the Franklin County Emergency Management & Homeland Security offers ALERT Franklin County at www.alertfranklincounty.org. This mass notification warning system is designed to notify residents about emergencies and other important community news in jurisdictions throughout Franklin County.

Know how you will communicate during a disaster. Consider these steps to start your emergency communication plan:

1. **COLLECT.** Create a paper copy of the contact information including phone, email, and social media info for your family, friends, caregivers, neighbors and other important people/offices, such as medical facilities, doctors, schools, workplace contacts or service providers.
 - Add information for connecting through relay services on a landline phone, mobile device and computer, if you are Deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability and use traditional relay services or video relay service (VRS).
2. **SHARE.** Make certain trusted people in your support network know:
 - Where your emergency supplies are kept.
 - How to contact you if the power goes out.
 - If you will call, email or text agreed upon friends or relatives if you're unable to contact each other directly.
 - What medical devices or assistive technology devices that you need to have with you if there is an evacuation order from local officials.
 - Your plans to remain independent if you require oxygen or mechanical ventilation.
 - How to obtain a copy of your plan.
3. **PRACTICE.** Just like you would a fire drill.
 - Discuss your needs and/or the needs of a family member; learn about their assistance or services. Advocate including people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs into emergency planning in your community.
 - Talk with your employer about your emergency plan, and find out how your employer includes the needs of people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.
 - Educate children and adults about why being prepared is important.

For more information on emergency preparation efforts in Franklin County, visit www.fcemhs.org. To receive a copy of “Prepare For Emergencies Now: Information for Older Americans” call the Franklin County Office on Aging at (614) 525-5230.