TOWNSHIPS TODAY

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Emergency Preparedness: Start Planning Now for What You Can't Prevent

With summer coming to an end, these last few weeks have probably been busy as you prepare for the start of another school year, maybe make plans for one last warm-weather getaway, and start thinking about the holidays ahead.

While these things may be high on your priority list, one thing probably has been put on the back burner: preparing for an emergency. Many people believe that "it just won't happen to me." However, this response can open the door for serious consequences. You can avoid these by taking time now to plan for the worst.

September is National Preparedness Month, and this year's theme, "Plan Now, Work Together, and Be Ready," serves as a reminder that we can all take measures to protect our loved ones, our homes, and our communities.

While our township has an emergency management coordinator who works closely with county officials and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency to prepare for and reduce the risk of natural and manmade disasters, the reality is that emergency preparedness really begins at home — your home.

There is no better time than September, National Emergency Preparedness Month, to begin protecting your family against disasters. A priority should be the creation of a home emergency kit that allows you to survive on your own for at least three days. ***(Photo courtesy of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.)***

That's why our township is encouraging you and your family to take a few minutes and log onto www.ReadyPA.org, a website developed by the state that asks every Pennsylvanian to take three steps to safety: be informed, be prepared, and be involved.

Getting educated, taking action

The first step — be informed — encourages you to learn about the threats facing our township.

Pennsylvania is prone to a wide variety of disasters, including floods, fires, snow, wind, tropical storms, and hazardous material spills. While you can't prevent these events, you can get informed, which will empower you to make better decisions to protect your family.

The next step — be prepared — encourages you to create a home emergency kit, which will allow your family to survive on its own for at least three days. As past disasters have shown, emergency responders can get quickly overwhelmed with calls and simply can't reach all victims at the same time. Therefore, gathering essentials, including food and water, should be a priority.

Recommended supplies for a basic emergency kit include:

Water for drinking and sanitation — one gallon per person per day for three days. *(Don't forget to include water for pets, too.)*

Food — at least a three-day supply of nonperishable items.

Cash — if there is no electricity, ATMs won't be working.

Other essentials — these include a crank or battery-powered radio, a flashlight, extra batteries, moist towelettes, a manual can opener, prescription medications, infant formula and diapers, pet supplies, and important documents.

Once you've organized these necessities, you might want to include a few fun things, too, such as toys for children and pets, travel-size family games, and a deck of cards. A smaller emergency kit should also be kept in each vehicle in case you are ordered to evacuate during work hours or are stranded in your car.

It's also a good idea to develop a plan in case your family gets separated when a disaster strikes. Imagine this scenario: Mom and dad work across town from each other, one child is at soccer practice, and a baby is a few miles away, being cared for by a family member who cannot drive. How and where will this family check in with each other and be reunited?

That's a good question, and to ensure your family doesn't find itself in such a bind, log onto www.ReadyPA.org, where you can download free family plan templates and emergency kit checklists. The website also features information on preparing for a disaster when you have pets and loved ones with special needs.

The final step — be involved — encourages you to join such organizations as the Pennsylvania Citizen Corps, a cluster of volunteer programs that promote safer communities, and SERV PA, an online registry for medical and nonmedical volunteers. *(More information about these programs and others is also available at www.ReadyPA.org.)*

And there is yet another way to get involved: Be vigilant when you're out and about in your neighborhood and in the township.

Community threats come in all shapes and sizes, and you can help make our township safer by reporting out-of-the-ordinary or suspicious behavior to the proper authorities. Here are some helpful guidelines for who to contact:

In an emergency: If you think a life is in danger or a serious crime is about to be committed, call 9-1-1.

For a nonemergency: If it is not an emergency, but you think that the person or situation should be investigated, do NOT tie up the 9-1-1 emergency number. Most local police departments and all State Police barracks and 9-1-1 centers have nonemergency numbers. Take the time now to look these up and record them in a handy place.

To give a tip: Perhaps you notice suspicious activity that doesn't warrant immediate attention or a past incident or person is still on your mind. You can pass this information along to a variety of public safety officials. For instance, you may phone a tip into the township; provide it to other local first responders, such as police, fire, and ambulance personnel; contact the Pennsylvania State Police by calling the toll-free hotline, (888) 292-1919, or e-mailing, sp-intelligence@state.pa.us; or reach out to the Federal Bureau of Investigation at https://tips.fbi.gov.

Preparedness is priceless

Storms and other emergencies are often unpredictable, but being prepared is one thing all of us — individuals, townships, and states — can control.

As anyone who has lived through a disaster will tell you, preparedness is priceless, and National Preparedness Month is a great time for you to take matters into your own hands.

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