

Panhandle Health District

8500 N. Atlas Road Hayden, Idaho 83835

www.phd1.idaho.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Date: August 31, 2010

Released by: Jeanne Bock, Director

Cynthia Taggart
Public Information Officer
(208) 415-5108
(208) 818-7288 (cell)

Preparing for Emergencies is Common Sense

People in tornado country prepare for disaster. We don't hear about the people who sit out killer tornadoes in underground shelters equipped with emergency supplies of food and water. They're not in the news unless they've lost their homes. Have you ever wondered how people who've lost everything survived to talk about it on the 6 p.m. news?

They prepared. They knew from experience that the right tornado could turn their house into firewood and crush their families in an instant. The loss of a house is heart-breaking, but a house can be replaced. Family is irreplaceable. Because these people are prepared for tornadoes, they're prepared to survive most major disasters.

Preparing for the unknown is mentally hard. Northern Idaho's disasters are few and arrive with no regularity. A firestorm sweeps through one year. Two years later, an ice storm paralyzes the area. Occasionally, rivers and lakes flood and snow piles so high that roofs collapse.

Talk of disaster is easy to dismiss until we see on TV a plane crash into a California neighborhood and wonder how easily that could happen to us or we see on TV a chemical plant explode and wonder if that could happen here.

We also see emergency responders hard at work saving people in those TV news segments. Many of us have come to expect that those responders will be there for us in an emergency. So just how important is preparation?

Ask the people who live in tornado and hurricane country. They know from experience that there are only so many emergency responders and they help people in the worst condition or the most danger first. If that's not you, you'd better be able to take care of yourself and your family for at least a few hours but ideally for a few weeks.

A plan is a good place to start. Do you know how to reach your family when they're not at home? Does everyone in your family know where to meet when going home isn't an option?

Emergency supplies are versatile. A good first aid kit is as much help when someone in your family trips on the sidewalk picking up the morning newspaper as it is when a tree crashes through the roof in a windstorm. It offers immediate help until better help is available.

A stockpile of non-perishable food—canned fruit, tuna, cereal, etc.—and bottled water lasts for months and is a great comfort when a disaster has turned your world inside out. Including pet food, baby supplies and medications if needed will enable you to work on recovery or help other people rather than worry about your basic survival. Stockpiles are also great when you return home late from vacation and there's no food in the house. But you need to replace the supplies you use.

Flashlights and a battery-powered radio will enable you to see and read and keep up with the latest developments and instructions during an emergency. Could you find your flashlight during the last power outage? Store your supplies in a safe, out-of-the-way spot, such as a basement shelf, so you always know where to find them.

Emergency planning makes sense. September is National Preparedness Month, the perfect time to start. Visit the Panhandle Health District website, www.phd1.idaho.gov, for supply lists and suggestions that will help increase your family's emergency survival odds.