**GUIDELINES FOR PREPAREDNESS**

In a disaster, there are protocols that we in emergency management must follow to get information and resources. Most folks feel that when severe weather occurs causing very damaging conditions that government will take care of them. That is the furthest from the truth. **PREPAREDNESS** is something I have harped on for over 25 years and most folks haven’t even investigated it simply because, their mindset is, **IT WON’T HAPPEN HERE**!

Legends and other myths aren’t even in my vocabulary simply because IT WILL AND HAS happened here. I cannot stress enough to folks that you have to have some sort of idea what you are going to do in the event something does occur, especially if you have a family. They are looking to you for guidance and if you don’t know and you are not prepared, it’s going to be a rough ride.

**PROTOCOL**: When a **MAJOR** event is forecast, a **STATE OF EMERGENCY** can be declared. In most cases, the city, town, county, or state can do this to begin the process of acquiring resources. This is important at our level in government because we must keep utilities going whether its water or whatever. We coordinate with OGE and ONG and whomever we need to, to assure continuity of government and utilities. Once we do the above, we continue in the coordinating process and then we keep up with the latest information through television, radio, 2-way communications, and any other means we have access to even satellite communications. We will pull resources locally first, then county-wide, then we could pull from surrounding counties if they aren’t affected, then we go to the state. The state prefers we go to them first, but we do what we need to then we can coordinate with the state. We inform them what is happening and coordinate accordingly.

**PLANNING**: Most folks don’t have a clue what planning is or even how to go about creating a good plan. It is really very easy. Each family is unique so their plans may and most likely will be different than yours. Here is all you really need to do to keep it simple; 1- what type of event may occur? Decide on what type and write down a procedure and work through it. Do this in steps and go over it with the family. Be sure to allow the kids to help in this process. They are smarter than you know. Do this for each type of event that may affect you depending on where you live. After you go through the planning steps, **EXERCISE THAT PLAN!** This means walk through all the steps you came up with in order and see how well it works. You will find yourself changing those steps a little each time you go through that plan. Do this for all the events you come up with. You can have a lot of fun doing this and the kids will know what to do when and if these events occur. **ACCIDENTS** do happen. Have a plan for those too. Be sure and plan for when you are on vacation. Check with officials in that jurisdiction that you will be in so you understand their procedures and protocols.

**INSURANCE**- If you own a home, business, or if you rent a home, apartment, vehicle or trailer, you need insurance. You have insurance on a car, and you should have insurance on your dwelling too. It doesn’t matter whether you rent, you HAVE TO HAVE INSURANCE. Don’t tell me it’s expensive. You can get quotes from as many companies as you need to that can provide what you need on what YOU can afford. This is the first thing you need to make sure you have for the security of fixing your home in the event something occurs. Believe me, FEMA isn’t going to be your insurance company.

**SAVINGS**- I discussed insurance but as it is with all insurance, there is a deductible. Whatever that deductible is, save that money and put it in a saving account and ***NEVER TOUCH IT!*** This way, you have your deductible covered. This should occur on each type of coverage you have unless you have an umbrella policy and then make sure that deductible is in the bank too. Again, **NEVER TOUCH IT!**

**FOOD**- You have insurance, a saving account for your deductible, let’s talk about food. What does it take to get you by each day? What do you eat & drink and snack on each day? Take those times 14 meaning for 14 days and do the same for your family and have all of this in an emergency type kit. I know this seems like a lot BUT if infrastructure is down, meaning no electricity, etc., you will need to be self-sufficient for at least 2 weeks. If you were around during the ICE STORM of 2002, you know what I am talking about. Just make sure you use non-perishable foods. Believe me, you’ll be ok for that short term.

On this same note, you have many organizations telling you what you need and how much you need. Only you and your family know exactly what you need so don’t go on a buying spree and end up in debt with enough stuff to survive the nuclear winter when that isn’t necessary. Remember that the traditional flashlights, batteries, etc. should already be on premises.

**CASH**- If power is out and banks are closed, credit cards won’t work. It’s best to have cash on hand BUT don’t carry it all with you. Hide it on your property and let your spouse know where that hiding place is if you trust either he or she. 😊 It may come in handy.

**PETS**-Don’t forget your pets. They will probably be just as traumatized as you are. They sense more than you know.

**TREES**- Have you noticed that the tree trimming companies have been in full swing this year trimming back limbs from near powerlines? It’s like they are clairvoyant and know we may see ice events again this year. Here is how you should look at this. Preventive maintenance is important to assure that utilities remain functionable. If you keep your trees trimmed away from any powerline, your chances of losing power become minimal, not zero because that idiot down the street didn’t trim his trees is the reason you lost power when his branch broke the lines. Limbs can only hold so much ice or snow and then they come crashing down. I would rather have folks mad at someone else than mad at me even though they are mad at me anyways on things I cannot control.

**FUEL**- Have you been driving and notice your fuel gauge in deathly close to that E? Oh, I can make it and then you feel the sputtering and wish you had stopped at that last station but didn’t because gas was cheaper at home. This situation just got more expensive because of that decision. Think ahead and never let your tank get below ½ ever! You will find that is a very good decision because you be travelling and not have to worry about fuel. If you have a propane tank at home, keep it topped off especially if you know a storm is coming. You don’t want to run out of fuel to keep the house warm during the winter. Keep gasoline around if you have a small generator for the same reasons.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES**- When infrastructure goes down, everyone’s stress levels go up. The reason is, they are not prepared or their favorite tv show was interrupted. It happens. When your stress levels increase due to a weather event or just an accident, attitudes go straight to you know where, and this in and of itself can be a major problem. Most folks know that accidents happen. Most folks know when inclement weather is going to occur. This is what preparedness is all about. The better prepared you are, the less stress you should have. YES, things will be a little different for a while, but power and utilities will eventually be restored. Have patience. If you are a parent, take the kids back in time to the western days when there was no power and explain to the kids how that would have been. It helps you and them.

**TELEVISION NEWS AND WEATHER**:

**YOU WANT DRAMA?** Watch the news and weather on tv. National news or local and especially local weather is almost a joke these days. If you have anxiety or blood pressure medication, I would highly advise you to take some before watching any of these. The news isn’t always truthful and complete, and the weather guys are in it for ratings. I choose **PUBLIC SAFETY over PUBLIC PANIC.** When you watch all of this, keep an open mind, and stay with those you trust knowing the PANIC BUTTON isn’t being pushed each time there is a storm. We all know storms cause damage sometimes. We live with it, and we deal with it. Now all you must do is ***PREPARE*** for it.

FINALLY, this can be a very long document depending on what the needs are for your respective situations. I would use this as a guideline in the process of getting, being, and staying prepared. GOOD LUCK and always stay aware of what is going on around you. This is called SITUATIONAL AWARENESS, and this is another subject I will write about in the future.

Mike Honigsberg, Certified Director

Enid/Garfield County Emergency Management