

Public health officials encourage emergency planning

by Bend Weekly News Sources

As January gets under way, public health officials in the Oregon Department of Human Services are encouraging people to make emergency planning one of their New Year resolutions.

"The end of this year has shown us the disruption that severe weather can bring to daily life," said Susan Allan, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) public health director. "Are you ready to confront an emergency that could last more than several days?"

Allan, whose job includes public health emergency preparedness planning, noted that whether it's a natural disaster, pandemic influenza or terrorism, survival may depend on how prepared people are.

"You need to be able to make it on your own for at least three days," she said. "In a severe disaster or pandemic, it could be even longer."

The first step toward becoming prepared is to assemble an emergency kit. This project can be as simple or elaborate as you choose. Allan advised that your emergency kit should contain these basics:

- Water -- one gallon per person per day for a minimum of three days, ideally ten days;
- Food -- at least a three-day, but ideally ten-day, supply of non-perishable items that do not require preparation (including use of water) or cooking, and a non-electric can opener;
- Battery-powered radio and extra batteries;
- Flashlight and extra batteries;
- First aid kit;
- Prescription medicines;
- Personal items such as extra eye glasses, contact lenses, toothbrush and toothpaste;
- Change of clothing;
- Sleeping bags;
- Sanitation articles such as garbage bags, toilet paper, towelettes, disinfectant and chlorine bleach; and
- Food and supplies for your pet, if you have one.

If you expect to be traveling in hazardous weather conditions, it's also a good idea to prepare an emergency

kit for your car. In addition to items noted above, the Red Cross advises including a fire extinguisher, jumper cables, tire repair kit, compass, road map, knife, windshield scraper and a heavy sack of sand and a tow rope.

A second important step is to develop a family communication plan, because you may not be together when a disaster occurs:

• Make an agreement that you will all call or e-mail a specific friend or relative. This person will be a contact who can communicate among separated family members. Depending on the emergency, it may be easier if the person lives in another town or state. • Make sure everyone in your family knows the contact person's phone number or e-mail address.

Allan noted there are additional things you can do that may benefit others:

• Make a list of elderly family members, neighbors or others with special needs who you may need to check on. • Take a first aid and CPR class so you are able to provide emergency help.

"Emergency planning is something we may not really want to think about," Allan said, "but it could make a critical difference for you and your family sometime in the future. The images we all saw following the 9/11 terrorist attack and Hurricane Katrina make clear that emergency planning is an important and urgent task."

Two reliable resources that can help with personal emergency planning are on the Web; information is available from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at www.ready.gov and the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org/.

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