

HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

News Release



National Preparedness Month: **Create a family emergency communications plan**

September 9, 2011 (Minneapolis) – September is National Preparedness Month. The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office urges you to create safety plans and an emergency communications plan.

“This is the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and it certainly reinforces the importance of National Preparedness Month,” said Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek, “Every citizen should learn more about emergency planning for their family, school community, or business .”

Natural disasters, such as tornadoes and floods, and man-made disasters such as criminal activity or threats/acts of terrorism may prompt evacuations or a large emergency response. When disaster strikes, it can be difficult to communicate with authorities, family, schools, and employers due to overloaded communications networks or downed cell towers.

Use the tips below to get started on a communications plan in case of an emergency. Share the information with your family and other important people who need to communicate with you in the event of an emergency.

(MORE)

- * Identify an out-of-town contact. Sometimes it's easier to place a long-distance call when an emergency strikes. Instruct family to call the contact to "check in." Make sure that every member of your family knows the contact's phone number.
- * Label your emergency contacts as "ICE" (In Case of Emergency) in your cell phone contact list. First responders are trained to look for this if you are in an accident.
- * Teach family members to text. Text messages often get around network disruptions, where a phone call might not be able. During the 9/11 attacks, in certain locations, texting was available when there were network disruptions.
- * In case electricity is down, be ready to have an alternate way of charging your cell phone—such as a charger in your vehicle.
- * Encourage friends and family members to subscribe to the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office alert service Nixle. Go to www.hennepinsheriff.org to subscribe. In addition, contact your local police department to subscribe to its Nixle or email information service.
- * Consider maintaining a traditional landline in order to ensure telephone service in case of cell phone disruptions. A landline offers a reliable method to call 911 when necessary which is an especially important consideration for households with young children or people with special medical concerns.
- * Remember that households with landline telephones that use VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol service) may not have phone service if there's a power outage.

For more information visit: FEMA <http://www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/index.html>

Department of Homeland Security <http://www.citizencorps.gov/news/webcasts.shtm>

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