

Are you ready?

As many cities in Iowa are all too aware, emergencies happen every day – usually when it's least expected. Each September, National Preparedness Month activities encourage cities and citizens to take steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and communities. **So what can your city do to be ready?** Work to establish a relationship with your local emergency management coordinator. Creating an emergency plan now and talking it over with the coordinator can help all parties feel more prepared and will establish expectations for when a disaster does occur. National Preparedness Month is also a great opportunity to encourage your citizens to prepare themselves for disaster. Simple steps, like creating a home emergency supply kit and a family emergency plan, can go a long way in ensuring safety after disaster strikes. The *Ready* Campaign recommends the following items be included in a basic emergency supply kit:

One gallon of water per person per day, for three days – remember to include enough for pets

At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Select foods requiring no refrigeration, preparation or cooking and little or no water, and choose foods your family will eat: ready-to-eat canned meats, peanut butter, protein or fruit bars, dry cereal or granola. Also pack a manual can opener and eating utensils

Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a weather radio with tone alert with extra batteries for both

Flashlight and extra batteries

First aid kit

Whistle to signal for help

Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place

Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation

Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities

Local maps

Families should also think of their special needs, such as prescription medications or glasses, diapers and formula, pet food, children's activities, and identification or driver's licenses. Learn more about family preparedness at www.ready.gov/america/index.html . The *Ready* Campaign also encourages family leaders to ask about the emergency plans at places where your family spends time: work, daycare and school. If no plans exist, families should consider volunteering to help create one. Neighbors should talk about how they can work together in the event of an emergency. Learn how schools, employers and daycares plan to communicate with families during a crisis. Citizens will be better prepared to safely reunite their family and loved ones during an emergency if they think ahead and communicate with others in advance. Similar to families, businesses should also take the time to prepare for disasters, since how quickly the

company gets back to business after a disaster typically depends upon the pre-disaster planning. And here's some food for thought: if employees are prepared at home, a company is better positioned in an emergency situation. So encouraging co-workers to create an emergency kit and have a plan at home is good for business. Although every business, just like every disaster, is different, putting a plan in motion can improve the likelihood of a company surviving and recovering from calamity. The *Ready Campaign's* Web site, www.ready.gov/business/overview/index.html, includes planning templates and outlines measures businesses can take to start getting ready. The three basic steps recommended for all businesses include: plan to stay in business, talk to your employees and protect your investment. These three steps also apply to your city. During disasters, city services are essential. Planning for how emergency services will be deployed and how regular services will be maintained can significantly impact response time and the citizen's perception of a city after and during disaster recovery. Unlike businesses, cities don't have a choice: they must stay in business – their citizens and retailers are depending on it. However, talking with city employers and elected officials about the city's disaster preparedness plan and protecting services in case of a disaster are logical steps cities can take to ensure your city successfully stays in business. Knowing which services are essential and successfully communicating the recovery plan to citizens and businesses will help everyone better plan for a disaster. Just like disaster recovery, preparing for a disaster can be a group effort. So take a few moments this September to encourage your community to prepare. National Preparedness Month is sponsored by the *Ready Campaign* and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in partnership with Citizen Corps and the Advertising Council. For more information visit www.ready.gov.

How to join...

National Preparedness Month Coalition membership is free of charge and open to all public and private sector organizations. By joining the Coalition your city or organization would agree to promote emergency preparedness during September. Once you register you will receive access to the National Preparedness Month Web site, where you can find a toolkit full of templates, resources and tips to assist you with promoting emergency preparedness. You will also find a National Preparedness Month calendar where you can share your success stories and read about the successes of others. Register to become a National Preparedness Month Coalition Member at <http://ready.adcouncil.org>