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Disaster Preparation: Planning Beats Wishing

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Hoping a disaster won't affect you can never take the place of actually being prepared for one.

More than 60 percent of Pennsylvanians surveyed think it is "not very likely" or "not likely at all" that they will be affected by a disaster within the next three years, according to a recent survey conducted by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, or PEMA, and Pennsylvania Citizen Corps.

The survey also shows only 34 percent of Pennsylvanians have started preparing for a disaster, although 60 percent recognize that it would be helpful for them to do so. September, which is National Preparedness Month, is the perfect time to start those helpful preparations.

PEMA and Pennsylvania Citizen Corps urge all residents to take advantage of ReadyPA, which offers resources to help everyone be ready for emergencies and disasters. Visit www.ReadyPA.org and take the three steps needed to prepare for any emergency: Be Informed, Be Prepared and Be Involved.

Be Informed: Know what to expect. Become familiar with the top 10 types of emergencies in Pennsylvania and learn how to be self-sufficient for several days following one. The www.ReadyPA.org website has information on how to prepare for the first three days and emergencies most often affecting Pennsylvania residents.

Be Prepared: Make a plan and build a kit. An emergency plan will help you navigate the uncertain times following an emergency and allow you to protect yourself and your family. ReadyPA.org has guides for making an emergency plan for your home, your vehicle and your workplace, as well as downloadable emergency contact list and family emergency plan templates.

After creating your plan, build a kit that includes basics, such as water and food, as well as items such as prescription medications, spare eyeglasses and a battery- or crank-powered radio. When disaster strikes, basic services such as electricity, gas and water may be cut off for days or you may need to evacuate at short notice. Having a kit ready will save you time and could even save your life. Kit-building checklists for your home, vehicle and workplace are available at www.ReadyPA.org.

Be Involved: Once you are personally prepared, you can get involved to make sure others in your family and community are ready. Join Citizen Corps, which actively involves citizens in making our communities and our state safer, stronger and better prepared. You can receive training in First Aid and emergency skills, and volunteer to support local emergency responders, disaster relief, and community safety. For more information on the Citizen Corps, the State Emergency Registry of Volunteers in PA (SERVPA) and other ways you can help prepare your community and get involved, go to www.ReadyPA.org, where you can find a calendar of emergency preparedness events in your area.

Being ready to respond to unexpected events will increase your chance of survival. Make emergency preparedness a priority now and visit www.ReadyPA.org to help you help yourself and your family.

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