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NEWS RELEASE
Family Emergency Planning

When disaster strikes, you won't have time to plan your response. Planning in advance for an emergency is the best way to protect your family.

"By working as a team and ensuring that family members know their roles, your family will be prepared to handle disaster before it strikes. September is Emergency Preparedness Month, a perfect time to put together or revise your family's plan," said the Otsego County Department of Health.

A well thought-out preparedness plan will better protect your family from such disasters as a tornado, hurricane, earthquake, fire, flood, a hazardous materials spill or even an act of bioterrorism. Your plan should include educating your family about what actions to take to keep them safe, as well as assembling a family disaster supply.

According to the American Red Cross, your family disaster plan should include educating your family about warning signals, emergency numbers, contact person(s) and a meeting place.

Talk to your partner and children about warning signals. Your family should be familiar with emergency sounds and warnings, such as fire detectors, fire alarms and sirens.

Everyone should know emergency numbers. Keep emergency numbers visible and accurate in your home. All phones should have easy-to-read emergency numbers posted on them. Have family members carry emergency numbers in their wallets, backpacks and other carry-along items.

Designate an out-of-state contact person for a "buddy check." If you are separated during an emergency, family members can check-in with that "buddy." Assign two places to meet in case your family gets separated or if you are not allowed to return to your home.

The American Red Cross says that you should stock your emergency kit with six basic supplies: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing, bedding, tools and special items, such as communication devices. Since electricity, power and phone lines could be knocked out, it's crucial that your supplies include a battery-operated or ham radio. Also, include battery-operated flashlights. Store the supplies in an easy-to-carry, waterproof backpack or duffel bag.

Keep at least a three-day supply of water for each person in your household. Store water in plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles. Store one gallon of water per person per day -- two quarts for drinking and two quarts for food preparation and sanitation.

Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Good choices are canned meats, fruits and soups; high-energy foods, such as peanut butter and granola bars; and comfort and "comfort" foods, such as cookies and dry cereal, stored in a tightly sealed container.

The first aid kit should include assorted sterile adhesive bandages, scissors, needles, tweezers, moistened toiles, antiseptic, thermometer, lubricant, cleansing agent or soap, and sunscreen. Also, include non-prescription drugs such as aspirin and non-aspirin pain reliever, anti-diarrhea medication, antacid, syrup of Ipecac (used to induce vomiting for poisoning and given only under the direction of a poison prevention specialist) and laxatives.

"Evaluate your family disaster plan at least once a year. Why not make it during annual emergency preparedness month? Take the time to review and practice your plan as well as updating medications and emergency numbers in your kit.

For more information on creating a disaster plan and kit, call the Otsego County Department of Health at 607-547-4230 or visit our web site at: www.otsegocounty.com/depts/doh

