



## WILLIAMSON COUNTY AND CITIES HEALTH DISTRICT

### NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Mike Caudle 512-943-3665

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### *Williamson County and Cities Health District Encourages Preparedness*

September 9, 2009 (Williamson County) –

September marks the sixth annual National Emergency Preparedness Month. Expectations for an especially active flu season, hurricane season continuing until November, and an increased risk of wildfires due to recent droughts in central Texas all highlight the importance of preparedness. Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) is encouraging all residents to take some simple steps that can help us all to be better prepared for emergencies in our homes, businesses, and communities.

National Preparedness Month is a nationwide event sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The Department and other partners in National Preparedness Month encourage people to develop an emergency supply kit, make a family emergency plan, and know the different types of emergencies that could affect them.

Emergencies and disasters, whether natural or human caused, can strike quickly and can change lives in a matter of minutes. These events can force people to evacuate neighborhoods or to remain confined to their home for long periods of time. By preparing in advance and working as a team with family members, everyone can better cope with a disaster and recover from it more rapidly.

WCCHD recommends that families develop emergency preparedness tools and plans by first meeting together to develop a readiness plan and emergency supply kit list that contains some basic elements and other items that fit the needs of the entire family.

Every household should assemble a disaster supply kit and keep it up-to-date. This kit is a collection of basic items that help keep people safe and more comfortable during and after a disaster. Supplies should be stored in a portable container(s). Kits should include a three-day supply of non-perishable food, appropriate cooking supplies, and one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days. A battery operated flashlight, radio with extra batteries, sanitation items including hand sanitizer and other basic hygiene supplies, are also good additions. If possible, have kits in both your home and vehicle.

Have a family communication plan. Ensure you have an out-of-town contact person with whom family and friends can check in should local communications fail or if out of town family members are unable to reach you. After a disaster, it is often easier to make a long distance call than a local call inside the disaster area. Make sure your family has a meeting point, where they can gather in an emergency. Choose two locations, one a safe distance from your home and one outside of your neighborhood in case you cannot go home.

Your plan should also include contact information for all family members-work, school and cell phone numbers. Your out-of-town contact should have a copy of this information and be familiar with your plans. Special needs supplies such as infant formula, medications and medical information, and other special products should also be part of the kit. Do not overlook comfort items such as toys and books.

-more-

Photocopies of important documents including identification cards, credits cards, and immunization records should be stored in a waterproof container along with some cash.

Remember pets in your plans. It is important that families have pet provisions in a disaster supply kit. Important items are copies of city license and up-to-date immunization records as well as extra food, water, snacks, leashes, and toys.

Once plans and supplies are in place, it is time to practice. Make sure you and your family review the plan often; conduct practice drills, and restock and update supply kit items at least once a year to make sure that items in the emergency supply kit have not expired and contact information is up-to-date.

Knowing what to do, and being prepared, is your best source of protection for emergencies of all kinds.

For more details on National Preparedness Month and to access free preparedness materials you can visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) or [www.texasprepares.org](http://www.texasprepares.org). A very informative video on emergency preparedness can be accessed on the latter site, and information is available in both English and Spanish. Information on flu preparedness can be found on the WCCHD website at [www.wcchd.org](http://www.wcchd.org) (look for the “Flu” link on the lower left corner of the homepage) or the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) website at [www.TexasFlu.org](http://www.TexasFlu.org). For more information on public health preparedness, contact Mike Caudle ([mcaudle@wcchd.org](mailto:mcaudle@wcchd.org)) or Ryan Moeller ([rmoeller@wcchd.org](mailto:rmoeller@wcchd.org)) in the Williamson County and Cities Health District’s Emergency Preparedness & Response office at 943-3665 or 943-3661.

For more information on *your public health department* visit, <http://www.wcchd.org/>