



## WILLIAMSON COUNTY AND CITIES HEALTH DISTRICT

### NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Mike Caudle 512-943-3665

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### *Williamson County and Cities Health District Encourages Personal Preparedness during National Preparedness Month (September)*

September 7, 2010 (Williamson County) –

September marks the 7th annual National Preparedness Month. National Preparedness Month (NPM) is a nationwide event sponsored by the *Ready* Campaign in partnership with Citizen Corps and the Advertising Council. Held each September, National Preparedness Month is a time in which all Americans are encouraged to take a few simple, but concrete, steps that can help them become better prepared to handle emergencies in their homes, businesses, and communities.

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. Families are encouraged to 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. By preparing in advance and working as a team with family members, everyone can improve their ability to cope with a wide variety of disaster situations and to ensure they can recover from them more rapidly.

During National Preparedness Month, WCCHD encourages all residents to enhance their emergency preparedness by developing an emergency supply kit, making a family emergency plan, and knowing the different types of emergencies that could affect them. These simple steps can be summarized as follows: 1) Get A Kit, 2) Make A Plan, and 3) Be Informed.

1) Get A Kit. You may need to survive on your own after an emergency. This means having your own food, water, and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least three days. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it might take days. In addition, basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment, and telephones may be cut off for days, or even a week or longer. 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. Photocopies of important documents including identification cards, credits cards, and immunization records should be stored in a waterproof container along with some cash. Special needs supplies such as infant formula, medications and medical information, pet supplies, and other special products should also be part of the kit. Do not overlook comfort items such as toys and books. If possible, have kits in both your home and vehicle.

-more-

2) Make A Plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to plan in advance: how you will contact one another; how you will get back together; and what you will do in different situations. 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. 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. 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. 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.

3) Be Informed. Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as making an emergency supply kit and developing a family communications plan, are the same for both a natural or man-made emergency. However, there are important differences among potential emergencies that will impact the decisions you make and the actions you take. Learn more about potential emergencies that could happen locally and the appropriate way to respond to them. In our area, this list may include fires, flooding, tornados, ice storms, and a wide variety of other things including public health emergencies. For Americans, preparedness must now account for man-made disasters as well as natural ones. In addition, learn about the emergency plans that have been established in your area by your state and local government. Knowing what to do during an emergency is an important part of being prepared and may make all the difference when seconds count.

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.

In July, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) launched their “Ready or Not?” public education campaign to encourage Texas to prepare for emergencies. Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) encourages everyone to join the readiness team and to truly help themselves, their neighbors, and their communities to be *Ready*.

For more details on National Preparedness Month and to access free preparedness materials and information you can visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) or [www.listo.gov](http://www.listo.gov), or call toll-free 1-800-BE-READY or 1-888-SE-LISTO. Emergency preparedness information specific to Texas can be found at [www.texasprepares.org](http://www.texasprepares.org) or [www.texasprepara.org](http://www.texasprepara.org). Those without Internet access may dial 2-1-1 for help finding local sites that offer free Internet access.

For more information on emergency 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/>.