

September 28, 2021

**For immediate release**

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### **September is National Preparedness Month**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) urges all Nebraskans to act now to be ready when a disaster strikes. Knowing what type of disaster is most likely to occur in your community is important when making your emergency plans and building your emergency kit. The disasters you are most likely to encounter in southwest Nebraska are severe weather, loss of electricity or communications, or exposure to hazardous materials.

“Prepare to Protect. Preparing for disasters is protecting everyone you love,” said Kay Schmidt, Emergency Response Coordinator for SWNPHD. “Set aside a few minutes each month to check for items that you might need to add or replace. Re-think your items and family needs, especially if new medications are needed or if children have grown.”

Involve all members of your family and supportive circles and practice your plan regularly. Practice is crucial for your emergency plan to be successful in the event of an emergency. Have a plan for sheltering in place for emergencies that don’t require you to leave your home. Also plan for evacuation, including which route you will take, places to travel to for safety, and phone calls that need to be made to loved ones.

Items for family disaster preparedness kits may include:

- Food and Water for 3 days (or more). Rotate food every six months.
- Personal supplies like clothing, blankets, gloves, and boots, along with hygiene items.
- First Aid kit with scissors
- Important Documents: (Keep in a waterproof container)
  - Contact list
  - Written instructions for how to turn off electricity, gas and water in case authorities advise you to do so
  - Home inventory list with photos and videos
- Supplies for family members with unique needs such as infants, seniors, and pets, including any special foods and medications.
- Misc. Supplies
  - Batteries
  - Cash
  - Compass
  - Camera
  - Duct Tape
  - Crowbar
  - Extra set of car and house keys

- Flashlights
- Hand crank or battery-operated radio
- Area maps
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Notebooks and pens
- Permanent markers
- Plastic sheeting
- Rope
- Small toolbox
- Shut-off wrench to turn off house-hold gas and water
- Utility knives
- Whistle
- Cell phone charger, or solar charger

Other helpful preparedness tips to remember:

- Place loose items in airtight plastic bags and keep these items in large easy-to carry, waterproof containers like a trash bin or plastic tub.
- Label each container with your name and address.
- Have last-minute items ready to add when a warning or evacuation order is issued.
- Store the kit in a safe place near a main exit.

More information on how to prepare for the types of disasters you are most likely to encounter in your area can be found at [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov). You can also get informed by downloading the FEMA app for disaster resources, weather alerts, and safety tips.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Visit [swhealth.ne.gov](https://www.swhealth.ne.gov) for information on preparedness. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook and can be reached by calling 308-345-4223.

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