

## Prepared, Not Scared

It's National Preparedness Month. Each September we focus messages on promoting family and community disaster and emergency planning. Unfortunately, we've already had plenty of disasters in the form of flooding, hail and winds this year – and some of us in the South Heartland District of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties are still in the recovery mode.

I'd like to share four preparedness strategies, one for each week in September, to hopefully help all of us be better prepared. These tips come from the website [ready.gov/september](https://www.ready.gov/september).

### #1 - Save Early for Disaster Costs.

- You never know when a disaster will happen and saving is the best financial defense against disasters. You can prepare by setting aside money in a rainy day fund.
- Do you have all the documents and digital copies you need to protect yourself after a disaster? You can use the checklists in the Emergency Financial First Aid Kit to help you see if you are missing anything. Documenting your personal property (including taking pictures) can help insurance claims in the event of a disaster.
- Before disaster strikes, review your insurance coverage. Insurance is the fastest way to recover after a disaster. Do you have flood insurance? Homeowners and renters insurances do not typically cover flood damage and flooding can be expensive. Learn more about flood insurance and how to protect your home or business by visiting the [Floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov) website.
- Use the Emergency Financial First Aid Kit available on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/96123> as a guide.

### #2 Make a Plan to Prepare for Disasters.

- Be Prepared. Make an emergency plan today & practice it. Get started today using the tools at [www.ready.gov/plan](https://www.ready.gov/plan). Preparing your family for an emergency can be as simple as a conversation over dinner. Have enough food, water, & meds for everyone in your family, including your pets, to last for at least 72 hours.
- It's important to include kids in the disaster planning process. Review your family emergency plan together so that they know what to do even if you are not there. See [ready.gov/kids](https://www.ready.gov/kids).
- Practice your fire escape plan by having a home fire drill at least twice a year with everyone in the home. Learn your evacuation zone. Practice evacuating in the car and include your animals, so they're more familiar if you need to evacuate in an emergency.
- Consider downloading a group texting app so your entire circle of family and friends can keep in touch before, during & after an emergency.
- Sign up for alerts and warnings in your area. This is available through your County Emergency Management office.
- If you rely on electrical medical equipment, contact your water and power companies to get on a "priority reconnection service" list of power-dependent customers.
- Learn how to turn off utilities like natural gas in your home. See [ready.gov/safety-skills](https://www.ready.gov/safety-skills). Make sure you have working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide monitors in your home.

- Be prepared for a power outage by Use the tool at [ready.gov/kit](https://www.ready.gov/kit).

### #3 Teach Youth to Prepare for Disasters.

- Teach children what to do in an emergency if they are at home or away from home.
- Review your family emergency communications plan with kids. Help your kids know how to communicate during an emergency. Review these topics with them: Sending text message; Emergency contact numbers; Dialing 9-1-1 for help.
- Update school records and discuss emergency contact numbers with kids before they go.
- Add your kids' school's social media info to the family communication plan.
- Consider Including your child's favorite stuffed animals, board games, books or music in their emergency kit to comfort them in a disaster.
- Ask your child's teacher about the plans the school has in place for emergencies. Are you a teacher? Are your students prepared for an emergency? Download curriculum for grades 1-12 for your classroom: [www.ready.gov/kids/educators](https://www.ready.gov/kids/educators).
- Kids can learn by playing the online emergency preparedness "Build a Kit" or "Disaster Masters" games: [www.ready.gov/kids/games](https://www.ready.gov/kids/games)

### #4 Get Involved in Your Community's Preparedness.

- Learn about the hazards most likely to affect your community and their appropriate responses.
- Every community has voluntary organizations that work during disasters. Contact your county emergency manager or South Heartland District Health Department to see what organizations are active in your community and how to get involved.
- Take classes in lifesaving skills, such as CPR/AED and first aid, or in emergency response, such as CERT.
- Check with neighbors to see how you can help each other out before and after a storm.
- If you have a disability, plan ahead for accessible transportation that you may need for evacuation or getting to a medical clinic. Work with local services or public transportation to identify accessible transportation options.

Be Prepared, Not Scared. Use these tools to get started today and contact me if you need help preparing your family, your business or your neighborhood.

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