

For Immediate Release Date: September 5, 2019

**Contact:** Michele Bever, PhD, MPH, Executive Director

402-462-6211 or toll free at 1-877-238-7595

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

## Prepared, Not Scared

"Be Prepared, Not Scared," is the message from local health department and emergency management officials. "Each September we promote family and community disaster and emergency planning for National Preparedness Month," said Michele Bever, Executive Director for the South Heartland District Health Department.

"This year we are sharing four preparedness strategies, one to focus on each week in September, to hopefully help all of us be better prepared," said Jim Morgan, public health risk coordinator for South Heartland District Health Department, which serves Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties.

"The first strategy is to Save Early for Disaster Costs," Morgan said. "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."

Adams County Emergency Manager Ron Pughes said that in addition to saving, it is a good idea to review your insurance coverage before disaster strikes. Pughes suggested checking into flood insurance, even if you do not live in a flood plain, because homeowners and renters insurances do not typically cover flood damage and flooding can be expensive. "The premiums for flood insurance are typically very reasonable compared to the costs of clean up and recovery from flood damage," Pughes said.

Residents can learn more about flood insurance and how to protect homes or businesses by visiting the Floodsmart.gov website.

"Another preparedness step is to Make a Plan to prepare for disaster," Morgan said.

Plans should include how you will communicate, where you will meet if you are in different locations when disaster strikes, instructions for how to turn off utilities like natural gas in your home, an evacuation route, how you will access important documents, a 3-day kit of emergency supplies and medications and considerations for pets.

Morgan recommended that if you rely on electrical medical equipment, you should contact your water and power companies to get on a priority reconnection service list of power-dependent customers.

"To help you get started, there are plan templates and tools on the website <a href="www.ready.gov/plan">www.ready.gov/plan</a>," said Morgan.

"Teaching Youth to Prepare for Disasters is another strategy," he said. "Include your children in the planning process, so that they know what to do even if you are not there, and then practice your plans," he said.

"The fourth strategy is to Get Involved in Your Community's Preparedness," said Ron Pughes. "Every community has voluntary organizations that work during disasters and we offer community training opportunities, too," he said. "For instance, if residents are interested in helping out their family and

neighbors, they can contact Adams County Emergency Management Agency about registering for an upcoming Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training."

"We have experience with disasters happening right here in south central Nebraska." health director Bever said. "In fact, our health district of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties is still recovering from all the flooding, hail and high winds we've had this year," she said.

"We want our residents to know that their local health department and their local emergency management agency can help individuals, families, worksites, schools and the community to prepare in advance for disasters," Bever said. "We encourage you to start this month – National Preparedness Month – with at least one step toward being better prepared," she said.

##