

# Hoping for the best . . .ready for the worst

## Preparing Becker County for A Public Health Emergency

### **Hurricane Katrina.** What Went Wrong?

We only have to look at the news to realize how important it is for individuals, families, and businesses to prepare for disaster and large scale emergencies. There are well-developed emergency response plans at all levels of government. These plans are supported by thousands of trained and dedicated emergency responders, health care systems and law enforcers. However, protecting the health and safety of your loved ones is an important personal responsibility.

Over the months to follow, you will be receiving information prepared by local public health agencies in the northwest region of Minnesota, designed to prepare you and your family or business for emergencies/disasters. There are actions you can take to help you get ready for and cope with almost any type of disaster. Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility. It is important to include your children in planning for emergencies. Provide them with age appropriate information. Including them will help their confidence and coping abilities if an event should occur.

Businesses also need to be prepared and have a plan to continue essential functions following an emergency or disaster. Businesses need to address infrastructure elements needed to continue essential services during a major incident. This includes plans to help save lives and protect the health and safety of their community. Some of the major steps for business continuity include taking an inventory of all functions performed by the company that cannot be interrupted for more than a short time and identify critical/essential functions, who can perform them and what is needed to perform them. In order to help you prepare, begin by asking yourself some basic questions and take an inventory of your own home and personal resources.



It can also help to do a walk-through of a typical day or week, determining what things you depend on and what alternatives you have if they are no longer available.

- Are there other people who rely on you? Children, elderly parents/relatives, your employer, neighbors, etc.
- What do I already have available? How long would it last? 3 days? 2 weeks? 1 month?
- Who would I call if I had an emergency? What ways do I have to communicate with them? How would I get messages to them if my normal communication were unavailable?
- Where would I go to find information in an emergency?
- What if I or my employees were unable to get to work for an extended period of time? What if I or my employees can't get home?
- Do I have an out of state contact?
- Can my family communicate with me if we are not at the same location? What if phone lines were down? Or cell phones overloaded?
- If I depend on my computer, are my files backed up?

These are just a few of the many questions that could be asked. There are many valuable resources available to you, including web sites and local contacts. Be sure to watch for and listen to media announcements on emergency preparedness in the months ahead. Comply with the recommendations. Remember, like many of the Katrina victims, **you may be on your own.**



### **TYPES OF EMERGENCIES THAT YOU SHOULD PREPARE FOR**

It is helpful to identify types of emergencies that you should prepare for. These can be man made or natural and some may be more likely to occur than others in our county.

- Air, Rail or Roadway (crashes, toxic spills)
- Infectious disease outbreaks (spread person to person, animal to animal, animal to human or food and water born, etc.)
- Severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, wild fires, winter storms/blizzards, extreme heat or cold
- Terrorism (The effects of terrorism can vary significantly from loss of life to property damage and loss of services. Visit [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov) for more information)

Be prepared for isolation at home for extended periods of time, or the possibility of having to leave your home. (Emergency sheltering) Remember the ice storms of 1997 and 1998 that hit the northern areas of the US and Canada, leaving many people isolated and without power.

Stay tuned in to your radio or television for weather reports as well as other information and advice that may be broad cast by local authorities. Your radio should have battery back up in case of power failure. It is also helpful to have a landline phone that doesn't use electricity so you can make telephone calls if needed.

### **Helpful Websites, resources**

#### **American Red Cross**

Terrorism Preparation Materials

[www.redcross.org/pubs/dspubs/terrormat.html](http://www.redcross.org/pubs/dspubs/terrormat.html)

#### **Center for Disease Control & Prevention**

Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response

[www.bt.cdc.gov/](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/)

#### **Department of Health & Human Services**

Disasters and Emergencies

[www.hhs.gov/disasters/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/disasters/index.html)

#### **Department of Homeland Security**

For more information on preparing for any of the emergencies described in the booklet

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

#### **Minnesota Dept of Homeland Security & Emergency Management**

[www.hsem.state.mn.us](http://www.hsem.state.mn.us)

#### **Minnesota Dept of Health**

Emergency Preparedness Response & Recovery

[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

#### **Becker County Emergency Management**

Rusty Haskins 218-847-5628 Ext 5365

[www.co.becker.mn.us](http://www.co.becker.mn.us)

#### **Federal Emergency Management Agency**

Disaster Preparedness

[www.fema.gov/](http://www.fema.gov/)

#### **FirstGov for Consumers**

Disaster, Fire and Emergencies

[www.consumer.gov/yourhome.htm](http://www.consumer.gov/yourhome.htm)

#### **Becker County Community Health**

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