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SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

Morgantown, WV – August 31, 2017

The images of flood victims wading through high water in Houston are only the most recent examples of the truth of the slogan of Ready, the national campaign to promote emergency preparation: “Disasters Don’t Plan Ahead. You Can.”

The news from Texas should hit home in West Virginia, which has experienced devastating flooding in the past two summers. That’s why National Preparedness Month, which will last throughout the month of September, is arriving in the nick of time.

The Ready Campaign (www.Ready.com) helps familiarize people with potential disasters and the steps they can take in advance to be more prepared. Unexpected events can include weather-related incidents such as floods, snowstorms, tornados, hurricanes and extreme heat and cold; actions caused by individuals or groups, like active shooters and bioterrorism; and other potential emergencies such as pandemic outbreaks and chemical leaks. Along with these disasters are tips specific to handling each one.

Luckily, there also are ways to be prepared for a variety of incidents that might occur. The Ready Campaign is promoting four weekly themes for the month: Make a Plan for Yourself, Family and Friends; Plan to Help Your Neighbor and Community; Practice and Build Out Your Plans; and Get Involved! Be a Part of Something Larger.

To make a plan, first create a list of the types of disasters that can affect the area where you live. Consider the following: How will you receive emergency alerts and warnings? What is your shelter plan? What is your evacuation route? What is your family or household communication plan? Then make a list of items that you would need in your household to take care of everyone, including pets. This means stockpiling at least a three-day supply of water and food as well as other necessities such as a flashlight, a battery-powered radio and extra batteries and a first aid kit.

This year, the Ready Campaign is encouraging people to take additional steps to prepare. This can be done in several ways, such as by holding drills and by taking the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA)
Until Help Arrives training (community.fema.gov/until-help-arrives). FEMA also sponsors National Prepareathon Day, which this year will be held on September 15.

Finally, the Ready Campaign is encouraging people to take what they have learned out into the community, to their workplace, campus, school and congregations.

Also taking place in September is Get Ready Day, which will be observed on September 19 by the American Public Health Association (APHA). Get Ready Day encourages communities, campuses and workplaces to prepare for emergencies by holding an event. Held each year on the third Tuesday in September, APHA’s Get Ready Day is timed to coincide with National Preparedness Month.

Get more preparedness tips at aphagetready.org, ready.gov and monchd.org/preparedness.html.

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