



For immediate release

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(Part 2 of 2 series)

Emergency Preparations for Severe Weather

Do you have a disaster plan that works for your family? Do you have any challenges that would keep you from seeking shelter? “These are questions that we encourage everyone to answer,” states Heidi Wheeler, Emergency Response Coordinator for Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD). “If you do not have a disaster kit that fits the needs of your family we want to help you get prepared.”

Following are basic supplies that should be a part of your disaster planning:

- Water: one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food: at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Radio: battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight: with extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Personal sanitation: moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties
- Tools: wrench or pliers to turn off utilities; manual can opener for food
- Cell phone: with chargers, inverter or solar charger

Marc Harpham, Fire Chief for McCook Fire Department encourages McCook residents to turn on their radio or television for the latest emergency information from local authorities. “Make sure you are getting your information from a reliable source. A new nationwide text emergency alert system, called Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) can send out alerts authorized by certain government partners.” You can find out more about WEA at NOAA.gov.

If you live in a home without a basement, you must be extra vigilant about knowing where you will go when a tornado watch has been issued. Have prior arrangement made and take cover early, before a tornado warning is declared.

Your kit may contain these additional items such as durable medical equipment, assistive technology, food for special diets, prescription medicines, diabetic supplies, extra eye glasses, hearing aids and batteries, supplies for a service animal and a manual wheelchair.

“One of the biggest challenges to your safety and access to information will probably be the loss of electrical power,” reminds Fire Chief Harpham.

Wheeler recommends that citizens include in their disaster plan where to have family members meet, how to communicate by text as the cell towers will probably be overwhelmed with calls, and conduct drills so family members are familiar with your disaster plan. Following is a list of important information that you should have in your disaster planning:

- Important telephone numbers, such as emergency (police and fire), paramedics, and medical centers.
- Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of your insurance agents, including policy types and numbers.
- Telephone numbers of the electric, gas, and water companies.
- Names and telephone numbers of neighbors.
- Name and telephone number of your landlord or property manager.
- Important medical information (for example, allergies, regular medications, and brief medical history).
- Year, model, license, and identification numbers of your vehicles (automobiles, boats, and RVs).
- Bank's or credit union's telephone numbers, and your account numbers.
- Radio and television broadcast stations to tune to for emergency broadcast information.

For more information on preparing a disaster kit and plan go to our website at swhealth.ne.gov contact Heidi Wheeler, SWNPHD Emergency Response Coordinator at 308-345-4223 or email her at: erc@swhealth.ne.gov. You can also go the SWNPHD office to pick up disaster kit information at 404 West 10th Street (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook. You can also follow us on [Facebook.com/swnphd](https://www.facebook.com/swnphd) and [Twitter@swpublichealth](https://twitter.com/swpublichealth). The health department serves Chase, Dundy, Hayes, Hitchcock, Frontier, Furnas, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties.

If you have any questions on the local emergency plans, contact Red Willow County Emergency Manager Alan Kotschwar at 345-1850, McCook Police Chief Ike Brown at 345-3450 or McCook Fire Chief Marc Harpham at 345-5710.

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