

Daily Union Article
Saturday, September 8, 2018
Title: Family Communications Plan

With the recent and extreme flooding experience in our Northeast Kansas counties, we have witnessed what natural disasters can do to people, their homes, and their communities. With that in mind, it is both timely and relevant to remind everyone that September is National Preparedness Month.

K-State Research and Extension agents and staff across the state work hard to help farmers, ranchers, families, individuals and businesses put plans in place to help them be prepared for unexpected events such as the recent flooding.

The very first thing you can do to make sure your family is prepared, is to make sure you are connected with weather and other emergency alert systems. At home, this could be in the form of a weather radio that works with the National Weather Radio system managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). There are several brands to choose from that will work well in your home. The key is to make sure that the weather radio receiver is programmed to receive the alert broadcast by the National Weather Service (NWS). Prices can range from \$20 and up, so you may want to shop around for the weather radio that has the features you desire.

Here are some features for residential models outlined by NOAA that you may want to consider:

- Tone alarm – the alarm sent by NWS before broadcasting the details of the warning or watch message. The alarm activates the receivers equipped to receive it, even if the audio is turned off. This is especially useful during a person's sleeping hours when they may not be as aware of the weather risks being reported.
- SAME technology – Specific Alert Message Encoding allows you to identify the specific area for which you wish to receive alerts. Most warning and watches broadcast over NOAA Weather Radio are county (or parish) based. Since most NWR transmitters are broadcasting for a number of counties, SAME receivers will respond only to the alerts issued for the area (or areas) you have selected.
- Selectable alerting events – a feature that allows you to turn off alarms for certain events which might not be of importance to you. For example, if you live on a high hill in this region, perhaps low-land flooding may not concern you. However, if you are like me, I live on a hill but I have to drive through low-water bridges to get around the county.

- Battery backup – a feature that allows you to remain “in tune” even during a power outage.
- External antenna jack – might be helpful if you have a lot of interference with reception. This is NOT an uncommon problem in the Flint Hills! Some receivers already come with an external antenna jack so you can connect to a larger antenna indoors or outdoors. If the one you are considering purchasing doesn't have this feature included, you can usually purchase an external antenna at the same location.
- External device jack for those with special needs – very helpful for those individuals with special needs. This add-on can trigger lights or bed shakers for those who cannot hear or see. It might also be helpful for those who are deep sleepers.

Another way to make sure you prepare by staying aware is to download a weather app to your phone or other device. There are weather apps designed for androids, iPhones, laptops, tablets, and more. If you have a favorite radio or television station, there is a good chance that they have some sort of weather app you could use. Whether at home, at work, or on the road the use of a weather app can help you stay informed and safe!

Last Monday, as several area counties were experiencing flash flooding, my social media accounts were buzzing with communications from friends and family letting all their contacts know if they were safe or if they needed help. We can't always assume that our family members will think to access this means of communication in times of a natural disaster.

As a Family & Consumer Sciences Extension Agent, I am particularly interested in helping you prepare a family communications plan so that all of your family know the best way to communicate on the heels of an emergency.

You never know when you or your family will experience an emergency. Planning out your response – especially in the form of a communication plan – can reduce the stress and anxiety that is often associated with a crisis. How will your family members get in touch with each other if you are not all together?

Before an emergency happens, have a family meeting to discuss what steps each family member needs to take and who will be your out-of-state point of contact (POC). The POC will serve as the family dispatcher to help everyone know what's going on. Everyone in your family needs to have this same person's contact information.

You also need to discuss a safe meeting place where you all can meet away from your home – both in the neighborhood and within your town. If it were your apartment that

flooded this past Monday, where would you go to safety? If strong winds flattened the roof of your home, where would you meet your family members to check on everyone's well-being?

If you prepare for the worst, then you and your family will have a plan in place to ensure that everyone is accounted for and those who need help can get it as quickly as possible. Look for the *Family Communication Plan* posted on the Geary County K-State Research & Extension website at <http://www.geary.k-state.edu/>. You'll find it under the Health, Home, and Family tab. Look for New Resources. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!



Family Communication Plan

Emergencies can happen at any time. Does your family know how to get in touch with each other if you are not all together?

Before an emergency happens, have a family discussion to determine who would be your out-of-state point of contact, and where you would meet away from your home — both in the neighborhood and within your town.

**Let them know
you're OK!**

Pick the same person for each family member to contact. It might be easier to reach someone who's out of town.

Important Information

Fill in this information and keep a copy in a safe place, such as your purse or briefcase, your car, your office, and your disaster kit. Be sure to look it over every year and keep it up to date.

Out-of-Town Contact

Name: _____
Home: _____
Cell: _____
Email: _____
Facebook: _____
Twitter: _____

Neighborhood Meeting Place:

Regional Meeting Place:

Work Information

Workplace: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Facebook: _____
Twitter: _____
Evacuation Location: _____

Workplace: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Facebook: _____
Twitter: _____
Evacuation Location: _____

School Information

School: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Facebook: _____
Twitter: _____
Evacuation Location: _____

School: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Facebook: _____
Twitter: _____
Evacuation Location: _____

School: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Facebook: _____
Twitter: _____
Evacuation Location: _____





Important Information (continued)

Family Information

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Important Medical Information: _____

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Important Medical Information: _____

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Important Medical Information: _____

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Important Medical Information: _____

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Important Medical Information: _____

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Important Medical Information: _____

Medical Contacts

Doctor: _____

Phone: _____

Doctor: _____

Phone: _____

Pediatrician: _____

Phone: _____

Dentist: _____

Phone: _____

Dentist: _____

Phone: _____

Specialist: _____

Phone: _____

Specialist: _____

Phone: _____

Pharmacist: _____

Phone: _____

Veterinarian/Kennel: _____

Phone: _____

Insurance Information

Medical Insurance: _____

Phone: _____

Policy Number: _____

Homeowners/Rental Insurance: _____

Phone: _____

Policy Number: _____

Text, don't talk!

Unless you are in danger, send a text. Texts may have an easier time getting through than phone calls, and you don't want to tie up phone lines needed by emergency workers.

