

Are we ready?

Over the past several days we have watched images of unprecedented devastation within a geographic area that was well prepared for dealing with disasters. Yet, due to the scale of damage incurred by Hurricane Sandy and her collision with two weather systems coming in from the North and West--first responders, National Guard, municipalities, hospitals and transportation providers were stretched beyond their well-planned capabilities.

As recovery efforts begin we should note that even in an area that spends a great deal of time preparing for disasters, things didn't go as planned. Over the last several days we have seen images of large portions of the population without basic services... and now, we are being told this may continue for weeks. We have seen images of elderly residents trapped in large tenements, with dwindling resources and no help in sight other than neighbors and families who may be faced with the same fate.

It is not because Emergency Responders and local disaster managers have abandoned them; it is because in any disaster the first 72 hours are crucial to ensure all is done to save lives. We, as citizens need to take responsibility for helping ourselves and our neighbors during the initial stages of a disaster. We need to prepare ourselves, our loved ones, our pets, and our communities to ensure emergency responders can treat those who are in the most urgent need first and not add to their burden.

We need to plan for the worst...or, at least have enough supplies to carry us through the first few days. Being prepared can help save lives, protect property, and can increase your resiliency for recovery. The more you know about what to do in an emergency, the more confident and secure you will feel in your abilities to survive a disaster.

While the images of Hurricane Sandy are still fresh in our minds, I ask you to visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) and take the time to prepare. This website will provide you with information on preparing for disasters and building a readiness kit. You may also consider becoming a volunteer in emergency preparation for your community as a member of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) at <http://volunteeridaho.com/>, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), or American Red Cross. Also, you may visit Southwest District Health's website for more information on preparedness at [www.swdh.org/](http://www.swdh.org/).

Living in Idaho we tend to become complacent because of our lack of major catastrophic events, thus we often take preparedness too lightly. One day the big one may hit us. Prepare NOW. Be ready and don't be caught without the minimum resources to make it through that first 72 hours.

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