



Recently I listened to a presentation by Lane Roberts, Police Chief of Joplin, Missouri describing the events that occurred on the evening of May 22, 2011 when 30% of his city was destroyed. He described how a one-half mile wide, EF-5 tornado-- indicating winds stronger than 200 mph-- ravaged his city. The storm is listed as one of the deadliest on record, resulting in over 1,000 injuries and 161 fatalities. It destroyed 7,500 structures and 500 businesses, while displacing 9,000 residents.

It seems you could not concoct a more devastating scenario. But despite the devastation, members of the Joplin community persevered and worked together to respond and recover from the disaster.

No matter where your community is located, a major natural disaster, such as wildfire, winter storms, flooding, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes can strike at any time. September is National Preparedness Month and a great time to remind all of us about the importance of readiness in case of disaster-- not only preparing our communities, but also our homes and families.

Being prepared can help save lives, protect property, and can increase your resiliency for recovery. Being prepared can help us to minimize the impact an emergency will have on our lives. It also enables emergency responders to treat those who are in most urgent need first. The more you know about what to do in an emergency the more confident and secure you will feel in your abilities to manage through a disaster.

Now is the time to think about the basic needs you, your family, and your pets will need. How will you communicate? What supplies will you need to keep? How many days can you survive with your own supplies?

To be more prepared, start with these four steps:

- Be informed about the types of emergencies, hazards, and risks that exist in your area and learn what you need to do to be ready to respond to each.
- Make a Family Emergency Plan. Think about how you will contact and communicate with one another if you are separated and how you will evacuate your home.
- Build an Emergency Supply Kit, both for your home and in your car, and keep the contents current. You may need to survive on your own until resources become available by having your own food, water, and first-aid supplies.
- Get involved in emergency preparation for your community by volunteering as a member for Community Emergency Response Team (CERT); Medical Reserve Corps (MRC); American Red Cross; and many others. Don't forget the importance of knowing basic first aid.

If you have made emergency preparedness plans, visit www.whatsyourrq.org/index.shtml to determine your Readiness Quotient (RQ) and evaluate just how prepared you are.

I hope you take a pledge to prepare in 2012. The responsibility to be prepared belongs to all of us and each of us plays an important role. For more information on how to prepare your family, home, and business for all types of emergencies, visit www.ready.gov.

Doug Doney
Public Health Preparedness Program Manager
Southwest District Health