

Prepare for disasters - The life you've built is worth protecting

By Michelle Steinbeisser, RN Public Health

Disasters over the past decade have increased in frequency and severity. In 2021, the US came face to face with 20 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters. The number of direct or indirect fatalities related to these weather events was 688.

These natural occurring disasters are uncertain, and usually have a devastating impact on the communities, individual's mental health, cost numerous lives, and have caused chaos to infrastructure. September is an excellent month to raise awareness about the importance of preparing for disasters and emergencies that happen unannounced and threaten the well-being of our communities.

All households should have a plan and a disaster go kit. It is extremely important to know which types of disasters could be of the greatest risk to your community. Some of the most common disasters we could anticipate in our area, are but not limited to, flooding, severe thunderstorms, power outages, tornados, snow and ice storms, along with severe weather events. The impact of disasters is different for everybody.

One of the most effective strategies in a disaster is having good communication. Starting the conversation with your family surrounding these events will promote life safety in an unplanned weather event. Planning and testing your plans will help you feel more in charge if and when you need to execute your plan.

Your whole family can assist in creating a simple yet effective preparedness plan, disaster kit, and communication plan. Not sure on where to start? www.ready.gov offers easy to use templates and takes all family planning and considerations into the planning process.

One of the most valuable ways to be in the know of your community's risks and when the risks are elevated to a threat, are to stay informed and connected. You can subscribe to your cities/counties Nixle page for real time updates, Brown County Sheriff's & Brown County Public Health Facebook pages.

Another way to start planning for disasters is to get involved. Disaster relief starts and ends at the local level, and behind the response is an army of volunteers who live in the community or come from nearby or surrounding community's. It helps the local emergency responders if the volunteers are registered through a credentialed system. If you are interested in volunteering you can register at www.mnresponds.org, www.nvoad.org, or www.redcross.org.

Preparing your family for disasters and continuing conversations about how you will communicate, where you will meet, what special items specific to your family need to go in your disaster go kit will help your family stay safe during unknown situations. Keep your family safe and lessen your vulnerabilities. "The life you've built is worth protecting. Prepare for disasters to create a lasting legacy for you and your family."