

For Immediate Release

Berrien County Health Department Recognizes September as Emergency Preparedness Month

Benton Harbor, Michigan, September 5, 2023 - In recognition of September as National Preparedness Month, the Berrien County Health Department calls upon community members to take proactive steps in preparing for unforeseen emergencies and disasters.

Launched in 2004 by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Preparedness Month is a time for individuals, families and communities to assess their readiness for various potential crises, such as natural disasters, severe weather events or public health emergencies. This initiative aims to educate and empower citizens to create comprehensive emergency plans that can safeguard their loved ones and provide a sense of security during times of uncertainty.

“Emergency Preparedness Month stands as a critical reminder of our shared responsibility to protect and support one another in times of uncertainty,” said Jeff Thornton, emergency preparedness coordinator at BCHD. “By taking simple yet impactful steps, families can enhance their ability to effectively respond to any emergency that may arise.

“We recommend all members of our community to take action during this month - assess your readiness, create a family emergency plan and assemble an emergency kit. Your actions today can make a profound difference in ensuring a safer and more resilient tomorrow for all of us.”

In addition to the [emergency preparedness resources](#) on its website, the Health Department offers the following practical tips for families to build their own plans:

- **Create a family emergency plan** : Develop a clear plan that includes evacuation routes, meeting points and contact information for family members, friends and local authorities.
- **Develop a communication strategy** : Designate a central point of contact for reunification and establish alternative communication methods in case traditional methods fail.
- **Build an emergency kit** : Assemble a kit containing essential supplies such as water, non-perishable food, first aid supplies, medications, batteries, flashlights and a radio.
- **Stay informed** : Ensure your family members have access to reliable sources of information such as local news, weather alerts and official government channels to stay up to date on potential hazards and recommended actions.
- **Secure your home** : Identify and address potential hazards in and around your home. Install smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and carbon monoxide detectors. Secure heavy furniture and objects that could pose a danger during severe weather events or natural disasters.
- **Community engagement** : Collaborate with neighbors and local organizations to foster community-wide preparedness events, workshops or drills. Sharing resources and knowledge can lead to a more resilient community.

“Taking these steps will enhance your readiness for any potential crisis,” Thornton said. “We encourage people to explore the resources on our website, sign up for [B-Warn emergency alerts](#) and plan ahead.

“By working together and being prepared, we can build a safer community during National Preparedness Month.”

For more information and resources on emergency preparedness, please visit berriencounty.org.

#