



THE SENTINEL

Reporting on Preparedness



Public Health

District 2 Public Health (North) • Emergency Preparedness • Gainesville, Georgia

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September is National Preparedness Month

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Make a Plan. Get a Kit. Be Informed.

The preparedness message is familiar but this year's theme is 'Prepared, Not Scared'.

During September an emphasis is placed on family and community preparedness to strengthen the nation's ability to respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters. This year each week is devoted to a specific action to take. Week one encourages us to Save Early for Disaster Costs. This includes making sure we have appropriate amounts of insurance to cover losses and to save for uncovered costs associated with disasters.

During week two, we should make a plan. If we already have a family plan, then

we should review and update the plan if necessary. Week three is for Youth Preparedness. This focuses on teaching kids what to do in an emergency, how to communicate during a disaster, and updating school or medical records. It is also a time to talk with your child about what type of disasters may occur and making sure they have what they need in an emergency kit.

Week four is a good time to get involved in your community's preparedness efforts. Learn what plans your community has established and volunteer to help if disaster strikes. A trained volunteer force can help a community greatly during a disaster.

Illnesses continue to pop up in Georgia, keeping epidemiologists busy

Illnesses like measles, hepatitis A, and Legionnaires are keeping State and District Epidemiologists busy this year. Vaccination for measles had reduced occurrences of the illness to near extinction in the U.S. However, unvaccinated individuals and travelers within our borders were infected with measles and presented the threat to others. Health officials encourage individuals to make sure they are up-to-date on required and recommended vaccines.

An outbreak of hepatitis A that started in the spring of 2017 has affected certain areas of Georgia. To stop the illness from spreading, Georgia public health began providing hepatitis A vaccinations to those most at risk. Epidemiologists have been tracking cases and keeping up with the progress of district staff as they work to stop the spread of this virus.

The largest Legionnaires outbreak in Georgia occurred this summer at an Atlanta area motel. According to the Georgia Department of Public Health, there were 12 confirmed cases and 61 probable cases. Sadly, the outbreak resulted in one death. Legionnaires is a bacteria that is found naturally in the environment, usually in fresh water systems of large buildings. The bacteria is the source for a type of pneumonia which is treatable with antibiotics, but can cause death in about one in ten people.

Added to diseases, are health problems stemming from opioid addiction and vaping. Public health has been aggressively addressing the opioid crisis with steps like

drug take-back programs, the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, and issuing naloxone to first responders, and other initiatives. In addition, public health has developed a strategic plan for opioid overdose outbreak response and a specific protocol for response.

More than 400 people in the US have now fallen ill due to vaping. While several of those cases are in Georgia, the CDC says it does not know what exactly is causing the illness. The CDC recommends not vaping or using e-cigarettes and not to switch to regular cigarettes.

While all these "in the news" health issues are garnering headlines, epidemiologists and public health practitioners continue to provide surveillance on the typical illnesses seen this time of year like flu, rabies, mosquito borne diseases and others.





Community events allow organizations to share preparedness messages

The District 2 Public Health Emergency Preparedness team is always on the lookout for opportunities to share our message. Participating with our community's responders is a good way to build partnerships with other responders and inform residents about preparing for

disasters. During the year, we participate in several events to share information about preparedness and specifically what public health does during disasters. Here are some recent events that District 2 Emergency Preparedness has participated in throughout the district.



The Annual Gainesville City Employee Health and Safety Fair was held at the Gainesville Civic Center this year. District 2 Public Health Emergency Preparedness staff reminded employees that now is a good time to check their emergency kits or to make one if they haven't done so.



7th Annual INK Preparedness Fair focuses on family preparedness





Hurricane Dorian: 4th year in row storms hit near Labor Day Weekend

Hurricane Dorian proved to be one of the most intense storms in Atlantic Ocean history when it reached a category 5 Hurricane. However, after pummeling the Bahamas, it teased Floridians and Georgians as it turtle crawled up the coastline of both states before wreaking havoc in the Carolinas.

In Georgia, emergency preparations and caution were put into action as the Governor ordered evacuation of the coastal areas. Public health and healthcare coalitions worked hand in hand to move vulnerable patients inland to receiving facilities, and Districts 6 (Augusta), 5-1 (Dublin), 5-2 (Macon), 9-2 (Waycross), and 7 (Columbus)

assisted with shelters to house the evacuees coming from the coast. EP staff, nurses, and environmental health personnel from other districts were deployed to assist at the shelters and the District Operations Centers.

Each day coordination was accomplished through the State Operations Center utilizing WebEOC to keep all partners informed of actions needed, actions taken and resources requested. The Weather Service tracked the storm and provided critical information to help responders make lifesaving decisions. Luckily, high pressure kept the storm from making landfall in Georgia and pushed it to the northwest.

White County Health Forum gives residents chance to learn about community resources

On the evening of September 19, White County residents had the opportunity to learn about health resources available in the county and area. Stefanie Ashlaw, Director - Peach Care for Kids, Lindsey Oliver, Social Worker, White County Schools, and Dave Palmer, District 2 PIO served as panelists for the event.

Moderators for the event were Bill Smith and Dr. Lynn Sibley. After questions from the moderators, attendees were given a time to ask questions of the panelists. There were many good questions and in-depth conversation about services and procedures to access services. Topics discussed included services available at public health departments, mental health services for (White County)

students, how Peach Care works in Georgia and training for disasters in the community and schools.

In addition, it was an opportunity to talk about how emergency preparedness efforts in the community, district and state have improved the ability for agencies to respond to disasters. Often disaster training and exercises are conducted with little disruption to the public and because of this, the public may not be aware of the training and exercises that agencies and organizations participate in. This forum was a good way to inform residents of preparedness activities their community organizations are working on. It also served to let residents know that they can help by preparing for disasters with their families.

7th Annual INK Preparedness Fair focuses on family preparedness



Gainesville Fire Department demonstrated what it is like to be in a building fire with their smokehouse. Hall County EMA brought their Mobile Command Unit to show how they can manage an incident on scene and provide communications for all agencies. Hall County Fire brought a fire truck and their Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) unit for a demonstration.





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