

## Public Health Preparedness



# ARE YOU PREPARED FOR A DISASTER?

The overall goal of the Milam County Public Health Preparedness Program is to engage the public to make preparedness a part of your daily lives. I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of some things that you should know. In an emergency situation, every second counts - that's why it is crucial to have a game plan. If you fail to plan; you plan to fail.

It is important to make sure that the entire family is prepared and informed in the event of a disaster or emergency. You may not always be together when these events take place and should have plans for making sure you are able to contact and find one another. There are a lot of people who believe that this will never happen to them nor their families. But, I am here to tell you that anything is possible. This is why making a plan is very important and volatile in these types of situations.

The first step in making a plan is to meet with your family or household members. Discuss how to prepare and to respond to emergencies that are most likely to happen where you live, learn, work and play. Identify the responsibilities for each member of your household and plan to work together as a team.

The next step is to plan what to do in case you are separated during an emergency. Designate two meeting spots, outside of your home in case of fire or sudden emergency and outside of your neighborhood in case you are asked to evacuate the area. Also, choose an out of area emergency contact person.

Last but not least, plan what to do if you have to evacuate. Decide where you would go and what route you would take to get there. As most of Milam County can recall, when hurricanes Rita and Katrina hit, the highways were crowded and backed up with people who were evacuating from Louisiana and other coastal areas. Always try to plan alternate routes so that you don't run the risk of sitting in traffic and running out of fuel. Plan ahead for your pets as well. Not all hotels or motels are listed as pet-friendly, and there may not be animal shelters along the way or even open.

There are many different potential hazards that face Milam County from train derailments to natural disasters. We hope that this will never happen to us, but it doesn't hurt to have a backup plan just in case. So, in closing, always remember that anything is possible and we should do all that we can to be prepared for anything to happen in an instant.