

1 Press Release

5/3/2007

Contact: Public Safety Dir. Dino Villani, 651.7150,
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Are You Ready Okaloosa?

Ready Okaloosa is a combined effort of the American Red Cross of Northwest Florida, United Way, Okaloosa Walton College, Americorp, Okaloosa County Public Safety and the Sheriff's Office to assist residents with knowledge, preparation and guidance for storms and evacuation. Ready Okaloosa focus consists of the following:

1. **Fridays in May**, Americorp volunteers will man the Okaloosa County Citizens' Information Line, **850.651.7583**, in order to register residents in a database, as well as provide them with information for neighborhood shelters, and flood or evacuation zones. Phones will be manned from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. on Fridays in May.
2. Provide residents with an 11-week step-by-step instruction booklet to prepare for emergencies. Also, these organizations evaluated community needs with current information, and organized vital information in an envelope that can be stored, filed in a safe place at home, or travel with you.
3. Provide Okaloosa County with a more accurate record to track residents before, during and after a storm.

"This is an outreach program to help residents and help us better serve the residents of Okaloosa County, just by acquiring and disseminating information in a state of emergency," stated Director of Public Safety Dino Villani.

Last year, Okaloosa County received a "StormReady" designation from the National Weather Service, making it only the 25th county in the State to achieve this status. Nationwide, only 399 other communities have been designated "StormReady."

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“Ready Okaloosa” just takes it to the next level, and makes us more prepared to plan better, provide education and awareness and ultimately save lives,” added Emergency Management Division Chief Randy McDaniel.

Okaloosa County has a computer based warning system with the ability to call 1,000 homes a minute with emergency information. Okaloosa County Emergency Management also distributes information via broadcast fax as well as radio communications, and all public buildings, including area schools, have been equipped with NOAA weather radios.

“While I hope we don’t need this packet of information anytime soon, this is a phenomenal group effort between American Red Cross of Northwest Florida, United Way, Okaloosa Walton College, Americorp, the Sheriff’s Office and the County for the safety of residents of Okaloosa County,” stated Okaloosa County Commissioner Don Amunds. “We want to hope for the best and prepare for the worst,” he added.

Following Fridays in May phone registration (651-7583), Ready Okaloosa registration will be available online in the near future, as well as a free emergency email notification service in emergency situations. For more information, contact Public Safety at 850.651.7150 or visit www.co.okaloosa.fl.us and select the Public Safety icon on the home page.

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