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OCTOBER 2014

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Museum**



*The pros
share tips on
emergency
planning*

"We assume we're ready or that nothing's going to happen to us, but you really have to be proactive and think for yourself."

MARGUERITE CLAIVEY
Plainville resident

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN EMERGENCY

By Erica Schmitt

FALLEN TREES have littered the street and the electricity is down — there's no telling how soon it will be back on or when the roads will be cleared.

Those who are prepared for emergencies fare much better than those without supplies and a well-thought-out plan. Smack in the middle of the 2014 Hurricane Season and with forecasters predicting a real New England winter ahead of us, local emergency responders decided it was a good time to host Emergency Preparedness Training at the Plainville Senior Center.

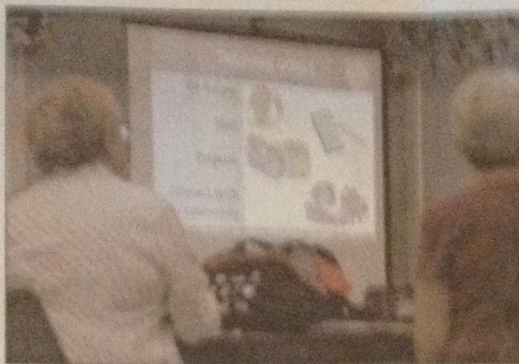
"We've become very complacent," said Marguerite Claivey, a Plainville resident who participated. "We assume we're ready or that nothing's going to happen to us, but you really have to be proactive and think for yourself."

Every area of the country faces different kinds of natural disasters — earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, hurricanes. Our region endures its own — most

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

■ Only call 911 in a real emergency in order to keep the phone lines open during a disaster. Call 911 to be directed to emergency information and services in your community.

■ CT Alert is an emergency notification system that alerts residents on their home telephone or mobile devices. Call 860-920-3337 or visit ct.gov/ctalert to register.

■ Alert your town's Human Services Department if you have developmental or functional needs that may require extra assistance.

recently, Tropical Storm Irene in August 2011, Hurricane Sandy in October 2012 and Winter Storm Nemo in February 2013.

"News stations go overboard a lot of times before a storm and get people all in a panic for no reason," Claivey pointed out. "We have to filter them based on our own experience."

Although course attendance wasn't as high as organizers had hoped, the small group was able to have a productive discussion and all of their questions answered by Allyson Schulz, preparedness coordinator with New Britain Emergency Medical Services.

"Power outages are the most common weather-related emergency," Schulz said, adding that people should always be prepared to be without power for at least a week.

Being prepared means having an evacuation plan and an emergency kit in your home or vehicle with everything you and your loved ones will need for the next seven days, at minimum. If a disaster poses a risk to building structures, officials may ask residents to evacuate their homes. On the other hand emergencies may require people to "shelter in place" — stay inside their homes until it is safe to leave.

Either way, having an emergency kit readily available is important.

This should include the following:

medications, non-perishable food, water, personal hygiene and first aid items, important documents, clothing, batteries, a flashlight, whistle, hand-crank radio, tools, cash and coins.

Other helpful items to have in a ready-to-go bag are shoes, spare keys, duct tape, a sleeping bag, a family photo for identification, hand sanitizer, a gas can, jumper cables, a utility knife, matches, road maps, and trash bags.

"Think of how much less stressed you'll be if you already have those things," Schulz explained. "Letting people know you're OK is huge," she added, pointing out that the elderly should be especially prepared to remain in their homes or evacuate for a prolonged period of time.

Those with a visiting home health aide should take precautions to that individual not being available during a disaster. A close friend, family member or other emergency contact should be notified in such a case.

Also, label wheelchairs, canes, and walkers with your name; teach family members how to operate special medical equipment; and keep medical information on a card in an easy-to-find location.

Families with pets should prepare for them the same way they would any other family member, keeping extra food, medications bowls, and

water on-hand along with veterinary records and don't forget the crate.

"If your dog or cat has never been in a crate you better start practicing now," Schulz said, adding, "Shelters are becoming better equipped to take pets but keep in mind they require animals be crated for the safety of everyone."

Know where your town's shelter is, since it can provide a safe place to shower, sleep and will have emergency supplies on-hand.

Natural weather-related events aren't the only kind of disasters to strike. Disease epidemics, radiation, terrorism and war have wracked our world through history. Generally the same preparedness plan applies and the same supply kit should suffice, but check local television and radio stations for other measures that may need to

be taken. For example, people who live near the Millstone Nuclear Power Station keep potassium iodide in their homes for treatment

of internal radioactive contamination, in case of a chemical disaster.

New Britain EMS is available to host Emergency Preparedness Training for other groups. Those interested should contact Patrick Thurek at (860) 351-0180 or pthurek@nbems.org.

