Weathering It All!

Springtime is here and so is the possibility of severe weather! Thunderstorms can be frequent occurrences here on the South Plains. It is always important to be informed about potential dangers and be prepared.

According to the National Weather Service’s Preparedness Guide: Thunderstorms...Lightning...Nature’s Most Violent Storms, Thunderstorms can produce Tornadoes, Lightning, Strong Winds, Flash Flooding, and Hail.

THUNDERSTORM STATS
- 1,800 thunderstorms occur at any moment around the world, which equates to 16 million a year.
- Tornadoes cause an average of 70 fatalities and 1,500 injuries each year.
- Lightning causes an average of 80 fatalities and 300 injuries each year.
- Strong winds can cause damage equal to a tornado.
- Flash Flooding is the #1 cause of deaths associated with thunderstorms...more than 140 fatalities a year.
- Hail causes more than $1 billion in crop and property damage annually.

Although thunderstorms usually affect relatively small areas at a time, we must remember that all thunderstorms are dangerous.

TORNADO MYTHS & TRUTHS
- MYTH: Areas near lakes, rivers, and mountains are safe.
- TRUTH: No place is safe from tornadoes.
- MYTH: Windows should be opened before a tornado approaches.
- TRUTH: Leave windows alone. The most important thing is to go to a safe shelter.
- MYTH: If you are driving, you should drive at right angles to the storm.
- TRUTH: Don’t remain in your vehicle. Instead, seek the best available shelter.
- MYTH: If caught in the open, seek shelter under highway overpasses.
- TRUTH: Take shelter in a sturdy, reinforced building if at all possible.

LIGHTNING MYTHS & TRUTHS
- MYTH: There is no danger of lightning if it is not raining.
- TRUTH: Lightning often strikes outside of heavy rain areas.
- MYTH: Rubber shoe soles and the rubber tires on a car will protect you from being struck by lightning.
- TRUTH: Rubber soled shoes and rubber tires provide NO protection.

FLASH FLOODING
- Flash Floods and floods are the #1 cause of deaths associated with thunderstorms with more than 140 fatalities each year.
- Most Flash Flood fatalities occur at night and most victims are people who become trapped in automobiles.
- Six inches of fast-moving water can knock you off your feet; a depth of two feet will cause most vehicles to float.

BEING PREPARED
What can you do to be prepared before severe weather strikes?
- Develop a plan for you and your family at home, work, school, or outdoors.
- Identify a safe place to take shelter.
- Practice by having frequent drills.
- Know the area and the county that you live in so you will know if the National Weather Service issues warnings for your area.
- If possible, have a NOAA Weather Radio available to receive warnings or access the NOAA website: www.nws.noaa.gov/wrh/nowpage.html

Listen to radio and television.
- Check the weather forecast before leaving for the outdoors.
- Check on the people you care about.

DISASTER PLANS
It is always wise to be prepared for ANY disaster by developing a family disaster plan. Your family could be anywhere when disaster strikes, so by knowing what to do, you ensure that everyone will have a better chance of being safe.

Steps for Developing a Plan:
- Gather Information about all types of potential hazards. By contacting your local American Red Cross Chapter or National Weather Service, you can obtain valuable information.
- Meet to Create a Plan. Include everyone to discuss what to do in case of an emergency.
- Implement your plan. You put everything into action and most importantly make it clear to everyone.
- Practice and Maintain your plan. Practice ensures that everyone will not miss a beat when an emergency occurs. It is also important to keep your plan updated as things or situations change.

At HSC, we have clear plans in place for severe weather. If you are unsure of the procedures and policies concerning severe weather, please contact the Unit Safety Officer for your department.

For the complete Preparedness Pamphlet, please visit NOAA’s website at: www.spc.noaa.gov/ (Source: NOAA)
A Kit for Disaster: Being Prepared

Preparing for a disaster is an important step in the protection of your family. In addition to developing a plan, it is wise to put together supplies in case of an emergency. You should plan ahead by making a list of everything that should be included in your disaster kit. We tend to think of having a first aid kit as being sufficient, however more should be included. Here is a list of supplies you can consider including when you are preparing your emergency disaster kit......

Sturdy plastic container for supplies

Water— at least three day supply of water for each person in the household

Food— at least three day supply of non-perishable food that does not require refrigeration or cooking and little or no water, such as; canned meats, fruits, and vegetables, canned juices and soups, high energy foods like peanut butter and granola bars, and comfort foods like cookies and hard candy.

First Aid Supplies

Tools and Supplies

- paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils
- battery-operated AM radio
- extra batteries
- flashlight
- non-electric can opener
- ABC fire extinguisher
- whistle
- toilet paper and toilettess
- liquid soap
- feminine supplies

Special Items

- extra eye glasses
- prescription drugs and medications
- baby diapers, food, and formula
- a family picture
- games and books
- copies of insurance policies
- bank account numbers
- inventory of valuables
- family records
- contact lens solution
- denture adhesive

Clothing and Bedding

- One complete change of clothes
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Mylar blankets
- Sturdy shoes
- Warm socks
- Hat and gloves

It is important to remember that you need to take care in storing your supplies. Therefore, always store your supplies in a sturdy container that can withstand potentially harsh conditions. Plastic tubs with handles work great and are easy to carry. Place individual items in plastic bags to protect them from moisture, mildew, or rust. These bags can be reused later for other things. Always make sure that you place your kit in a place that can be easily accessed, no matter what kind of emergency occurs. Essentially, you need to be able to locate and move the kit quickly. It might be advisable to store the supplies in smaller containers, so that each family member can grab something quickly and it won’t be too heavy to move.

Karen J. Humphreys
Education and Training

On April 5, 2006 Samuel Mendoza, Chief Radiology Technologist in El Paso, was “Caught in the Safety Act”. He had just placed a patient on the radiographic table to perform an x-ray and was heading to the control panel when the room became completely dark. He could hear the radiographic tube column extending and knew that it was right above the patient. He found his way to the table and positioned himself over the patient and grabbed the tube column and pushed it to the side. When he felt it was safe to move he went to open the door, at that time the lights came on. He turned and saw the tube column was about 3 feet away from the patient.

Mr. Mendoza’s quick thinking prevented this situation from becoming a serious event to the patient and TTUHSC. The X-Ray unit has been checked and serviced to eliminate this situation from happening in the future.

I want to thank and recognize Mr. Mendoza for his quick thinking that prevented an unsafe situation from becoming worse!

Have you “Caught someone in the Safety Act”? We would like to recognize those people! Please email us a description of what, when, where, and how to:

safety.services@ttuhsc.edu

Jose Melchor
El Paso Safety Services Office
Dust Storm Safety

A dust storm usually arrives suddenly in the form of an advancing wall of dust and debris which may be miles long and several thousand feet high.

Here in West Texas, we sometimes see days and days of blowing dust. Therefore, it is important as motorists, to take action during these storms.

Here are some useful safety tips for dust storms:
- If dense dust is observed blowing across the roadway or visibility is extremely low, it is better to pull completely off the road, away from traffic.
- Do NOT enter a dust storm area if you can avoid it.
- If you have to stay on the road, proceed at a suitable speed for visibility, turn on lights, and sound horn occasionally.
- Use the painted center line to help guide you.

Another consideration during dust or sand storms is the wind speed. Excessive wind speeds or extreme gusting usually accompany the storms.

Therefore, it is important to keep both hands on the wheel at all times and do not become distracted. Your car can literally be swept to the side by major wind currents.

Many people do not consider dust/sand storms as a threatening weather event, but it should be treated as such. It is always good to listen to radio and television for information, warnings, visibility readings, and wind speeds.

(Source: NOAA)

Karen J. Humphreys
Education and Training

Odessa HSC Emergency Codes

It is extremely important for all Odessa employees to be familiar with the emergency code system. Codes will be announced over the public address system. You need to know what the codes for Odessa are:

OPERATION “O”—Denotes a fire, smoke, or the smell of something burning in the area. Follow RA-C-E procedures. Rescue anyone in danger. Activate the fire alarm. Contain the fire by closing doors. Evacuate to designated reassembly area.

CODE WHITE—Severe Weather Watch—The potential of severe weather has been identified. Be alert and follow announcements.

CODE YELLOW—Severe Weather Warning—Severe Weather has been confirmed in the area. Follow all announcements and instructions to seek shelter.

CODE RED—Severe Weather Warning—Tornado, heavy rain, high winds, hail or other weather situation is on collision course for TTUHSC. Go to your designated shelter/refuge area.

CODE GREEN—Bomb Threat—An explosive device has been located in the building. Evacuate to designated reassembly area.

CODE BLUE—Cardio-Respiratory Arrest—Denotes a medical crisis, please call 911 for immediate response by EMS. Involved medical personnel respond immediately.

CODE BROWN—Internal Disaster—Major/minor internal damage to TTUHSC facility that requires relocation or evacuation. If in your area, evacuate to designated reassembly area. If not in your area, return to your work area and wait for additional instructions.

CODE BLACK—External Disaster—The hospital ER expects to receive numerous patients. Assigned personnel respond.

CODE PINK—Infant/Child Abduction—Clear the corridors and report suspicious persons/activity to TTU Police.

CODE ORANGE—Area Evacuation/Hazardous Spill—Listen for notification to evacuate the immediate work area.

EVACUATION—Building evacuation/Imminent Danger—Evacuate immediately to designated reassembly area.

If you need further information regarding codes, evacuation, reassembly, or procedures, please contact your Unit Safety Officer (USO) or Art May at the Odessa Safety Office (432-335-1820).

Karen J. Humphreys
Education and Training

First Aid Supplies
When you have kids, it is a safe bet that you are going to go through a lot of band-aids before they hit their 18th birthday and maybe even some afterwards. It is always a good idea to have a complete First Aid Kit available to treat anything from a scrape to a broken bone.

What should you include in your kit? Actually, there are basic necessities that need to be included, but you can also include extra items that might “fit” your family or your lifestyle better. Many pharmacies and retail stores have pre-made kits available for purchase. You can also purchase small to large kits from many local American Red Cross or online at:

www.redcross.org/store/

FIRST AID KIT
- Assorted sterile adhesive bandages
- Assorted sterile gauze pads
- Rolled gauze bandages
- Large triangular bandages
- Butterfly bandages
- Adhesive tape
- Scissors and tweezers
- Safety pins
- Moistened towelettes
- Bar soap
- Latex gloves
- Aspirin & non-aspirin Pain Reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid
- Insect repellent
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Antibiotic ointment
- Sunscreen
- Needle & Thread
- Plastic bags
- Sanitary pads
- Instant cold packs
- Pocket knife
- Splinting Materials
- It is also a good idea to include several days supply of essential medications that are taken by family members. However, always remember to change out the medication.

Use your calendar to rotate supplies and keep everything fresh. It is important to occasionally replace some supplies, such as latex gloves that break down over time and become ineffective. Use a sturdy and sealed container to store all the supplies. Make sure you keep your kit in an easily accessible place and everyone knows where it is located.

It is also good to consider keeping smaller kits in other areas, such as the car, boat, diaper bag, and kitchen. By having a first aid kit well-stocked and easily accessible, you can possibly save precious seconds when an emergency arises.

Karen J. Humphreys
Education and Training
Meet Jose Melchor!

Jose serves as Safety Manager for the department of Quality Improvement / Health and Safety in El Paso, Texas. He is housed in the new Medical Science Building and works closely with all the Researchers and Lab Techs in addition to serving all Texas Tech departments on safety-related issues.

Jose was born in Artesia, New Mexico but has lived most of his life in El Paso, Texas. Jose graduated from Park University with a Bachelor Degree in Management / Human Resources. He has been in the

Occupational Health and Safety field for seventeen years working for Levi Strauss 24 years, Eureka 5 years and El Paso City-County Health District 2 1/2 years. In his last assignment with the Health District Jose was the Strategic National Stockpile Planner. In this position he was responsible for El Paso City-County planning on dispensing of medications to the public in cases of large-scale natural or man-made disasters.

Jose believes that he will be an asset to the Quality Improvement / Health and Safety Team through his knowledge in Federal, State and City Safety and Environmental Regulations.

Look for our next issue where we will be spotlighting another member of our Safety Services team. Remember, we are here to assist you with your safety needs or just if you want to say hello!