

James K. Joseph
Director

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CONTACTS:
Patti Thompson 217-836-0742 (cell)

IEMA Highlights Emergency Preparedness for People with Access and Functional Needs in May

Ready Illinois website offers preparedness tips for people, caregivers

SPRINGFIELD – Most emergencies occur with little or no warning, such as the flooding currently impacting more than two dozen Illinois communities. While most disasters can't be prevented, the stress of such situations can be reduced significantly through personal preparedness. This is particularly important for households with members who have disabilities, functional needs or may need assistance during an emergency.

Throughout May, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and local emergency management agencies will highlight the importance of disaster preparedness for people with functional and access needs.

“A flood, tornado or ice storm can cause power outages, force people to evacuate their homes or create other dangerous situations for people in the affected communities,” said IEMA Director James K. Joseph. “That’s why we encourage everyone to be prepared, especially those who may have medical, functional or access needs. We have resources that can help people and their caregivers be better prepared for emergencies.”

Joseph said the Ready Illinois website offers a guidebook with preparedness tips for people with visual, cognitive or mobility impairments; people who are deaf or hard of hearing; those who utilize service animals or life support systems; and senior citizens. The guide, *Emergency Preparedness Tips for Those with Functional Needs*, is available at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.

For each functional need, the guidebook provides a list of supplemental items for a disaster kit, tips on developing an emergency plan, suggestions on how to be better informed about community emergency planning and a checklist of preparedness activities.

The Ready Illinois website also offers more than two dozen preparedness videos in American Sign Language on such topics as what to do before, during and after tornadoes, severe thunderstorms and flooding, how to build an emergency supply kit, and what to do if you're instructed to evacuate. The videos were developed in collaboration with the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission.