

For Immediate Release

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National Preparedness Month - America Stands Ready

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages everyone to check their preparedness during September for National Preparedness Month. Cathy Strudle, Emergency Response Coordinator for SWNPHD, says, "Being prepared helps not only yourself but everyone. If you are ready in the event of an emergency, you can recover faster and possibly aid others."

The 2026 Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (HVA) for SWNPHD identified air quality issues, chemical exposures, epidemics, communication failures, and dam failures as the top five hazards posing the greatest relative risk to the district. To be prepared, make a plan, build a kit, and know where you will go in an evacuation.

Make a plan for your household, including your pets, so that you and your family know what to do, where to go, and what you will need to protect yourselves during a disaster. Consider the unique risks where you live and the needs of your family.

Build an emergency kit. [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) has ideas on what to put in your kit for each person in your household. Be sure to include items for family members that have a disability or illness, older adults, children, and any pets. Check it every few months to make sure it is ready to go.

Know where you will go if you need to leave your home and learn your evacuation routes so you can get there safely. Have more than one evacuation route and have a couple of gathering points outside of the area. Take your pets with you if possible, since you may not be able to go back to get them within a few hours.

Have a central person you can all contact if you are separated. That person should be in a safe area and can check off when you and your family members call in and let others know everyone's status.

"It's important to realize that we all have a responsibility to be prepared," says Strudle. "This is especially important because disasters and emergencies can happen at any time, anywhere, and sometimes without warning and you may be the first person to respond and provide help in your neighborhood."

For more information on preparedness visit [Ready.gov/plan](https://www.ready.gov/plan) or call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Follow @swnphd on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube or visit swhealth.ne.gov.

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