

NEWS RELEASE: Nov. 16, 2011

**Emergency response officials urge residents to
prepare now for winter weather and all hazards**

Emergency response officials urge residents to make a kit, make a plan and stay informed now, *before* the next disaster takes place.

Officials shared this message at a news conference today in observance of Winter Weather Awareness Day, Nov. 16, and the approaching six-month anniversary of the Joplin Tornado.

Simple, easy-to-use home disaster preparedness materials are now available at www.greenecountyoem.org, the website for the Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management.

Ryan Nicholls, Director of the Office of Emergency Management, said every resident should print these materials and keep them in their emergency supplies kit.

“Winter weather, tornado, earthquake... We’ve identified all the hazards that could impact Greene County,” said Nicholls. “Basic disaster preparation is the same for all: make a kit with emergency supplies, make a plan to keep in touch with your family if you become separated, and stay informed before, during and after an emergency.”

The materials include a list of supplies needed for an emergency kit, directions on how to stay safe during a variety of events, and a wallet card useful for recording contact information your family would need after a disaster.

Steve Runnels, meteorologist with the National Weather Service said the weather extremes seen this year in southwest Missouri prove that residents need to take responsibility for keeping themselves informed and to heed watches and warnings.

“2011 was horrific: a blizzard, a drought, and in the middle of it, Joplin,” said Runnels, who brought along a weather radio and urged residents to buy them for their homes. “You can program it to go off anytime there’s a watch or warning in your county.”

Joel Alexander, Manager of Communications with City Utilities of Springfield, spoke of the importance of not just staying informed, but letting your utility company know when you’ve lost power.

“Technology has come a long way, but we still need that two-way communication with our customers to know what’s going on in individual households,” said Alexander. The number to call for City Utilities customers is 1-888-663-9001.

Chris Harmon, Director of Emergency Services at the American Red Cross- Greater Ozarks Chapter, spoke about his experience coordinating shelters in Joplin after the

tornado. He said one basic preparation measure would have prevented a lot of anguish for tornado survivors: an out-of state emergency contact.

“Someone you can all call and say, ‘I’m safe, I’m OK, here’s where I am,” said Harmon. “When the power is out and lines are down, families have a hard time getting in touch with one another. An out-of-state contact will bring comfort to your loved ones.”

Basic disaster preparedness materials are ready for download and printing at **www.greenecountyoem.org**. Printed materials are also available through the Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management.

For more information, call the Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management at 417-2-869-6040 or Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Greene County Public Information Office, at 417-829-6019 or 417-224-5510.

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