

?You can't predict an emergency, but you can prepare for one?

Emergency Preparedness Week (EP Week, May 4-10) is a national event coordinated by Public Safety Canada in cooperation with the provinces and territories. Canadians may have a tendency to categorize large scale catastrophes as occurrences far from home; earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes. Over all, we continue to be a "safe" country compared to many of the world's disaster hotspots. But, recent warnings from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) must serve as a reminder that we are not immune to disaster in Ontario, and that changing weather patterns may put us in emergency situations that we are unprepared for as a province, a municipality, and as families and individuals. Environmental and industrial emergencies, such as the 2013 tragedy at Lac-Mégantic are becoming more frequent as corporations push not only the boundaries of technology, but the economic transportation of volatile products and resources. Outside of these large scale disasters, no family is immune to more common and potentially fatal emergencies like floods, fires, tornados, winter blizzards, and threats to drinking water.

According to government studies, two thirds of Canadians have no emergency plans despite the fact that nearly half of all Canadians have experienced at least two different disasters. We live our lives like an insurance company makes money - we gamble against disaster occurring. EP Week reminds us that we are all vulnerable, but not powerless. Government websites and agencies, like the Red Cross, support emergency preparedness with valuable information and resources, promoting their motto, "You can't predict an emergency, but you can prepare for one."

Know the risks in your community - what types of disasters are most likely to occur. Make a plan that includes: - The best way to evacuate your home in an emergency - An alternate evacuation route - Know your community's evacuation plan - Have an out of town emergency contact Make or buy an emergency kit (available through the Red Cross) good for 3 days and pack it in a back pack or bag that is quick to grab and easy to carry. Include: - Water, dried or canned food, can opener, flash light, extra batteries, battery powered radio, house and car keys, First Aid, cash, matches, candles, medications, hygiene items, copies of important family documents, plastic sheeting, scissors or knife, whistle, hand sanitizer, basic tools, duct tape, sleeping bag or blanket.

Hydro One crews restored power to over 2.5 million customers due to the snow storms of the past winter. They also encourage families to be prepared for future outages by packing a 72 hour emergency kit. They also suggest having a least one corded phone in your home as cordless phones will not work in a power outage.

For more help on how to prepare your family for an emergency or disaster situation visit Public Safety Canada's "Get Prepared" step-by step on line guide: www.getprepared.gc.ca

By Marni Walsh