

FAQs

Commonly asked questions and answers about National Preparedness Month (NPM) and the America's PrepareAthon! (AP!) campaign

1. What National Preparedness Month?

Disasters can strike anywhere and at anytime. National Preparedness Month (NPM)—observed every September by Presidential Proclamation—serves as a reminder that everyone must take action to prepare for the types of emergencies that can affect each of us. Sponsored by the Ready Campaign, National Preparedness Month is promoting “Don't Wait. Communicate. Make Your Emergency Plan Today” as its theme. On September 1, President Obama will proclaim September 2015 as National Preparedness Month.

Launched in February 2003, Ready is a national public service advertising (PSA) campaign designed to educate and empower the people of the United States to prepare for and respond to emergencies including natural and man-made disasters. The goal of the campaign is to get the public involved and ultimately to increase the level of basic preparedness across the Nation. Additional information is available at www.ready.gov.

2. What is the America's PrepareAthon! campaign?

The America's PrepareAthon! campaign is a national campaign of action to increase preparedness and resilience through awareness of the hazards that threaten our communities and to increase the practice of preparedness actions to minimize our vulnerabilities to disasters and emergencies. The goal of the campaign is to increase the number of individuals who: understand which disasters could happen in their community; know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage; and take action to increase their preparedness. National Preparedness Month will culminate with the National PrepareAthon! Day on September 30.

America's PrepareAthon! provides instructions for preparedness discussions, simple drills, and exercises for a range of disasters that will help people:

- Understand which disasters could happen in their community;
- Know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage;
- Take action to increase their preparedness; and
- Participate in community resilience planning.

America's PrepareAthon! is coordinated by FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness Division in collaboration with Federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial governments, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations at all levels. The AP! campaign encourages individuals, organizations, emergency managers, first responders, and communities to take action and practice simple steps to increase preparedness throughout the year. AP! provides action-oriented guidance for individuals and organizations to practice the necessary steps to stay safe during a disaster or emergency; learn about mitigation measures; and understand community plans, including alerts and warnings, evacuation, and sheltering. More information is available at www.ready.gov/prepare.

3. What is the relationship between NPM and AP!?

September is significant for national preparedness, as two FEMA outreach campaigns combine efforts, utilizing the same overarching theme, as well as weekly hazard-specific themes. NPM and AP! campaigns work hand-in-hand to promote national preparedness.

By presidential proclamation, September is designated National Preparedness Month, led by FEMA's Ready Program, which is an information-awareness driven campaign that promotes four universal building blocks of preparedness—Be Informed, Make a Plan, Build a Kit, and Get Involved. America's PrepareAthon!, led by FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness Division, builds on this awareness to motivate action—and encourages individuals and organizations to take simple, specific actions to increase their preparedness for a potential local disaster. Both FEMA campaigns are year-round efforts, but September is significant as the annual capstone event for the Ready Program, and both April and September are key months in AP! that culminate in National PrepareAthon! Days on the last days of those months.

4. Why is preparedness important to the Department of Defense?

We pride ourselves on our ability to defend the Nation. To that effect, safeguarding U.S. security depends on ensuring the strength and readiness of our 3.2 million-strong workforce by preparing ourselves, both as individuals and as an organization, for natural and man-made hazards. Our Service members, civilians and contractors, and installations must be prepared for disasters and emergencies. Each of us has an important role to play in bolstering our preparedness for hazards of all types to strengthen our collective security and resilience.

Preparedness is important to the Department to ensure the well-being and safety of members of our workforce and their families--a top priority of the Department.ⁱ The preparedness of the families of the DoD workforce and the preparedness of our local communities are closely linked to the Department's preparedness. If our personnel are not prepared, if family members are not prepared, and if our communities are not prepared, DoD will find it challenging to perform its missions during and after a large-scale disaster or emergency. Approximately 65 percent of active duty Service members live outside of military installationsⁱⁱ; and most significant incidents transcend physical boundaries that separate an installation from its local community. Ultimately, our readiness and preparedness are critical components to the United States remaining strong and resilient.

5. Why does DoD participate in national preparedness campaigns?

Presidential Policy Directive – 8, *National Preparedness*, directs the Secretary of Homeland Security, who directs the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to coordinate a comprehensive campaign to build and sustain national preparedness, including public outreach and community-based and private-sector programs to enhance national resilience, and preparedness efforts by the Federal Government. All executive departments with roles in prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery are responsible for national preparedness efforts.

DoD participation in awareness and outreach campaigns strengthens efforts to foster a culture of preparedness within the Department by ensuring the DoD workforce, including families, is prepared when a disaster or emergency strikes.

National preparedness campaigns provide a recurring opportunity to take action before a crisis. These preparedness campaigns highlight the important role each of us has to play in bolstering our preparedness for all hazards—from flooding to an active shooter—to ensure the strength of our workforce and the Department’s ability to continue to safeguard U.S. security. National preparedness campaigns also enhance partnerships with other Federal departments and agencies on individual preparedness topics of common interest, increase collaboration among DoD Components, and encourage community preparedness.

6. How should our Service members, civilian employees, and installations participate in NPM and AP!?

To help ensure that we are prepared for the types of disasters and emergencies we may encounter, all DoD Components are requested to participate in the September 2015 National Preparedness Month and America's PrepareAthon! campaign.

Overarching Theme: “Don’t Wait. Communicate. Make Your Emergency Plan Today.” Throughout the month, the emphasis is on emergency communication planning, including planning for evacuation or staying in place and developing a family emergency communication plan.

Weekly Hazard-Specific Themes: Continued focus on emergency planning messaging.

- Week 1 (September 1-5): Flood
- Week 2 (September 6-12): Wildfire
- Week 3 (September 13-19): Hurricane
- Week 4 (September 20-26): Power Outage
- Week 5 (September 27-30): Lead up to National PrepareAthon! Day

DoD Components are encouraged to emphasize and promote actions associated with NPM and AP! weekly themes. For regions not affected by particular themed hazards, Components are encouraged to focus on local man-made or natural hazards.

Participation is encouraged in any of several ways: leadership engagement and preparedness outreach activities; partnership and collaboration with stakeholders; and promotion of NPM and AP! through social media and communications channels.

- **Leadership Engagement and Preparedness Outreach Activities:** Engage your principals to promote NPM and AP! activities such as internal correspondence, speaking opportunities, or public service announcements. Hold a preparedness discussion, drill, or exercise; host a preparedness fair or booth to promote action-oriented activities; or write an article in a newsletter. Choose actions and activities to promote preparedness among individuals and organizationally, such as:
 - Develop and test emergency communications plans.
 - Sign up for local alerts and warnings, or download emergency-oriented applications.
 - Assemble or update emergency supplies.

- Learn about local hazards and conduct a drill to practice emergency response actions.
- Hold a scenario-based continuity of operations tabletop exercise for your organization. Participate in a preparedness discussion, training, or class.
- Collect and safeguard critical documents.
- Document property and obtain appropriate insurance for relevant hazards.
- Make property improvements to reduce potential injury and mitigate property damage.
- Plan with neighbors to help each other and share resources.
- Partner and Collaborate with Stakeholders: Reach out to internal and external stakeholders to collaborate or partner on preparedness activities to strengthen your campaign.
- Promote NPM and AP! Through Social Media and Communications Channels: Use your social media and communications channels such as websites, newsletters, Facebook, or Twitter to reach your workforce, their family, and community to promote preparedness activities and resources.
- Be Counted: Complete the online DoD NPM and AP! After Action Questionnaire at www.defense.gov/prepare to have your participation be part of a final DoD activities report; and register your events and participation with FEMA at www.ready.gov/prepare.

Find more information in Deputy Security of Defense Robert Work's signed memorandum and planning guide, "DoD Participation in National Preparedness Month," August 21, 2015, at www.defense.gov/prepare.

7. What resources are available and how do I find them?

Defense and Service-related preparedness information and tools are available at www.defense.gov/prepare.

America PrepareAthon! has many hazard-based preparedness resources available at <http://www.community.fema.gov/take-action/hazards>, as well as AP! customizable campaign tools that can be found under "National Creative Resources" at <http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/9769>, which include customizable posters, participation certificates, and web badges. Many of these tools and resources are available in Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, French, Japanese, and Tagalog at <http://www.community.fema.gov/node/204>. Logo Usage Guidelines, which inform participants on how to use and customize the brand, are available at www.ready.gov/prepare.

Resources and information on National Preparedness Month, including the FEMA NPM Digital Media Guide and NPM logo are available at <http://www.ready.gov/september>. The guide provides valuable tools and information, such as sample Tweets and Facebook posts, web resources, and weekly-themed tips and tools to share.

8. Does my activity or event need to be called PrepareAthon?

While this is not a requirement, connecting your preparedness efforts to the national AP! campaign allows you to leverage national messaging and ensures that you are counted with

others around the country who are contributing to our progress toward building a more resilient Nation. Connecting to the AP! campaign can be as simple as mentioning America's PrepareAthon! in messaging, putting the logo on a website, and/or using PrepareAthon! in the title of an event. The PrepareAthon logo helps to promote and connect your activity with the national effort, but need not supersede Service, Component, or program logos.

9. How does my participation count?

Be counted by completing the online DoD NPM and AP! After Action Questionnaire at www.defense.gov/prepare to have your participation be part of a final DoD activities report to the DepSecDef and White House. Join the millions who have registered their America's PrepareAthon! participation and events with FEMA at www.ready.gov/prepare.

10. What is the research and findings FEMA is using to support taking action?

Disaster Facts

- Extreme weather events have increased in frequency in the past 50 years and are expected to become even more common, more intense, and more costly.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Between 1900 and 2014, the United States experienced 38 earthquakes, 166 floods, and 568 storms (including tropical cyclones).^{iv}
- In 2012, the United States was struck by 936 tornadoes, causing about \$1.6 billion in damages.^v
- In 2013, there were more than 440 weather-related fatalities and nearly 2,800 injuries.^{vi}

The Cost of Being Unprepared

- In 2013, deadly weather caused more than \$8 billion in property damage.^{vii}
- According to the Insurance Information Institute, an estimated 25 percent of all businesses affected by a major disaster never reopen.^{viii}
- Failure to prepare for extreme weather events has cost the United States \$1.15 trillion in economic losses from 1980 to 2010 and could cost another trillion dollars in coming years.^{ix}

Key Survey Research Findings

- Despite an increase in weather-related disasters, the 2012 FEMA National Survey found that only 39 percent of respondents have developed and discussed an emergency plan with their household.^x
- A recent report by the National Academies found that annual Federal spending on disasters jumped from \$20.9 million in 1953 to a staggering \$1.4 billion in 2009.^{xi} This spending increase comes at a time when many individuals believe there is an increased chance of a disaster affecting them in the future, yet most people still remain unprepared for them.^{xii}
- Most Americans presume that certain groups of people, such as health care workers, are more prepared at home for a disaster. However, a study of U.S. health care workers found that 75 percent were either "minimally prepared" or "not prepared."^{xiii}
- A 2011 FEMA study on disaster and earthquake preparedness recommended that a focus be placed on outreach efforts that are "locally relevant and hazard-specific."^{xiv}

- Drills, exercises, and trainings are key tools that help the brain acquire skills that enable individuals to better overcome shock and support crisis response.^{xv}
- An increase in awareness of the disasters most relevant to their community is shown to prompt people to take preparedness actions.^{xvi}
- Collective action promotes and provides opportunities for peer-to-peer discussions within and across community networks. Peer-to-peer discussions about disaster preparedness have been shown to be linked to motivation to the act.^{xvii}

i Carter Takes Helm as 25th Secretary of Defense, DoD News, Defense Media Activity, February 17, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.defense.gov/News/Article/604122>

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iv Number of national disasters in the United States from 1900 to 2014 by type. (2014). Statista. Retrieved from www.statista.com/statistics/236504/number-of-natural-disasters-in-the-us-by-type.

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vi National Weather Service. (2014, July 22). *Summary of natural hazard statistics for 2013 in the United States*. Retrieved from www.nws.noaa.gov/om/hazstats/sum13.pdf.

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viii Insurance Information Institute. (2013, October 3). *Insurance lessons learned from Sandy: Steps to keep your business running following a disaster*. Retrieved from www.iii.org/press_releases/insurance-lessons-learned-from-sandy-steps-to-keep-your-business-running-following-a-disaster.html

ix U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2014, February 12). Extreme weather events: The costs of not being prepared. Testimony before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Senate, 113th Cong.

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xiv Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2012). *2011 FEMA Central States Disaster and Earthquake Preparedness Survey report*. Retrieved from www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=6403.

xv Shiwaku, K., & Shaw, R. (2008). Proactive co-learning: A new paradigm in disaster education. *Disaster Prevention and Management*, 17(2), 183–198.

xvi Simpson, D. M., & Sephton, S. E. (1998). Citizen participation, social support, and disaster preparedness planning: Promoting self-protection action in risk-prone environments. Working Paper No. 53-P, Texas A&M University: Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center.

xvii Federal Emergency Management Agency & American Red Cross. (2013). *Summary report on awareness to action: A workshop on motivating the public to prepare*. Retrieved from www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=7124.