

Be Prepared, Not Scared

In California, fall brings a hint of cooler weather, but also the peak fire season. This makes October the perfect time to review emergency preparedness procedures. In September, National Preparedness Month, several federal agencies provided guidelines and resources through the website Ready.gov to help every citizen to be prepared for an emergency. The central theme of this year's messaging is "Be Prepared, Not Scared." One suggestion is to use "fall forward" clock setting on November 3, 2019 as a prompt to review preparedness plans and refresh emergency kits. As Volunteers in Policing (ViPs), we aim to assist our first responders as they support our community's safety. Sign up for one of the many opportunities in the ViP office, where through our presence, we are a reminder that the Woodland Police Department (WPD) puts the safety of its citizens first. We can also share the message that in an emergency, if the entire community is prepared, we are all helping the WPD and Woodland Fire Department (WFD) to protect our community.



Share the message that surviving a house fire depends as much on having a working smoke detector and an exit strategy, as on our well-trained WPD and WFD. The same is true for surviving an earthquake or other emergency. We must have the tools and plans in place to make it on our own, at least for a period of time, no matter where we are when disaster strikes.



Preparing for the unexpected makes sense and actually gives all citizens the opportunity to be the *first* responder, which aids our WPD officers. Detailed guidelines to prepare for disasters, including wildfires and earthquakes, are available on the Yolo County Emergency Preparedness

Resources website (YoloCounty.org). Some of the main points are:

1. Prepare Your Home

- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home and replace the batteries every six months.
- Store heavy items on the lowest shelves to avoid damage if they fall.
- Secure pictures and wall hangings and use restraints to secure heavy items such as bookcases and file cabinets.
- Keep fire extinguishers and know how and when to use them.

- Strap down the water heater and fit all gas appliances with a flexible gas supply line.
 - Store flammable or highly reactive chemicals (such as bleach, ammonia, paint thinners) securely and separated from each other.
 - Know how and when to switch off your utilities.
 - Ensure that all window safety bars have emergency releases.
 - Be sure your house number is visible from the street so emergency vehicles can find you.
2. Make a Plan
- Create a household emergency plan and distribute it to each household member.
 - Teach each member of your family how to use a fire extinguisher.
 - Make sure everyone knows where to find your disaster supply kit and Go-bags (see the YoloCounty.org website for Go-bags guidelines).
 - Create emergency response cards for each of your family members.
 - Take into account the special needs of children, seniors or people with disabilities, family members who don't speak English and pets.
 - Talk to your children about how to be ready for a disaster with age appropriate tools.
 - Determine the best escape routes from your home. Try to identify two escape routes.
 - Plan where to meet after a disaster if your home becomes unsafe.
 - Practice your evacuation routes and drills, such as Stop, Drop & Roll.
3. Build an Emergency Kit
- Experts recommend that you should be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least three days.
 - Store your household disaster kit in an easily accessible location.
 - Put contents in a large, watertight container (e.g. a large plastic garbage can with a lid and wheels) that you can move easily.
 - Refresh the contents of the kit every six months.

Yolo County also provides an emergency alert system. You can receive messages by text. Register for the service at Yolo-Alert.org and encourage others to do the same. As ViPs, we can help the first responders by sharing this message with the community when we are out on patrol, working at the front desk, or supporting the many WPD community activities in the coming months. For Halloween, Be Prepared, Not Scared.