

## **Most Wisconsin residents unprepared if disaster strikes**

A severe winter storm sweeps across the state making driving conditions treacherous and causing long-term power outages. An explosion at a chemical plant requires the evacuation of nearby residents. A fire, tornado, or a bomb causes buildings to collapse.

Would you be prepared to respond to these kinds of emergencies?

Likely no, according to a survey conducted to gauge public preparedness, released December 2009.

The survey found that 80% of Wisconsin residents had not taken basic emergency precautions—such as making a kit of emergency supplies—and would not be prepared to respond if an emergency or disaster strikes.

The survey was commissioned by Wisconsin Emergency Management and the Office of Justice Assistance and conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center.

Survey questions aimed to assess residents' familiarity with emergency awareness messages, personal steps taken to prepare for potential emergencies, and first aid training or volunteering to support local emergency responders.

Individual and family emergency preparedness was assessed by age group, household income level, education level, geography (urban, suburban, rural), and by state region.

The survey provides a baseline measurement of Wisconsin residents' emergency preparedness, against which the success of future emergency awareness campaigns can be measured. Survey results highlight the need for such a campaign. Major survey findings include:

- Overall, 80% of respondents had not taken steps to prepare for an emergency—like preparing a home disaster kit, a communication plan, or setting an established meeting place.
- More than 60% of respondents could not locate the emergency broadcast channel on the radio.
- Suburban dwellers are the least likely to have taken emergency preparation steps (82% had not)
- Respondents with a household income of more than \$80,000 were generally the least likely to be prepared for an emergency (55%), but most likely to have taken first aid training.
- Younger respondents were the most likely to have taken first aid courses, volunteered in response to an emergency (23%), and taken steps to plan (established a meeting place etc.) for an emergency (29%)

- Respondents who had heard or seen an emergency preparedness message were twice as likely to have taken emergency precautions than respondents who had not.
- Respondents who indicated that they had volunteered in emergency situations were three times as likely to have prepared a home emergency kit and have made a family plan to communicate during an emergency.

Additional statistics on emergency preparedness data are examined by region below.

"We need to make sure Wisconsin citizens are ready for the unexpected—whether it is a flood, tornado or a fire," said Ed Wall, Wisconsin Emergency Management Administrator. "That's why it is important for everyone to build an emergency kit, have an emergency plan and stay informed."

"This survey highlights the need for allocating resources for community preparedness," said Dave Steingraber, Office of Justice Assistance Executive Director. "Investing in programs like Ready Wisconsin will help the state move towards achieving greater citizen awareness and preparedness."

The *ReadyWisconsin* initiative—administered by Wisconsin Emergency Management—aims to help Wisconsinites prepare for and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters and technological emergencies (hazardous material spills, radiation events, cyber security, as well as terrorist attacks). Learn more about simple steps residents can take at <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov>.

Funding for *ReadyWisconsin* is provided by US Department of Homeland Security grants administered by the Office of Justice Assistance.

### ***Basic Emergency supply checklist***

When disaster strikes, immediate help may not be available. Every household should have an emergency kit with enough supplies to see you through three days following a natural disaster or technological emergency (hazardous material spill, radiation event, cyber security, terrorist attack etc.). Go to <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov> for more tips on preparing for emergencies.

Minimally, every emergency kit should include the following (additional items may be necessary for babies, older Americans, persons with special needs, and pets).

- Water (3 gallons per person for drinking and sanitation)
- Food that does not need electricity for storage or preparation
- Manual can opener (if kit contains canned food)
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards and a commercial radio or hand crank radio
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- First aid kit and emergency medical reference manual
- Prescription medications and eyewear
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, paper towels, moist towelettes, garbage bags and ties
- Complete change of clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, socks and sturdy shoes

## **Emergency preparedness survey results by region**

### **Northwest region**

*(Counties in this region: Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Polk, Rusk, Sawyer, Washburn)*

- 27% of respondents—the lowest in the state—had seen or heard an emergency awareness message
- 30% of respondents had put together a disaster kit or taken other personal emergency preparedness steps; Northwest respondents were the most prepared in the state.
- 9% of respondents had volunteered within the past year; the lowest percentage in the state

### **Northeast Region**

*(Counties in this region: Florence, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marinette, Menominee, Oconto, Oneida, Portage, Shawano, Vilas, Wood)*

- 47% of respondents—the highest in the state—had seen or heard an emergency awareness message
- 20% of respondents had put together a disaster kit or taken other personal emergency preparedness steps
- 13% of respondents had volunteered within the past year;

### **East Central Region**

*(Counties in this region: Brown, Calumet, Dodge, Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marquette, Outagamie, Sheboygan, Winnebago, Waushara)*

- 47% of respondents—the highest in the state—had seen or heard an emergency awareness message
- 20% of respondents had put together a disaster kit or taken other personal emergency preparedness steps
- 16% of respondents had volunteered within the past year

### **West Central Region**

*(Counties in this region: Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, St. Croix, Taylor, Trempealeau)*

- 42% of respondents had seen or heard an emergency awareness message
- 18% of respondents had put together a disaster kit or taken other personal emergency preparedness steps; West Central respondents were the least prepared in the state.
- 15% of respondents had volunteered within the past year

### **Southwest Region**

*(Counties in this region: Adams, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Vernon, Richland, Sauk, Juneau, Rock)*

- 39% of respondents had seen or heard an emergency awareness message
- 23% of respondents had put together a disaster kit or taken other personal emergency preparedness steps
- 18% of respondents had volunteered within the past year; the highest percentage in the state

### **Southeast region**

*(Counties in this region: Jefferson, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha)*

- 39% of respondents had seen or heard an emergency awareness message
- 22% of respondents had put together a disaster kit or taken other personal emergency preparedness steps
- 13% of respondents had volunteered within the past year