



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
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INFORMATIONAL COLUMN

**WISCONSIN REVIEWS ITS PREPAREDNESS PLANS**

Like most of you, I will always remember the devastating effects left by the tornado that moved through Dane County and, more recently, the destruction left from the numerous hurricanes in the southern United States. They are a sudden and bold reminder that life-altering events (both natural and man-made) can happen anywhere. Even with excellent advance weather warning systems, a storm can be unpredictable because so many variables are out of our control. We can, however, learn from these storms and review our emergency strategic plans to better prepare ourselves for the next weather emergency.

Following any type of disaster, it is very important to reassess local and statewide planning efforts. Recently, Governor Jim Doyle directed Major General Al Wilkening (Wisconsin's Adjutant General and Homeland Security Advisor) to conduct a review of Wisconsin's preparedness plans. This comprehensive report, due in early October, will focus on the lessons that Wisconsin can learn from previous disasters. We need to make sure we have adequate resources to deal with any type of tragedy and assess how Wisconsin can use technological advances to better prepare ourselves for any emergency situation. Adequate planning, funding, and comprehensive coordination efforts between all units of governments are critical when disaster strikes.

Wisconsin's Emergency Management's central office is located right here in Madison and there are six additional regional offices providing local support statewide. All 72 counties are required to have specific emergency operation plans which are updated annually. These county emergency proposals, based on hazard analysis data, work in conjunction with state and federal agencies as well as volunteer and private sector partners. They are prepared to offer disaster response and recovery; hazardous materials and radiological emergency evacuation and clean-up; warning and communication systems and critical emergency police, fire and health care services. Necessary instruction and planning exercises for staff and volunteer emergency responders has and will continue to take place. In 2004, 5,016 people statewide participated in 71 different hazardous-training exercises. Since 9-11, local and state

agencies in Wisconsin have participated in 255 exercises to test their emergency plans which included more than 17,000 trained responders.

The Wisconsin Emergency Management Office operates around-the-clock. In the event that something happens anywhere in the state, this office is notified by local officials and the necessary assistance will be dispatched to the affected area.

While Wisconsin's emergency systems have been very effective, we can always learn new and innovative ways to plan for any type of natural or man-made situation. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a trained disaster volunteer, contact the Red Cross Badger Chapter at 233-1257 or the Wisconsin Emergency Management's Community Emergency Response Team Training Office at 242-3222.

Working together is our best defense.

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