

## Emergency Manager's Efforts in Hard-Hit Texas Area Ensure Community Readiness

Buna, TX – For more than three decades, Emergency Management Coordinator and Floodplain Administrator Billy Ted Smith has taken a proactive approach to engaging the communities he serves in preparing for when disaster strikes.

With good reason. Since 1973, according to Smith, Texas has had 72 major disaster declarations. The three counties he serves—Jasper, Newton, and Sabine—have seen more than their fair share of hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, and floods, as well as tropical and winter storms.

“Preparedness is our goal,” reads the mission statement of the Jasper/Newton/Sabine County Emergency Management Agency. “Don't wait until the forecast is threatening— take the time now to identify the evacuation routes in your community, as well as the designated shelters in your area. Be sure your hurricane kit is fully stocked and develop a disaster plan with your family. Let's work together to make sure that regardless of what happens, our community is prepared and ready to face any challenges that may come its way.”

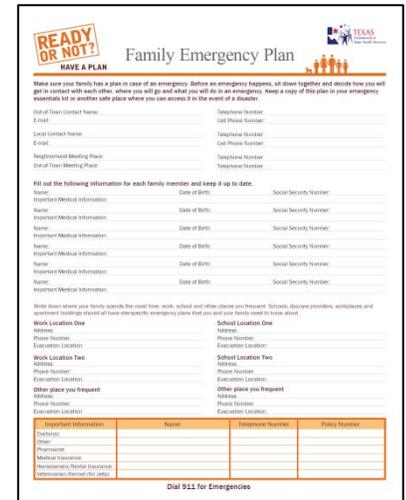
Smith's 35 years of experience as an emergency management coordinator and 25 years as a floodplain administrator have provided him with a wealth of knowledge regarding emergency preparedness. A big part of his job in Buna, located in Jasper County, is to share that knowledge.

“Most of the time, I'm in the field alone promoting education and conducting outreach activities,” said Smith. “I promote emergency preparedness at town hall meetings, the Women's Civic Club, the Lion's Club, schools and any other organization that invites me.”

What does Smith talk about? Everything from identifying hazards common to the area, knowing the risks, making an emergency supply kit, developing an emergency plan, becoming familiar with evacuation routes, heeding warnings and purchasing radios.

Smith also encourages homeowners to find out if they live in a floodplain. Some of the worst natural disasters in history—measured by fatalities—have been river floods. “It is always important to know whether the area you live in is within or near a floodplain,” he said.

Smith recommends residents purchase a battery-powered or hand-cranked emergency radio approved by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “Emergencies and disasters can cause disruptions in communications systems such as telephones and internet connection. Public information outlets can become unavailable. That's why owning a radio that is able to autonomously work for extended periods of time is extremely important, as they help citizens to stay aware of the situation,” said Smith.



**READY OR NOT? HAVE A PLAN** Family Emergency Plan

Make sure your family has a plan in case of an emergency. Before an emergency happens, sit down together and decide how you will get in contact with each other, where you will go and what you will do in an emergency. Keep a copy of this plan in your emergency kit or another safe place where you can access it in the event of a disaster.

Out of Town Contact Name: Telephone Number  
 E-mail: Cell Phone Number

Local Contact Name: Telephone Number  
 E-mail: Cell Phone Number

Neighborhood Meeting Place: Telephone Number  
 Out of Town Meeting Place: Telephone Number

Fill out the following information for each family member and keep it up to date.

Name	Date of Birth	Social Security Number
Emergency Medical Information		
Name	Date of Birth	Social Security Number
Emergency Medical Information		
Name	Date of Birth	Social Security Number
Emergency Medical Information		
Name	Date of Birth	Social Security Number
Emergency Medical Information		
Name	Date of Birth	Social Security Number
Emergency Medical Information		

Write down where your family spends the most time: work, school and other places you frequent. Schools, daycare providers, workplaces and universities (college) should all have emergency plans that you and your family need to know about.

Work Location One: School Location One  
 Address: Address  
 Phone Number: Phone Number  
 Evacuation Location: Evacuation Location

Work Location Two: School Location Two  
 Address: Address  
 Phone Number: Phone Number  
 Evacuation Location: Evacuation Location

Other places you frequent: Evacuation Location  
 Address: Address  
 Phone Number: Phone Number  
 Evacuation Location: Evacuation Location

Evacuation Location	Name	Telephone Number	Priority Number

Dial 911 for Emergencies

**Families are encouraged to complete a “Family Emergency Plan.”**



**Are You READY!**

Some disasters strike without any warning. Have you thought about those supplies you'll need the most? They will usually be the hardest to come by. Enlist your children to help gather supplies for your family's emergency kit. It's taking you a moment of effort, and you'll feel a feeling of empowerment.

Make sure you have enough supplies to last for at least three days. Think about where you live and your needs. Consider having a large kit at home, and smaller portable kit in the car or your workplace.

**If a big storm is coming...**

- Fill your car with gas
- Fill plastic bags with water and place them in the freezer
- Get extra cash-out of the bank
- Fill prescriptions

**Emergency Supplies List**

- 3-day supply of non-perishable food (instant hot, canned tuna fish, peanut butter, etc.)
- Cash on hand
- Paper plates, plastic cups and utensils, paper towels
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Water - at least a gallon per person per day for drinking and hygiene
- First aid kit
- Prescription medication and glasses
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for everyone in your family
- Change of clothes to last for at least 3 days, including sturdy shoes (consider the weather where you live)
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Toiletries, toothbrush, soap and other personal items
- Handing hygiene supplies
- Fire extinguisher
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Dust mask, and plastic sheeting and duct tape, to help seal containers and air
- Battery-powered or hand-cranked radio and extra batteries
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Cell phone with charger, extra battery and solar charger
- Whistle to signal for help
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper (when diluted with water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Do in an emergency you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleach with added cleaners)
- Local maps
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Emergency reference material such as first aid book or information from www.ready.gov
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, ID, and bank records in a waterproof, portable container
- Kit supplies
- Infant formula and diapers
- Paper and pencil
- Blank, games or puzzles (let your kids pick these out themselves)
- Your child's favorite stuffed animal or security blanket
- The food and extra water for your pet

**Don't forget to think about infants, elderly, pets, or any family members with special needs!**

**BE A HERO!** <http://www.ready.gov/kids>

**“Are You Ready” is an emergency checklist designed to help parents prepare for emergencies.**

The tri-county agency uses the Blackboard Mass Notification system for its emergency alerts. Smith does not miss an opportunity to acquaint citizens with the importance of registering to use the system.

“The system is used to supplement our current communications plans and augment public safety and first responder services,” said Smith.

When Smith is not driving to designated locations to promote emergency preparedness, he relies on social media and the tri-county’s website.

“We have Facebook and Twitter accounts. I know that it works. Folks are into social media and they are getting the message,” said Smith. “It’s nothing for us to average 10,000 to 12,000 hits on Facebook. During the 2016 flooding, we had 55,000.”

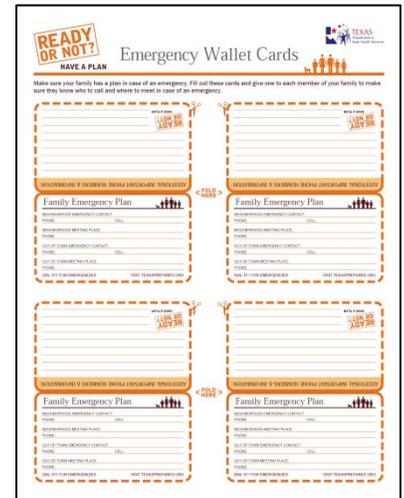
Smith promotes other public resources such as the Disaster Center and the Texas Disaster Tracking Website. Disaster Center is a database of websites and links to help residents prepare for a disaster, remain alert during one and recover after; the Texas Disaster Tracking Website tracks any statewide disaster in real time. The site also provides links to promote awareness of hurricane and tornado season.

Smith also participates in the National Weather Service’s Storm Ready Program aimed at arming communities with the communication and safety skills necessary to save lives and property. It is a voluntary program and is offered to provide guidance and incentive to officials who want to improve their respective hazardous weather operations. The program encourages communities to take a proactive approach to improve local hazardous weather operations and public awareness. It also helps communities attain a new level of preparedness and mitigation awareness for extreme weather-related events.

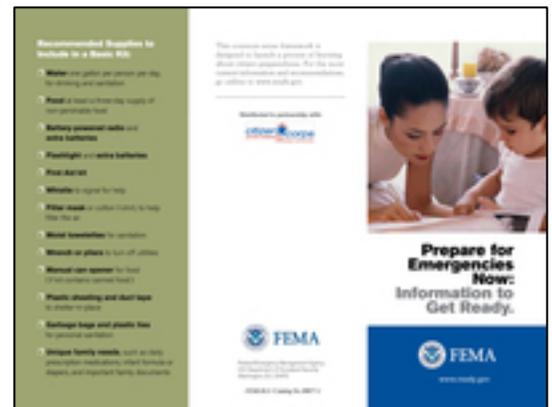
“The best defense against an emergency is being prepared. It is important that you plan in advance to ensure your safety year-round against all potential hazards,” said Smith. “Should a disaster strike any of our communities, the Jasper/Newton/Sabine County Emergency Management website is our citizens’ resource for up-to-date, critical information.”

For additional information, visit:

[fema-publications-warehouse@fema.gov](mailto:fema-publications-warehouse@fema.gov) and [co.jasper.tx.us/default.aspx?Jasper\\_County/EmergencyMGMT](http://co.jasper.tx.us/default.aspx?Jasper_County/EmergencyMGMT).



**Citizens are urged to carry Emergency Wallet cards on their person at all times.**



**“Prepare for Emergencies Now” is a FEMA publication that Smith uses as a handout.**