

## September is San Juan County Disaster Preparedness Month



While emergency preparedness is a year round responsibility for all islanders, the San Juan County Council recently proclaimed September as “Preparedness Month” in San Juan County.

“This is an opportunity to remind everyone who spends time in the islands that many of the things we love most about being here also require us to be especially well prepared for our inevitable emergencies and natural disasters,” said County Council Member Rick Hughes.

The primary focus for emergency preparedness in the islands should be a two week supply of food and water (including for our pets), followed closely by a 30 day supply of essential medications, a way to cook and stay warm in an extended power outage, and talking through basic needs and response with families and neighbors.

The San Juan County/Town of Friday Harbor Department of Emergency Management has preparedness materials online at [www.sanjuandem.net/prepare](http://www.sanjuandem.net/prepare) and are very willing to send staff to talk to neighborhoods, businesses, churches, or any group of islanders looking for some direction and help with preparing.

Emergency Management Director Brendan Cowan highlights that, “Being prepared isn't complicated, and doesn't need to be expensive or time consuming. We've tried to make it as simple as possible. The most important thing is to just get started. Doing nothing means that you're counting on someone else to take care of you.”

A disaster in the islands likely means loss of power and communications, disruption to the food and fuel supply, much more difficult access to medical care, and perhaps a loss of water systems. The islands are in an active earthquake hazard zone, and have a history of severe winter storms in years past. While the likelihood of a serious event in any one year is low, over time the risk is high.

Lopez Island Fire and EMS Chief J Havner emphasized the importance of action, “In a disaster, local emergency responders will be overwhelmed, and mainland help may be a long time coming. It is essential that every islander ensure that they and their families can take care of themselves for at least two weeks, ideally longer.”

Sheriff Ron Krebs echoed the Chief's concerns, “My team and I will be working tirelessly after the quake to help the islands recover, but we need everyone to do their part now. Get prepared. Take this seriously. We all care about our community, and the best way to make sure you'll be part of the good work that happens in response is to make sure you're prepared now.”

So, while emergency preparedness is a full time assignment, use September as an annual check in. Take a look at your supplies, fill in any missing pieces, and reach out to the local Department of Emergency Management if you have questions or needs. Email: [dem@sanjuandem.net](mailto:dem@sanjuandem.net) or 360-370-7612.