

Emergency Preparedness and the PTA

THE BASICS OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Emergencies can take many forms ranging from intentional (terrorism or intruder) to medical (MRSA, H1N1), to natural disasters. In the Snoqualmie Valley, our school district works with each individual school regarding emergency planning, evacuation, communication, and medical responses. Our local PTA units focus on being of assistance whenever students are affected by an abnormal event such as a power outage or a natural disaster such as earthquake or flooding.

There is no one site or central location for information for school emergency preparedness. Basic emergency preparedness information can be found at www.ready.gov. Their advice is to “Get a kit. Make a plan. Be informed.” This information can be applied to schools as well. Our job as PTSA Emergency Prep committees is to help the schools “get a kit”. The basics would include:

A **storage shed** to store emergency supplies. This shed should be secure from vandals, rodents, flood waters, and sited away from school buildings. Sheds at local schools ranged from small wood sheds with shelves to large elevated wood portable buildings to metal shipping containers. Each kind of storage shed will have its pros and cons.

Water: recommended to have a gallon per person per day for 3 days. This can add up not only in expense but also in storage needs and rotational responsibilities. A number of local units buy large quantities of water jugs or bottles to store for a year then rotate it out at a school function such as Walkathon or Field Day. A recent suggestion has been to buy water filtration supplies in order to serve larger school populations.

Some form of **shelter** for students and staff. This can range from pop-up canopies to tents to tarps sited against stable, dry structures.

BEYOND THE BASICS

Food can be supplied. It is recommended to have a 3-day supply of non-perishable food. Choices have ranged from granola bars to energy bars to dehydrated food to meal replacement bars. There are a number of businesses that can be contacted regarding emergency food. Costco also carries emergency food supplies. It is important to store food in some kind of rodent-proof containers like metal garbage cans with secure lids.

First Aid materials such as sterile gloves, gauze, bandages, antibiotic ointment, burn ointment, eye wash solution. Your school nurse will be a good resource to ask about any pressing needs.

Portable toilets and toilet paper

Miscellaneous items such as walkie-talkies for school personnel to use for communication; rope; duct tape; paper, pencils, books, games, puzzles; space blankets, propane heaters, garbage bags, flashlights, hand-crank radios, etc.

Always check with your school administrators to create a plan on how your committee can be of the most effective assistance. This may involve an annual inventory of items, communicating with parents, or fundraising to purchase needed supplies.