

NATIONAL STUDENT NURSES' ASSOCIATION, INC.®

Guidelines for DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, RECOVERY, AND RELIEF PROJECTS



In 2010-2011 the NSNA's Community Health and Disaster Preparedness Committees were combined by the Board of Directors to facilitate coordination of the initiatives undertaken in both areas. Go to www.nсна.org/ProgramActivities/CommHealthDisasterPrep.aspx and click onmore on disaster preparedness..... for updated information.

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Guidelines for
DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, RECOVERY,
AND RELIEF PROJECTS



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WHAT IS THE NSNA DISASTER RELIEF AND PREPAREDNESS PROJECT?

Background

The 2006 NSNA House of Delegates passed a resolution entitled: *The Establishment of Protocols for Disaster Relief Guiding the Scope of Practice for Student Nurses and the collection and Distribution of Donation* (See Appendix I on page 9). The resolution called for NSNA to:

1. Establish guidelines for nursing student involvement during disasters;
2. Address the needs of nursing students impacted by disasters by developing a plan for the collection and distribution of donations.

To begin planning for the implementation of the resolution, eight NSNA Board members traveled to the Gulf Coast in August 2006 to visit schools impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Using a data collection tool and visiting with students and faculty, the Board began an assessment and evaluation process that helped to guide implementation of the resolution. In addition, the Board conducted a workshop in New Orleans entitled *Lessons Learned: Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery*. The Gulf Coast visit was funded through donations and included participation by Dr. Cheryl Schmidt, a disaster-training specialist and member of the Foundation of the NSNA Board of Trustees, who served as a resource person.

One of the major outcomes of the Gulf Coast Trip is the development of *Guidelines for Nursing Students in Disaster Preparation, Recovery and Relief*. Another outcome is the establishment of an ongoing Disaster Preparedness, Recovery and Relief Project (Disaster Project). In order to obtain input into the development and dissemination of the *Guidelines* and establishment of an ongoing Project, the NSNA Board of Directors created a Task Force to:

- Provide feedback into the development of the *Guidelines* and establishment of the NSNA Disaster Project;

- Make recommendations to the NSNA Board regarding how constituents may become involved in implementing the Disaster Project at the state and school chapter level.

The goals of NSNA's Disaster Project are to:

- increase awareness of the role of nursing students during disasters;
- increase the number of students qualified to participate in disaster relief activities;
- establish methods to identify the needs of nursing students during disasters and to address those needs;
- establish Disaster Project committees at the state and school chapter level
- raise funds for nursing students to have available in times of disaster. (The Foundation of the NSNA has created a Disaster Relief Fund for this purpose.)

IMPLEMENTATION

The Disaster Project is part of the Community Health Committee at the national level. The Disaster Project Guidelines will assist NSNA chapters to create an ongoing structure that is in place when disaster strikes. The following implementation steps are suggested to move the process along:

1. Examine the chapter's bylaws and college/university policies to determine how to form a new committee;
2. Review the college or university's disaster plan to see how nursing students fit into the plan;
3. Involve the faculty advisor in the development of a plan to establish the committee;
4. Once the process has been determined, ask the chapter president to include the topic of establishing a Disaster Project Committee on the next meeting agenda. Be prepared to explain why the committee is needed, goals for the committee, and see if a core group of students would like to work together to form the committee;
5. The Disaster Project Committee may also be a subcommittee of the community health projects committee.

GUIDELINES TO ESTABLISH A DISASTER RELIEF COMMITTEE



To implement the committee, a core group of 5-7 NSNA members and a faculty advisor are needed. There may be a faculty member at your school who teaches disaster response in the curriculum or one who volunteers with the American Red Cross. The students and faculty should be willing to commit to work on the committee for at least a year. The Disaster Project Committee chairperson's role and responsibilities should be included in the association's bylaws to insure continuity from year to year.

The first task is to gather information about disaster response teams at the nursing program; college/ university; community/ town; state; and nationally. Students volunteering on the committee should explore how to receive NSNA Leadership University credit for participation.

Committee structure may include:

Chairperson who serves as liaison with NSNA and the state association and who serves as overall coordinator of the committee;

One member for each of the following roles:

- liaison with disaster team at the college/ university;
- liaison with community-based disaster response organizations (such as the American Red Cross);
- liaison with local hospital(s) disaster team;
- program coordinator to plan and implement a workshop for nursing students and students in other disciplines on Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery;
- program coordinator to plan and implement educational programs on Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery for the community in collaboration with community organizations such as the American Red Cross (i.e. high schools, senior centers, boys & girls clubs, Boy/Girl Scout Troops).

DISASTER RELIEF COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Disaster Project Committee should play a major role in every state chapter and school association. It provides an important venue through which nursing students can work in a unified way to develop an understanding of the nursing and nursing student role in time of disaster. Community service projects help to expose the public to the role of nurses and increases visibility for the profession. Here are some examples of actions that the committee can take:

- Monitor disaster relief activities on the national, state, and school levels;
- Develop educational workshops for students and the general public;
- Distribute Guidelines for Disaster Preparedness;
- Search for sources of funding for the project and develop creative incentives for participants (i.e. award and recognition at pinning);
- Submit articles to school and state newsletters and websites to inform others of the Disaster Project Committee's activities and accomplishments;
- Utilize NSNA's Open Discussion Forum on www.nsnaleadershipu.org to create a dialogue about Disaster Project activities;
- Contact local media (newspapers, radio and television stations) and arrange interviews and submit articles about the importance of disaster preparedness;
- During committee member transitions, leave a list of guidelines and recommendations for the incoming chairperson and committee members;
- Submit a bylaws amendment at the state convention to have the Disaster Project Director included in the state bylaws as an elected or appointed position on the Board of Directors;
- **Links to More Resources** are available on the [Disaster Preparedness Program Page on the NSNA website](http://www.nсна.org/ProgramActivities/DisasterPreparedness.aspx) (www.nсна.org/ProgramActivities/DisasterPreparedness.aspx) and see Page 12 in this Guidelines for additional project ideas.

ARE YOU READY?

NSNA and the Disaster Preparedness Committee invite NSNA members, faculty, Deans/Directors/and Program Chairs to participate with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) **Ready** campaign. [NSNA is proud to be a 2010-2011 Coalition Member of the Ready campaign.](#)

How can you help prepare your community, your campus, your nursing program, and your families to be **Ready** when disaster strikes? Find the FAQ's and information about the **Ready** campaign, short and informative video clips, and fun activities for families now available at www.ready.gov/america/about/instructional.html The video clips include important information to help you plan and get **Ready** for the needs of children, adults, elderly relatives and neighbors, persons with special needs, and pets in your family during a disaster.

Throughout the year, beginning in September with National Preparedness Month, the DHS and NSNA will promote individual emergency preparedness updates through the **Ready** campaign. [In September 2010, NSNA will focus on Preparedness for Hurricanes and Floods.](#)

Ready is a national public service advertising campaign produced by The Advertising Council. The **Ready** campaign's web sites provide free disaster preparedness information in English at www.ready.gov and in Spanish at www.listo.gov. Toll-free numbers include 1-800-BE-READY (in English) and 1-888-SE-LISTO (in Spanish).

GETTING STARTED

WHAT IS A DISASTER?



A disaster is the impact of a natural or human-made hazard that negatively affects society or environment. Disasters occur when hazards strike in vulnerable areas. Hazards that occur in areas with low vulnerability do not result in a disaster; as is the case in uninhabited regions. It is often argued that all disasters are human-made, because human actions before the strike of the hazard can prevent it developing into a disaster. Hazards are routinely divided into natural or human-made, although complex disasters, where there is no single root cause, are more common in developing countries. A specific disaster may spawn a secondary disaster that increases the impact. A classic example is an earthquake that causes a tsunami, resulting in coastal flooding. Reference: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disaster>

A disaster is an occurrence of a natural catastrophe, such as a hurricane, tornado, tsunami, earthquake, landslide, mudslide, volcanic eruption, fire, or snowstorm, a technological accident, or human-caused event that has resulted in severe property damage, death, and/or multiple injuries. Reference: [Government Disaster Relief Loan](http://www.fema.gov/assistance/index.shtm)

www.fema.gov/assistance/index.shtm

PREPARING

Self

- Keep current with CPR and First Aid certification, and keep proof on person.
- Keep current with background check as required by health care and emergency response agencies, and keep proof on person if applicable.
- Register with one agency and do so BEFORE a disaster situation.

- Check, assess, and declare your own health status (i.e. asthma, diabetes).
- Maintain a supply of bottled water and nonperishable food items in your home and in your vehicle's trunk if possible. Check and restock supplies routinely.
- Identify personal support system.
- Join your local Medical Reserve Corps.
- Be aware of the requirements to work in a shelter.
- Become [an American Red Cross volunteer](#).
- Take the Mass Care and Shelter classes.
- Know your state's "Good Samaritan Law."
- Complete National Incident Management System (NIMS) Training/NIMS Courses: <http://training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.asp> and take the following:
 - IS-22.a [Are You Ready? An In-depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness](#)
 - IS-100.HC [Introduction to the Incident Command Center \(ICS\) for Healthcare/Hospitals](#)
 - IS-200.a [for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents](#)
 - IS-700a [National Incident management System \(NIMS\) an Introduction](#)
 - IS-230.a [Fundamentals of Emergency Management](#)

Bring your certificates of completion for three or more of the courses (above) to NSNA Registration at 2010 MidYear Conference or the 2011 Annual Convention and receive your NIMS Certified ribbon.

Family/Friends

- Establish a pre-arranged, out-of-state mutual contact person to relay information in the event of communication disruption or outage. Go to: http://www.ready.gov/america/_downloads/familyemergencyplan.pdf.
- Create and maintain "Go Bag." (see page 6)
- Create Disaster Supply Kit (see page 7)
- Know procedure for "sheltering in place."
- Know/Create evacuation routes from home and school.
- Have a plan of care for your pets.



Planning for Safety of Immediate Family

- Establish plan for gathering all members of family (from work, children at daycare or school, etc.) including backup volunteers to help in the event that you are unable to pick up children or make it home.
- Pre-arrange volunteers able to assume childcare short-term and long-term in the event of a disaster preventing parents from reaching home.
- Discuss safety plan with entire family, verifying each is aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- Establish meet-up location both near home and outside of town to be prepared for various types of disasters.
- Maintain copies of vaccination and identification records in a waterproof container, both at home and at place of work.
- Ensure that children are able to identify selves, address, phone number, and name and phone number of pre-determined contact person.

School

- Know the disaster plan at your nursing program. If one does not exist, develop one with the School/Dean.
- Encourage Dean/School to create and maintain a list of students interested in volunteering during a disaster. Their level of skill should be noted as well.
- Another list must be created of clinical faculty members willing to take students to volunteer.
- Nursing students must practice under the supervision of a registered nurse.
- Set parameters for student participation in terms of what the nursing program will support.

- Determine time commitment
- Advocate for clinical experience and academic credit for your involvement (refer to www.nsnleadershipu.org)

Community

- Identify potential types of disasters in your area, and develop plans for each specific type of disaster (weather-related, industrial, and environmental, such as chemical spill.)
- Preplan fundraising and relief supply collection protocols.
- Establish a notification network to reach students for response, with provisions for communication disruption or outage.
- Identify rendezvous site and an alternate site for student nurses to meet to coordinate disaster response.
- Contact local emergency response agencies to identify how and where student nurses might be welcomed to respond to a disaster in your area, and to establish student nurse roles in that event.
- Identify and clarify the student nurse scope of practice within your school and state.
- Identify all community medical and social service agency resources available to respond to a disaster, and have contact information available.
- Know the location and surge capacity of hospitals.
- Know the location and capacity of designated emergency shelters.
- Hold regular mock or mass casualty drills with post-evaluation.
- Provide public education on disaster preparation, warning and response, including encouraging CPR and First Aid training.
- Identify availability of mental health services for victims, response and health care personnel, such as counseling for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Identify the notification network to alert government and support agencies.
- Identify the policy for designating temporary administrative authority to protect public's health (e.g., governor, public health director).
- Identify mechanism for debriefing student nurse disaster responders.

- Identify post disaster referral resources (e.g. rehabilitation, convalescence, and counseling).

RESPONSE

Self

- Ensure your own safety and stay calm.
- If necessary to ensure personal safety, follow official evacuation plan.

Family/Friends

- Ensure the safety of family/friends if they are with you.
- Communicate with pre-arranged, out-of-state mutual contact person to relay information regarding your well being, and whereabouts.

Community

Implement student nurse notification network for response, if situation is deemed safe to do so.

- Rendezvous at designated site or alternate site for student nurses to coordinate disaster response.
- Always stay within the student nurse scope of practice.
- Respond as directed per the plans for student nurse disaster response.

RECOVERY

Self

- Gradual return to pre-disaster activities.
- Seek counseling if needed to deal with stresses related to disaster.

Family/Friends

- Re-establish contact to receive and offer support.

Community

- Implement debriefing of student nurse disaster responders.
- Evaluate performance of disaster response and modify plan as needed.
- Volunteer for rebuilding efforts.
- Fundraise for relief effort.



Items that should be added to your Disaster Supply Kit

- **Water in non-breakable plastic containers**
 - 1 gallon per person, per day – maintain a 3 day supply
 - Change water supply every 6 months to maintain freshness
- **3 day supply non-perishable food**
 - requiring no refrigeration, preparation, or cooking, and little or no water to prepare.
 - High energy foods
 - Low salt items
 - Vitamins
 - Infant foods
 - Comfort/stress foods
 - Canned juices
 - Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables
 - Replace stored food every 6 months
- **First Aid Kit** – One well-stocked kit for home and one for each vehicle.
 - Variety of bandages
 - Gauze
 - Tourniquet
 - Antibacterial gel
 - First-aid cream
 - First aid tape
 - Scissors
 - Tweezers
 - CPR shield
 - Latex gloves
- **Non Prescription Drugs**
 - Aspirin or alternate pain reliever
 - Anti-diarrhea medication
 - Antacid
 - Laxative
 - Activated charcoal (only for use as advised by Poison Control Center)
- **Tools and Supplies**
 - Mess kits or disposable tableware
 - Battery operated radio and extra batteries (store batteries outside of radio)
 - Battery operated flashlight and extra batteries (store batteries outside of flashlight)
 - Non-electric can opener
 - Cash or traveler's checks in small denominations
 - Paper and pencils
 - Aluminum foil
 - Matches in waterproof container
 - Plastic sheeting
 - Tape
 - Whistle
 - Needles and thread
 - Shut-off wrench to turn off household gas and water
 - Map of the area
- **Sanitation**
 - Toilet paper
 - Soap/liquid detergent
 - Feminine supplies
 - Personal hygiene items
 - Disinfectant
 - Household chlorine bleach
 - Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses)
- **Clothing and Bedding**
 - Minimum one complete change of clothes and footwear per person
 - Sturdy shoes
 - Rain gear
 - Blankets/sleeping bags
 - Cold weather gear
 - Sunglasses
 - Update clothing regularly to assure proper fit and season
- **Specialty Items**
 - When caring for infant, child or elderly, remember any necessary specialty items
- **Baby**
 - Formula, powdered milk
 - Diapers/wipes, bottles
 - Medications
- **Adults**
 - Prescription medications
 - Denture care needs
 - Contact lenses and supplies
 - Extra eye-glasses
- **Entertainment**
 - Games, books, puzzle magazines

- **Family Documents**

- Photocopies to be kept in waterproof containers
- Will, insurance policies, contracts/deeds, stocks and bonds
- Passports, social security cards, immunization records
- Bank account numbers
- Credit card account numbers and companies
- Inventory of valuable household items
- Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)

Kit should be kept in a convenient spot that everyone is aware of. Smaller kits can be kept in the trunk of your vehicle. Items should be kept sealed in airtight plastic bags. Be sure to re-analyze any special needs of your family yearly as situations change.

Lists have been adapted from www.redcross.org. More information can be found there as well.

PANDEMIC FLU..... GO TO: www.flu.gov
Preparation

- Flu Shots – it is recommended that all health care workers get seasonal influenza vaccinations in early fall 2010. If you did not receive the Novel H1N1 flu vaccine in 2009-2010, please monitor the recommendations at www.flu.gov/ for vaccination and treatment during the upcoming flu season.
- Sheltering supplies – see disaster supply checklist above for information on what to have on hand. In a pandemic flu situation, it is quite possible that people will be asked to shelter-in-place at home. Be sure that you, your family and friends are prepared with food, water, medication and household supplies at home to last up to 7 days.
- If you get the flu, plan to stay home (shelter-in-place) until you are free from fever or flu symptoms for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- If you have a chronic health condition or if you get the flu and your symptoms worsen, contact your primary care provider for instructions.

Response

- Simulation Drills – Many communities and local governments hold mass immunization, pandemic flu response and/or disaster response drills. For these events, the NSNA believes that nursing students make ideal mock victims, having been educated on physiological and emotional responses to pain and injury. We encourage students to be actively involved in simulations via cooperation with local disaster response officials.
- State and Federal Influenza Pandemic Response Plans – Students are encouraged to become familiar with and actively involved in planning of state and federal Influenza Pandemic Response Plans. Through cooperation with local hospitals, emergency responders and government officials, nursing students are able to provide valuable input into the development of response plans and the inclusion of nursing students in said plans.

Things to do to stay healthy:

- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol based hand cleaner are also effective.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs spread this way.
- **Try to avoid close contact with sick people.**
- **Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.**

Keep informed this flu season: Go to www.flu.gov for the latest information.

Appendix I NSNA Resolutions on Disaster Preparedness

National Student Nurses' Association

In Support of the Establishment of Protocols for Disaster Relief Guiding the Scope of Practice for Student Nurses and the Collection and Distribution of Donations

NSNA House of Delegates, 54th Annual Convention in Baltimore, MD, April 2006.

- WHEREAS, student nurses have contributed to disaster relief from the time of the Jacksonville yellow fever epidemic of 1888; and
- WHEREAS, the American Red Cross recognizes the contributions of student nurses in "delivering critical community services for more than half a century"; and
- WHEREAS, the United States has experienced many crisis events, both natural and man-made, within the past four years; and
- WHEREAS, no community is ever fully prepared to handle a massive disaster with a large influx of patients; and
- WHEREAS, professional nurses are often restricted to acute care settings in times of disaster and crisis; and
- WHEREAS, student nurses are an available and competent resource to assist in disaster relief efforts; and
- WHEREAS, no literature has identified the appropriate scope of practice to support student nurse utilization in the area of disaster relief; and
- WHEREAS, the lack of a defined scope of practice for student nurses during disaster relief operations is a repeated problem needing attention and is likely to reoccur; and
- WHEREAS, the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) has for the past 53 years been the connecting link and collective body of the state student nurses associations promoting "civic responsibility"; therefore be it
- RESOLVED, that the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) support education and awareness of the need for the establishment of protocols guiding the scope of practice for student nurses in the area of disaster relief and the collection and distribution of donations for disaster areas; and be it further
- RESOLVED, that the NSNA encourage its constituents to work collaboratively with their local and state disaster response and healthcare agencies to develop a taskforce that will define the scope of practice of student nurses in disaster settings and develop a protocol for coordinating the collection and distribution of donations to be sent to disaster areas; and be it further
- RESOLVED, that the NSNA promote student involvement in community disaster response planning, implementation, and evaluation, and the collection and distribution of donations; and be it further
- RESOLVED, that the NSNA send a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, the American Nurses Association, the American Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the National League for Nursing, the National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing, state departments of health, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, and all others deemed appropriate by the NSNA Board of Directors.

National Student Nurses' Association
In Support of Increased Awareness and Inclusion of Nursing Students
In the Implementation of
State and Federal Influenza Pandemic Response Plans

NSNA House of Delegates, 55th Annual Convention in Anaheim, CA, April 2007

- WHEREAS, "pandemic is defined as disease affecting or attacking the population of an extensive region, including several countries, and/or continent(s)"; and
- WHEREAS, "the present state of alert among world health authorities is the belief that we are witnessing the development of a . . . once in a 100-year major flu pandemic due to the emergence of a[n] H5N1 Influenza virus type A [Avian Influenza]"; and
- WHEREAS, "although person-to-person transmission of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) appears to be rare, one major concern is that a person infected with HPAI could also become co-infected with a normal human influenza virus. Genetic material could be exchanged between the HPAI virus and the human influenza virus, which could result in an influenza virus that is transmitted easily from person-to-person"; and
- WHEREAS, "an influenza pandemic will post unique challenges . . . medical services and health care workers... will be overwhelmed... [and] may not be able to provide essential care to all patients in need"; and
- WHEREAS, "the Influenza Pandemic Response Plan (IPRP) addresses the unique challenges that could rapidly unfold . . . [and] identifies the roles and responsibilities of key public health responders"; therefore be it
- RESOLVED, that the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) promote increased awareness and inclusion of nursing students in the implementation of state and federal Influenza Pandemic Response Plans; and be it further
- RESOLVED, that the NSNA encourage its constituents to collaborate with local, state, and federal pandemic response committees, if feasible; and be it further
- RESOLVED, that the NSNA provide continued updates regarding the development and implementation of Influenza Pandemic Response Plans through the use of *Imprint* articles and/or NSNA website updates, if feasible; and be it further
- RESOLVED, that the NSNA provide a copy of this resolution to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the American Hospital Association, the American Nurses Association, the American Nurses Credentialing Center, the American Organization of Nurse Executives, the National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing, the American Red Cross, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the National League for Nursing, and all others deemed appropriate by the NSNA Board of Directors.

National Student Nurses' Association

In Support of Liability Protection for Paid Healthcare Personnel during a Declared Disaster or State of Emergency

NSNA House of Delegates, 57th Annual Convention in Nashville, TN, April 2009

- WHEREAS, the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) has supported disaster relief efforts through resolutions in the House of Delegates every year since 2001; and
- WHEREAS, there have been 551 declared disasters nationwide between 1999 and 2008; and
- WHEREAS, Louisiana has recently passed legislation protecting on-duty, employed health care personnel during declared disasters which specifies employees are not held liable for any civil damages or injuries unless caused by gross negligence or misconduct; and
- WHEREAS, most states have Good Samaritan laws that only protect healthcare professionals from liability when volunteering or offering assistance outside their scope of employment; therefore be it
- RESOLVED, that the NSNA encourage its constituents to advocate for liability protection for paid healthcare personnel during declared disasters or states of emergency; and be it further
- RESOLVED, that the NSNA hold focus sessions at MidYear and Annual Convention on the importance of liability protection for employed health care personnel during a declared disaster, if feasible; and be it further
- RESOLVED, that the NSNA send a copy of this resolution be sent to the American Nurses Association, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing, the National League for Nursing, the American Medical Association, and all others deemed appropriate by the NSNA Board of Directors.

NOTE:

For a complete Resolution Index with links to resolutions adopted by the NSNA House of Delegates over the past 10 years, go to www.nсна.org and click on Publications (left column) and then click on [Resolution Index](http://www.nсна.org/Publications/ResolutionIndex.aspx) (www.nсна.org/Publications/ResolutionIndex.aspx) and scroll down to search by topic area (e.g. Category 10. Disaster Preparedness).

Appendix II

PROJECT IDEAS

September Each Year

is

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

National Preparedness Month is a nationwide coordinated effort sponsored by FEMA and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) each September to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and schools.

The goal of National Preparedness Month is to increase public awareness about the importance of preparing for emergencies including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks and to encourage individuals to take action to prepare themselves and their families.

The month provides Americans with a variety of opportunities to learn more about emergency preparedness. Events and activities across the nation will encourage individuals to get an emergency supply kit, make a family emergency plan, be informed about the different types of emergencies that could occur and their appropriate responses and get involved in preparing their communities.

Homeland Security is working with a wide variety of organizations, including national, regional, state and local government organizations to highlight the importance of public emergency preparedness throughout September. NSNA, along with over 1,370 national, regional, state and local organizations, participate in the National Preparedness Month Coalition and support this important effort by disseminating emergency preparedness messages to their customers, members, employees, stakeholders, and communities across the nation.

Throughout the year, DHS promotes individual emergency preparedness through the Ready Campaign. Ready is a national public service advertising campaign produced by The Advertising Council that is designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks.

The campaign's Web sites (www.ready.gov and www.listo.gov) and toll-free numbers (1-800-BE-READY and 1-888-SE-LISTO) provide Americans with free preparedness information.

DISASTER CERTIFICATION EVENTS

The most helpful volunteer in a disaster situation is a trained volunteer who is expected and knows his/her role in the situation. Spontaneous Unanticipated Volunteers (SUV's) can mean well but actually end up disrupting an organized disaster response network.

Hold an event through your school or state organization where attendees can receive Red Cross disaster relief certification by attending on-site classes (<http://www.redcross.org>). Another option is to gather students in your computer lab to complete online NIMS (National Incident Management System) Certification. Your students will become valuable resources for disaster response, while being educated on preparing themselves for disaster as well.