



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: Tuesday, September 10, 2013

Contact: Adam Stiebeling, Commissioner, BES: 845-808-4000 or
Barbara Ilardi, Public Information Officer, DOH: 845-808-1390

National Preparedness Month Observed for Tenth Year;
Be Informed, Make a Plan, Build a Kit, Get Involved

Brewster, NY- September is National Preparedness Month, a national observance strongly supported by Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell, as well as the County's Bureau of Emergency Services and the Department of Health. It was established in response to the events of September 11 to encourage Americans to better prepare themselves and their communities.

"Having learned from Sept. 11 and from natural disasters such as Hurricane Irene and Super Storm Sandy, we know we have to be vigilant and be prepared," said Odell. "I would strongly urge everyone in Putnam to take proper precautions as we now head into peak hurricane season. You should keep emergency information and supplies nearby. You should know what County resources are available to you and where and to whom you can turn for help when needed."

Experts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration had been predicting a 70-percent chance of an "above-normal" hurricane season which runs through October, and then in Putnam the winter snow season follows.

Be informed, make a plan, build a kit, and get involved—this is the mantra of preparedness experts and the month-long observance. Step-by-step guidance for individuals to prepare is available at the www.Ready.gov website.

"Being informed is the first step," says Adam Stiebeling, Commissioner of the Bureau of Emergency Services (BES), "and we urge county residents to sign up for NY Alert, a free service that offers the best way to stay on top of County and State announcements during emergencies." NY Alert

is the New York State All-Hazards Alert and Notification system, which provides current information about risks, threats and appropriate responses. Residents sign up and can choose selected warnings and how they would like to receive them, via their cell phone, email, web or other technologies. Personal information is completely protected and never shared. Selected alerts can be modified or cancelled at any time by the subscriber. For more information, visit: www.nyalert.gov.

“Making a plan and stocking an emergency kit are crucial follow-up steps,” says Allen Beals, MD, Commissioner of Health, “but unfortunately they are not usually on the top of everyone’s To-Do list.” As part of local preparedness activities, the Health Department and BES are co-hosting a special, free screening of the movie *Contagion* on September 20 at 6:30pm, followed by a brief “question & answer” session with staff from both organizations. “We hope this event will further people’s motivation and planning.” The medical thriller, rated PG-13, is a fictional dramatization of efforts to stop a lethal virus from spreading around the globe.

Getting involved in community efforts is also part of national preparedness. The Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) and BES plan and train throughout the year, but when disaster strikes, volunteers can help ease strain on a potentially overburdened system. Nearly 300 volunteers have joined the Putnam County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), but more are needed and not only in medical areas. Volunteers fill other key roles, such as providing data entry or language interpretation. For more information or to learn how to join the MRC, contact Keiren Farquhar, MRC Coordinator, at 845-808-1390, or visit the County website at www.putnamcountyny.gov

The Health Department’s mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, made up of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.putnamcountyny.gov/health>; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.