



Putnam Prepped For National Preparedness Month

The 2019 theme is "Prepared, Not Scared."

By [Lanning Taliaferro](#) | Sep 5, 2019 9:20 am ET





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BREWSTER, NY— The Ready campaign, launched in 2003, aims to promote preparedness through public involvement. This and every September, the campaign recognizes National Preparedness Month, to encourage family and community disaster and emergency planning. The 2019 theme is “Prepared, Not Scared.”

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The notion of preparedness is nothing new in Putnam. In the aftermath of 9/11 a bioterrorism task force was formed, and public health staff, first responders and other county agencies have been coming together to prepare for emergencies ever since. One exercise earlier this year focused on receiving “fake” medications and another full scale exercise will be conducted in October. These PHEP drills, which stands for Public Health Emergency Preparedness, are led by the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH), and required by the New York State Department of Health.

“Our emergency response in Putnam continues to be top tier. Our Bureau of Emergency Services has a stellar record for ensuring county-wide communications during potential and actual disasters, and maintains an Enhanced 911 system,” says County Executive MaryEllen Odell. “First responders, healthcare workers, and volunteers work together and remain diligent and committed to our communities.”



“Local agencies have also banded together to support children, especially during an emergency,” says Putnam County Health Commissioner Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD. “The Putnam Community Resilience Coalition [CRC], with the involvement of over two-dozen state and local agencies and the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University, have set a foundation and provided leadership in developing approaches focusing on children before, during and after a disaster. Our health department continues to enact innovative approaches when it comes to starting a

community conversation that is focused on safety and resolution, rather than fear and panic.” Work begun under the CRC grant is being sustained through enhancing mental health awareness and services throughout Putnam Schools and various provider groups.

At the 4-H fair this summer, visitors to the PCDOH booth were invited to take part in an online survey to assess their personal and household readiness by answering simple questions. Results from the survey indicated that lack of knowledge was a barrier for many in being prepared. Recognition of this will serve to shape future local preparedness initiatives.

Recommendations to all residents include creating a “Grab and Go Kit” containing essential medicine and important papers in case of evacuation, as well as an Emergency Supply Kit should they need to stay in their homes for 2-3 days.

Additionally a large portion of survey participants reported getting weather emergency information from NY-Alert, a website and notification service providing critical, emergency-related information including instructions and recommendations in real-time by emergency personnel. New Yorkers can subscribe to NY-Alert and receive information that may include severe weather warnings, significant highway closures, hazardous material spills and other emergency conditions. All areas of New York State are included in the system, and you can decide which area you would like to receive alerts about.

Signing up is free, and messages can be received by phone, email, text and fax. For more information or to sign up, visit <https://alert.ny.gov/>.

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our