

FACT SHEET



Public Information From:

Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY EXPANDING SIREN MONITORING

***FCEM&HS Recruits 'Siren Watch' Volunteers;
National Preparedness Month is Sept. 1-30***

Overview

- Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security (FCEM&HS), in partnership with the local volunteer-coordination organization FIRSTLINK, in September will begin actively recruiting volunteers to add another layer of performance-monitoring of the county's outdoor warning sirens.
- FCEM&HS Director Michael R. Pannell is working with other local and national organizations to help boost the community's readiness for emergencies as part of National Preparedness Month (Sept. 1-30), a FEMA-sponsored promotion to encourage Americans to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and communities.
- Because their sound quality can be degraded by lightning strikes and vandalism, FCEM&HS tests outdoor sirens in locations across Franklin County at noon each Wednesday, monitoring them electronically for potential system errors.
- To increase assurances the community is receiving adequate warnings in emergencies, the agency is creating a "Siren Watch" program -- it is seeking volunteers to monitor sirens in their neighborhoods and report online after each test.

About the siren system

- The county's 163 outdoor warning sirens, which are part of a larger Franklin County emergency notification system, warn people who are outside to seek shelter and tune into local TV and radio stations or weather radios for more information.
- The sirens sound when there is a tornado warning -- when a tornado has been sighted or picked up by radar -- by the National Weather Service for Franklin County. The sirens can also transmit spoken messages for other types of information.
- Of the 163 sirens, two older models will be replaced in the next several weeks, both located in Columbus. Eight additional sirens will be installed and operational in the next several weeks, all of them located in Columbus except for one, located in Grove City.

(more)

Volunteer Recruitment

- To recruit new volunteers, FIRSTLINK will distribute information about the new program at an upcoming regional Citizen Corps Council meeting, Ohio Emergency Management Agency Open House, and safety fairs at Cardinal Health, Capital University, Grange Insurance, Westerville Cops & Kids Days, and Columbus Metropolitan Library locations.
- Information will also be emailed to volunteers and volunteer agencies and posted on the Web sites of FCEM&HS (www.franklincountyohio.gov/emahs), FIRSTLINK (www.firstlink.org), and www.volunteermatch.org.
- The agency will also target existing volunteers who reside in a certain zip code where a siren is located.

How the Program Will Work

- To implement the monitoring program this fall, FCEM&HS will assign siren watchers a “watcher ID” and a siren location to monitor weekly after they register online.
- FCEM&HS will set up weekly online report forms for volunteers; agency staff will access the reports. (Online forms minimize staff time spent processing paperwork and will more easily allow the agency to build a database.) Siren Watch volunteers may be contacted for more information about their reports if it appears there is a potential system error.
- Siren Watchers will be expected to report at least 48 weeks out of the year. The program will be expanded as new sirens are added. The agency will track how people learned about Siren Watch to find the most effective ways to reach the public about similar volunteer opportunities.

About FCEM&HS

- Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security is a local government agency which coordinates county-wide emergency/disaster planning, education, warning, response and recovery to minimize the adverse impact on area residents and property. To learn more, go to www.franklincountyohio.gov/emahs/.