

NEWS RELEASE

Public Information From:

Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security
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Columbus, Ohio 43230



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY PROMOTES CITIZEN READINESS

FCEM&HS, Partner Activities Mark National Preparedness Month, Sept. 1-30

(COLUMBUS, OHIO) -- The head of Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security (FCEM&HS) in September will kick off a public meeting about community preparedness, host a specialized training day for emergency responders, reach out to African immigrants, and begin expanding the performance-monitoring of outdoor 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.

The media is welcome to cover all the local activities listed below:

- **Citizen Corps' Disaster Preparedness and Volunteer Response Public Meeting, 4:30 p.m., Sept. 9:** Director Pannell will deliver opening remarks to the Disaster Preparedness and Volunteer Response Public Meeting, sponsored by the Franklin County Citizen Corps Council, from 4:30 p.m. to approximately 7 p.m. at Columbus Public Health, 240 Parsons Ave., Columbus. Meeting participants will learn what preparations the community has made for disasters -- including H1N1 preparations and the City of Columbus Evacuation Plan -- and how citizens can become involved as volunteers. The public is invited to attend the meeting. (**EDITORS:** For more information on this event, please contact Lee Foster, FIRSTLINK, at 614-221-6766, ext. 168, or email lfoster@firstlink.org.)
- **The 2009 Norfolk Southern/TRANSCAER 'Whistle-Stop Tour': Rail-transport safety training for emergency responders, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sept. 25:** FCEM&HS is the Columbus host of the Norfolk Southern/TRANSCAER multi-city Whistle-Stop Tour, a day-long series of hands-on drills and training sessions by chemical and rail transportation experts for local first responders, emergency managers and government officials. The event is sponsored by the transportation company and TRANSCAER (Transportation Community Awareness and Emergency Response), a nationwide program that helps communities prepare for possible hazardous material transportation incidents. Beginning with a welcome ceremony at 9 a.m., the event will be held at the

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Norfolk Southern Bulkmatic Facility, 1875 Frebis Ave., Columbus. (**EDITORS:** For more information on this event, please contact Rudy Husband, Norfolk Southern Director of Public Relations, at 610-567-3377, or email rudy.husband@nscorp.com.)

- **Emergency preparedness assistance and presentation to local Somali community center, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Sept. 29:** FCEM&HS will present an emergency weather radio and instructional information about the county's emergency warning system to the Somali Community Association of Ohio (SCAO) community center at 3422 Cleveland Ave., Columbus. The presentation will be part of a meeting of the Citizen Preparedness Subcommittee of the Franklin County Government Somali Work Group, which is co-chaired by FCEM&HS and the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and includes representatives of Somali-focused and other community organizations across the county. The subcommittee's goal is to overcome cultural and language barriers to help local Somalis better protect themselves and their families from community disasters.
- **Promotion of outdoor warning "Siren Watch" program, beginning Sept. 1:** 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. Because their sound quality can be degraded by lightning strikes and vandalism, FCEM&HS tests the sirens 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. The 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.

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 of disasters on area residents and property. To learn more, go to www.franklincountyohio.gov/emahs/.