

Article for January 14, 2015

I'm going on a diet! I resolve to eat better and exercise more! I'm joining the gym this year and resolve to exercise every day for at least 30 minutes! No more red meat! I'm going to quit smoking once and for all!

Ever heard of any those? Maybe you've even said some of those! It's that time of year again – New Year's resolutions! I've been hearing lots of talk about just how long the average resolution actually lasts and I'm getting conflicting information! However, I would certainly guess that there's not a very high success rate on New Year's resolutions. So, FEMA is trying to change that!

How so? Simple. FEMA is encouraging families to Resolve To Be Ready! It's the one resolution that we hope will not be set on the back burner – or even be completely abandoned before the calendar pages turn to February!

The idea is that families prepare throughout the year for seasonal weather hazards. Sounds easy enough, right? If you follow the Madison County Office of Emergency Management on Facebook, you know that we try to keep you informed of weather hazards and suggest preparedness actions you and your families can take to minimize the impact of weather conditions. We encourage you to prepare everywhere, too – your home, your work, and everywhere in the community. This program stresses those same values!

Winter weather just happens to be on our minds now! I imagine by the time you read this, we will have already had a freezing night or two and even possibly some freezing precipitation! I'm hoping you have already been protecting the "4P's" – People, Pets, Plants and Pipes!

People are encouraged to keep warm and stay indoors if possible. Dress in layers; wear hats, gloves and an appropriate coat. Stay aware of developing and current weather conditions. If the forecast calls for severe weather or frozen precipitation, try to plan your day where you don't have to drive unless it's absolutely necessary. Try to avoid driving after sundown and before sunrise if the roadways are expected to freeze.

Bring pets inside or move them and other animals to sheltered areas. Be sure to provide adequate food and water for them, and if you are utilizing a heat lamp or other heat source, take extra caution in its placement and make sure it is stable and secure, or has a built-in safety feature to turn it off if it's knocked over.

Many pipes need extra protection. Disconnect outdoor hoses – drain them and store them in a protected area. Wrap exposed faucets and pipes. Don't forget about protection for your water well, if you have one.

Plants aren't very pretty or productive when they freeze. Bring potted plants inside or store them in a garage near an interior wall to provide extra warmth and wind protection. If you are bringing them inside, be careful not to give unwanted pests a ride inside your home!

Taking these extra precautions can help lessen the effects of winter weather. For more ideas on how to prepare for seasonal weather, visit our county website at http://www.co.madison.tx.us/default.aspx?Madison_County/EmergencyMgmt.Tips! Stay warm and Be Safe Out There!