

Article for February 19, 2014

We've seen more winter weather in the past month in our county than we usually see in two or three months – or even two or three winters! We have been very fortunate that we had not had more accidents, power outages, or other side effects from it.

With many of our residents driving to and from work, family, school, etc., we could very likely wind up stranded between one and another if the weather is severe enough. Have you even given any thought to what you would do if you were stuck on the road?

I hope you have read our previous column that focused on having a preparedness kit in your car. If not, you can check it out on our county website. As you may recall, we suggested emergency supplies and comfort items; but we didn't really talk about a "plan". So, let's do that today!

Let's think this through and put together a "Commuter Emergency Plan" – even if your farthest commute is from your home to the grocery store – so that you will be prepared in the event you need it!

The key to this plan is to write it down, keep a copy in your wallet or other safe place where you can access it in the event of a disaster. Start with listing details on your normal travels. For instance, write down the mode – car, pickup, or bus. This may not apply to our area, but if you use public transportation, write down the line or provider, the stop you get on and off and the fare.

Next, write down the driving directions you normally take to and from work or other location. Be complete and use details for your commute – both ways.

Then, write down an alternative route you could use if the streets or highways you use are not passable. When you have figured out an alternative route, then come up with ANOTHER alternative route. Write that down. Think of roads that you might not normally use and add them to your alternative route. Write down several routes, just in case you need them.

Now, think about what other options you might have in the way of transportation. For instance, write down details of a taxi company that might be available on both ends of your transit. Is there a bus that goes your way either way? Find out that information and record it. Is there a co-worker who lives near you that can provide an alternate transportation source for you? Jot down his/her contact information. Is there a relative who has a 4-wheel drive vehicle you could call if you need to? Do you know how to get in contact with them? Do you have access to a vehicle transport trailer, in the event you are stranded and wreckers are already overwhelmed? These are just some of the "what if's" you may want to consider and use to enhance your plan.

Continue to plan ahead financially, too. Try to have a nominal amount of cash money available to you, in case you need to stay in a motel overnight until the roads clear. Are there places to lodge located on your route or alternative routes? Note them in your plan.

The final step is to share your plan with a loved one, friend, or neighbor. Decide on a third person to contact in case local phone lines are not available. Share with that person, too. It's better to plan for the worst and never have it happen than not to plan! Be Safe Out There!