

School / Campus Preparedness 2016

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Parents Encouraged to Include Emergency Preparedness in Back-to-School Plans

August is School and Campus Preparedness Month in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD - In the next few weeks, students from pre-kindergarten through college will be headed back to school. As parents prepare their students for the new academic year, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and local emergency management agencies across the state are encouraging parents to include emergency preparedness in their back-to-school plans.

“Emergencies can occur any time of the day or night, including when children are in school,” said IEMA Director James K. Joseph. “The start of a new school year is the perfect time to make sure you know your school’s plans for keeping students safe during an emergency and then talking to your child about those plans.”

Joseph offered several back-to-school planning tips for parents of school-aged children, including:

- Find out where children will be taken in the event of an evacuation during school hours.
- Ensure your current emergency contact information is on file at your child’s school.
- Pre-authorize a friend or relative to pick up your children in an emergency and make sure the school knows who that designated person is.
- Teach children with cell phones about ‘Text First, Talk Later.’ Short, simple text messages, such as “R U OK?” and “I’m OK,” are more likely to get through than a phone call if phone service is disrupted following an emergency. As phone congestion eases, you can follow up with a phone call to relay more information.

Students headed off to college also need to be prepared for emergencies. Many college campuses offer email and text messages to alert students of potential dangers, such as severe weather and other threats. Encourage your college student to sign-up for such alerts. Some colleges also provide alert messages for parents so they also are aware of potential dangers on campus. In addition, make sure your student knows the emergency plans for their dorm or apartment building.

Additional preparedness information is available on the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.