

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**COMMISSIONERS RECOGNIZE PREPAREDNESS MONTH,
ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO CREATE EMERGENCY PLAN AND GET TRAINED**

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners supports preparedness through planning, exercising and equipping both the public and private sectors. September is National Preparedness Month and the commissioners are working with federal, state and local government agencies to help county residents be ready for the unexpected.

This year's theme is: ***Don't Wait. Communicate. Make Your Emergency Plan Today.*** To that end, the commissioners are encouraging everyone to take part, make a plan and know what to do during an emergency. This means having an up-to-date contact list for those you may need to reach during a disaster and establishing alternate methods of communication in case traditional channels are not available.

"I encourage all of our residents to make an emergency plan today, if they don't already have one," said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. "If you have one, make sure you review it with your families and make necessary updates, including having up-to-date contacts and a way to communicate should mobile cellular and data service not be available."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends that families keep a three-day supply of food and water on hand in case of an emergency, and also reminds families to include medicine in their emergency kits and plan for the well-being of their pets. Other essential items include a flashlight (with fresh batteries), first aid kit, whistle, dust masks, maps, a manual can opener, and an adjustable wrench to turn off utilities. Additional tips for creating an emergency plan can be found at www.Ready.gov.

"At the conclusion of our Cybersecurity Task Force, and as a co-chair, it became even more apparent that planning for any level of disaster is essential," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "Our neighbors and loved ones, and the entire community must take this to heart. A little practice and forethought now saves lives."

Next week, the Commissioners' Office of Homeland Security and Justice Programs is planning informational events for county employees and asking them to help spread the message of preparedness to family, friends and neighbors, and to take part in *America's PrepareAthon!* which is a campaign to increase the number of individuals who: understand which disasters could happen in their community; know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage; take action to increase their preparedness; and participate in community resilience planning.

Preparing for the unexpected also includes thinking beyond natural disasters. On Monday afternoon, Franklin County Commissioners will be joined by a group of county employees to participate in the

Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) training offered free to schools, colleges, businesses, hospitals and places of worship. CRASE training provides strategies, guidance and a proven plan for surviving an active shooter event and is taught by local law enforcement throughout the United States.

“Training for the unexpected is a big component of being prepared,” said Commissioner John O’Grady. “We all have an idea of how we think that we would respond in an emergency situation but programs like CRASE and VIPSS provide hands-on instruction and training so that if a critical, life-threatening situation arises, we are practiced and have the necessary skills to respond, potentially saving lives, including our own.”

Later in the week, Commissioners will recognize the Central Ohio Volunteers in Public Safety Support (VIPSS) Volunteer of the Year. The VIPSS program supports private sector preparedness by training a cadre of volunteers in disaster response.

Through the first half of 2015, 89 VIPSS volunteers have contributed 349 hours of volunteer work at 27 different events. Their activities serve as a force multiplier freeing up law enforcement to focus on heftier public safety issues. For more info on the VIPSS program visit:

<https://sheriff.franklincountyohio.gov/programs/volunteers-in-public-safety-support.cfm>.

PHOTO AND INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES –

Monday, September 28 at 1:30pm: Members of the Franklin County Board of Commissioners Office will participate in the Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) training in the East Conference Room (373 S. High St.).

Tuesday, September 29 at 9am: the Franklin County Board of Commissioners will be joined by the Office of Homeland Security and Justice Programs and the Sheriff’s Office as they hear from and recognize the Central Ohio Volunteers in Public Safety Support (VIPSS) Volunteer of the Year, Nick Holmes during their General Session Meeting in the Hearing Room (373 S. High St.). Mr. Holmes family will also be in the audience.

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For more information on the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, log on to: www.franklincountyohio.gov/commissioners.