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Disaster Preparedness

Natural disasters, such as severe weather events, are no stranger in Nebraska. There are opportunities for 4-H members to learn about and prepare for events like tornadoes, floods, blizzards, ice storms, and fires. These opportunities can be incorporated in club meetings or tailored for a community service project.

Make a disaster preparedness kit. This emergency kit, and the bag it is in should be small enough to grab and go during an emergency. Items in a in the bag include a water bottle, granola bar, protein bars, or non-perishable snack, flashlight, small first aid kit, and necessary medications. What else would you add to your bag? Take this activity one step further and consider making or discussing an emergency bag for your pet. What items would make your pet comfortable if you were facing a disaster?

Determine a refuge or escape plan. Being safe during an emergency is important. In some natural disasters, like tornadoes, staying home, and taking cover is the safest option. In others, like fires and wildfires, leaving your home is essential. Have youth draw maps of their homes. On their maps, ask them to identify places of refuge and all exits. Have youth map an escape route in case of fires. Where is your family's meeting place? What other factors should you consider? Encourage them to discuss their maps with their families.

Invite a guest speaker. Ask an expert to talk to youth about ways they can help their families and community prepare for a disaster. Fire chiefs, police chiefs,

emergency managers, public health officials, and veterinarians are great resources. Consider inviting several speakers and host a Question & Answer panel where youth can ask questions and the conversation is moderated by the 4-H leader or Extension Educator. Take this one step further by inviting other youth organizations, such as Boy Scouts or faith-based groups, to participate, too.

When youth understand disasters and participate in preparedness activities, they are able to cope more effectively if one occurs. But preparing for disasters can cause discomfort for some, and this is normal. Allow youth time to process whichever activity you choose. Asking the following questions may help. Give everyone time to answer; not all questions have to be covered.

- What did you learn about disaster preparedness today?
- Can you think of a time when you or someone you know was in a disaster?
- How do you think experiencing a disaster makes people feel?
- How that you know about disaster preparedness, what do you think you can do to make a difference at home? At school? In your community?

For more information about preparing for a disaster, contact the Buffalo County Extension Office, 308-236-1235.