NEWS RELEASE
November is Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month

As the American population ages, we all are increasing aware of the growing and tragic toll of Alzheimer’s disease. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common cause of irreversible, progressive dementia in the elderly.

“Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month in November is the perfect opportunity to learn more about this condition,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Alzheimer’s disease is not a normal part of the aging process. It is a degeneration of the part of the brain that controls thought, memory and speech. Alzheimer’s disease is a terminal illness, and has recently surpassed diabetes as the sixth leading cause of death among American adults. And, notably, mortality rates for Alzheimer’s disease are on the rise, unlike several other major killers such as heart disease and cancer death rates, which are continuing to decline.

Current estimates are that as many as 450,000 New Yorkers have this disease.

“Symptoms of the disease often begin slowly, with the first symptom typically being mild forgetfulness. The disease can progress to gradual memory loss, increasing difficulty performing normal tasks, impaired judgment, disorientation, personality change, difficulty in learning, and eventual loss of language skills,” (name of official) said.

The disease typically progresses over years, even decades. Initially, a patient’s memory of people and events in the distant past may still be clear, but short-term memory becomes increasingly poor. The person with Alzheimer’s disease might forget where he or she is, as well as the date, time, and season of the year. They may begin to invent
words, or fail to recognize familiar faces. During the later stages of the disease, people often need help with daily living activities, such as eating, grooming, and dressing, and independent living becomes first difficult, and as the disease progresses, impossible.

While there is no cure for Alzheimer’s disease, treatment for some symptoms is available, and research is continuing. There are programs to help patients and their families cope.

The New York State Department of Health supports programs targeting Alzheimer’s disease, including nine local Alzheimer’s Disease Assistance Centers (ADACs) that serve as Centers of Excellence, and the Statewide Coalition of Alzheimer's Association Chapters, which provide essential support to families and caregivers, respite care, and information and referral services to patients with Alzheimer's disease and their families. To learn more about ADAC visit the State Health Department website at www.health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/dementia/alzheimer/adac_map.htm.

For more information on Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, visit the State Health Department Web site at www.health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/dementia or Alzheimer’s Association at www.alz.org.
NEWS RELEASE
Controlling Asthma Triggers

If you or someone you know has asthma or allergy symptoms, you may be able to breathe easier by finding your “triggers”. A trigger is anything that makes your asthma or allergy worse. Triggers are different for each person. Triggers can be found outdoors or indoors, at home, school or work. Common triggers include:

- Dust
- Pests such as mice, rats or cockroaches
- Tobacco smoke and wood smoke
- Pets with fur or feathers
- Cleaning solvents, paint, perfume or any strong odors or fumes
- Hot or cold weather or outdoor air pollution
- Colds and flu
- Mold

“You may be able to add more triggers to this list. Other things may also trigger your asthma or allergies. It's important to learn which triggers are a problem for you and ask your healthcare provider to help,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name). He/she may suggest that you:

- Keep a diary of where you are and what you are doing when your asthma or allergy gets worse.
- Try to keep triggers out of the house or the room where you sleep.
- Make an asthma action plan to be sure you know how and when to take your asthma medicines.

“Finding triggers isn't always easy. If you do know your triggers, cutting down exposure to them may help avoid asthma and allergy attacks,” (name of official) said.

‘If you don’t know your triggers, try to limit your exposure to one suspected trigger at a time. Doing this may show you if the trigger was a problem for you,” (he/she) said.
Here are some tips to reduce triggers in the home:

- Make your car and home smoke-free. Ask family members and friends to smoke outdoors if they must smoke. Get help if you or a family member is having a hard time quitting. It's free to call the New York State Smoker's Quitline at 866-NYQUITS (866-697-8487).
- Avoid wood stoves and fireplaces. Wood smoke can be a problem for children and adults with asthma and allergies.
- Create a pet-free zone. Keep pets off furniture and out of bedrooms. Wash your hands and face and change your clothes after playing with pets. Weekly pet baths may help cut down on the amount of pet saliva and dander in the home.
- Deal with cockroach infestations by taking away their food, water and hiding places. Put away food, clean up spills, fix leaks and seal cracks in floors, walls and ceilings. Dead roaches and roach droppings collect in house dust and may trigger asthma or allergy attacks. Keeping your home clean will help.
- Keep excess moisture down to control mold. Mold needs water to grow. Open windows or use fans to stop moisture from building up in bathrooms, kitchens, and basements. The basement in particular may need a dehumidifier. And remember, the water in the dehumidifier must be emptied and the container cleaned often to prevent forming mildew.
- Keep strong smells out of the home or at least stay out of the areas where they are being used. Perfume, room deodorizers, cleaning chemicals, paint, or candles can all be triggers.
- Stop dust from building up, even in places where you can't see it, like your bed. Wash bedding regularly in hot water. Get rid of clutter. Choose stuffed toys that are washable and wash them often in hot water.

In general, the best way to avoid triggers is to keep your home clean, dry and comfortable.

To learn more about controlling asthma, visit the New York State Department of Health website at www.health.ny.gov/diseases/asthma.
NEWS RELEASE
October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, (name and title) of the (local health agency name) is encouraging all women to talk to their health care providers about breast cancer screening and their personal risk for the disease.

"Great strides have been made in early detection and treatment of breast cancer, and many women diagnosed with the disease are living long, healthy lives," (name of official) said.

"During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we urge women to consult with their health care providers to learn more about the disease, discuss their fears and concerns, and develop an appropriate plan for breast cancer screening. When coupled with new treatment options, early stage diagnosis through mammography screening can significantly improve a woman's chance of survival," (he/she) said.

It is highly recommended that women between 50 and 74 years of age get a mammogram every two years. Other women, including women who are between 40- and 49-years-old, or those with a family history or other risk factor for breast cancer, or who have any symptoms or changes in their breasts, should talk to their doctor about what screening schedule is right for them.

Recommendations for when a woman should begin breast cancer screening, and how often a woman should be screened may differ among organizations.

"Regardless of these differences, each woman should be aware of her personal risk for breast cancer and decide, with her doctor, when and how she should be screened for breast cancer," (name of official) said.

Breast cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women in New York State. (Lung cancer is the leading cause of death.) On average, more than 14,000 women in New York are newly diagnosed with breast cancer each year, and more than 2,700 women die annually from the disease.

Although the causes of breast cancer are still unknown, the following factors may increase a woman's risk for the disease:

- Advancing age
- Having a first menstrual period at a young age
- Starting menopause at an older age
• Never giving birth or having delayed giving birth to a first child until age 30 or older
• Not breastfeeding
• Having a personal or family history (on the mother's or father's side) of breast cancer, especially early (pre-menopausal) breast cancer
• Having certain gene mutations such as BRCA 1 or BRCA 2
• Being overweight or obese
• Drinking alcoholic beverages (The level of risk rises as the amount of alcohol consumed rises.)
• Being sedentary
• Having a history of radiation exposure to the chest
• Taking hormone replacement therapy for an extended period of time

Even if a woman has one or more of the risk factors for breast cancer, it does not mean she will be diagnosed with the disease. Conversely, many women diagnosed with breast cancer do not have any risk factors or unusual symptoms, which is why screening is important for all women. Those who do have a personal or family history of breast cancer may want to consider genetic counseling to determine if they are at greater risk for developing the disease.

Although research on the causes of breast cancer is ongoing, there are many ways to improve outcomes related to cancer. These include not smoking and avoiding exposure to secondhand smoke, making healthy food choices, getting regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, and, specifically for women, breastfeeding their infants and getting recommended cancer screenings.

Choosing how you will feed your baby is one of the most important decisions you will make as new parents. Today, more and more couples are choosing to breastfeed. By breastfeeding, you give your baby security, nourishment and love, all at once!

While some women look forward to their chance to breastfeed, others may worry, especially if they do not have the support of their family and friends. These feelings of uncertainty are normal.

“Not only is breast milk best for your baby, breastfeeding can be an exciting and fulfilling part of motherhood. It can even make your life easier,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

“Women and their families should visit the Breastfeeding Partners website www.breastfeedingpartners.org to learn more about breastfeeding, how to get started, going back to work, recent issues in the media and more,” (he/she) said.

The Breastfeeding Partners web site was developed by the New York State Women Infants and Children (WIC) program for breastfeeding mothers, pregnant women and their families. The web site is also available in Spanish.

The web site includes a training section for health professionals. Information is presented in “classrooms” to help health care workers keep up-to-date in breastfeeding management. Video clips, training resources and bulletin boards are available under this password-protected portion of the site.
New York State has a long history of breastfeeding support and promotion in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, which includes the Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program.

Peer counselors are mothers in the community with personal breastfeeding experience who provide advice and support to other mothers. They act as mentors or friends, giving new mothers confidence and support before and during breastfeeding. A breastfeeding peer counselor has breastfed her children and understands the challenges and how to overcome the barriers.

Both breastfeeding mothers and peer counselors can benefit by logging onto www.breastfeedingpartners.org. For more information, call the (local health agency name) at (telephone number).
NEWS RELEASE
Child Passenger Safety

Motor vehicle injuries are the leading cause of death among children in the U.S. But, (name and title) of the (local health agency name) says many of these deaths can be prevented. Child safety seats reduce the risk of death in passenger cars by 71 percent for infants and 54 percent for toddlers ages one to four years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). New York State law requires children under the age of four to be buckled into a federally approved child safety seat when riding in a motor vehicle. The safest place is in the back seat, said (name of official).

Four basic types of child safety seats are available: rear-facing infant seats, designed for infants up to 22 to 30 pounds, depending upon the model; convertible seats, which can be used rear-facing for infants and then “converted” to forward-facing for toddlers; forward-facing only seats, which are designed for toddlers up to 40 to 80 pounds, depending on the model; and belt positioning booster seats, which are used for children who have grown out of the height and weight limits of forward-facing convertible and forward-facing only seats. It is important to use an appropriate child safety restraint system based upon a child’s age and size.

(Name of official) advises that infants ride in rear-facing child safety seats as long as possible. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing at least until they are one year old and weigh at least 20 pounds or reach the height and weight limit for that particular seat.

A research study conducted by the Center of Applied Biomechanics at the University of Virginia found that one- and two-year-old children were five times safer when riding in rear-facing child safety seats when compared to forward-facing child safety seats. When children outgrow rear-facing child safety seats, they should ride in forward facing safety seats until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat. Refer to the manufacturer’s instructions for the child safety seat.
Many parents wrongly believe that once their child reaches age four and has outgrown his or her forward-facing child safety seat, an adult seat belt offers adequate protection. Using seat belts to secure small children can be dangerous. A seat belt designed for an adult can cut across a child’s neck and the shoulder belt can ride up over the stomach, which could cause a serious or fatal injury in a crash. However, a booster seat positions the adult seat belt correctly and safely while offering the child greater comfort and visibility.

All children under the age of 13 should ride in the back seat. Adults should avoid placing children in front of airbags. The impact of the inflated bag could cause serious or even fatal injuries to a child. Putting children in the back seat eliminates the risk of injury from deployed front passenger-side airbags and places children in the safest part of the vehicle in the event of a crash. New York State law requires back seat passengers up to age 16 to be properly restrained when riding in a motor vehicle.

Whatever type of car seat you use, make sure it’s installed correctly and that you use it every time your child rides in the car. Refer to the manufacturer’s instructions that came with the child safety seat and your vehicle owner manual when installing a child safety seat or booster seat.

A certified child passenger safety technician can provide hands-on educational assistance if you have questions or need help installing a child safety seat. To find a child safety seat fitting station or child safety seat check-up event in your area go to www.safeny.com. For more information on child passenger safety, visit the New York State Department of Health website at www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention.
October is Dental Hygiene Month to remind us how important oral health is to overall health.

“Everyone wants healthy teeth and a beautiful smile - but maintaining a healthy smile means more than just cosmetic appearance – it’s important to realize the crucial role that oral health plays in one’s overall health,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

“Nearly 75 percent of adults in New York suffer from various forms of gum disease, and most of them don’t even know it. This makes dental health a major health concern for everyone,” (he/she) said.

Oral hygiene can affect more than just your smile. Routine dental care – combined with dental check-ups - can save your smile, your teeth, and even your life. Bacteria in the gums (periodontal disease) can affect not just your teeth, but also your overall health. Although reversible in its early stages, periodontal disease can affect your overall health. Numerous studies have shown a real link between gum disease and heart disease. Studies have also shown that expectant women with periodontal disease are up to seven times more likely to have premature, low-birth-weight babies.

People with severe dental problems cannot chew or digest food properly, which can lead to poor nutrition.

“The mouth reflects a person’s general health and well-being. Good oral hygiene includes daily tooth brushing, flossing, and regular visits to the dentist. All are important to a person’s overall health,” (name of official) said.

Having regular dental check-ups is one of the most important things you can do to ensure that your teeth last a lifetime. And changes in oral health may be the first signs of more serious health problems, such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or even HIV.
Dental professionals are trained to routinely screen for these oral symptoms and recommend appropriate care,” (he/she said).

For children, this connection to one’s overall health is even more important. According to the U.S. surgeon General, tooth decay is the single most common childhood disease - five times more common than asthma, and seven times more common than hay fever.

“Tooth decay is a common and largely preventable childhood disease. Very young children with severe dental developmental problems may not grow normally, and may even suffer serious behavioral and attention disorders, (name of official) said.

“The observance of National Dental Hygiene Month is just part of a year-round awareness effort that that requires the support and cooperation of health care providers, health plans, dentists, dental hygienists, and dental insurers. Every visit to the dentist should be viewed as an opportunity for achieving and maintaining good oral health,” (name of official) said.

To learn more about dental hygiene and the importance of developing a good regimen of dental hygiene, visit the New York State Department of Health website at www.health.ny.gov/prevention/dental.
NEWS RELEASE  
November is Diabetes Awareness Month

When we think of November and Thanksgiving and pumpkins, keep in mind it’s also Diabetes Awareness Month. Diabetes is a disease that affects one in 10 adults in the United States — and whose prevalence is climbing with each passing year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) project this statistic will rise to an alarming one in three U.S. adults by 2050!

(Name and title) of the (local health agency name) described diabetes as a disease in which the body does not make any insulin or can't use the insulin it does make as well as it should. Insulin is a hormone made in the body. It helps glucose (sugar) from food enter the cells where it can be used to give the body energy. Without insulin, glucose remains in the blood stream and cannot be used for energy by the cells. Over time, having too much glucose in the blood can cause many health problems.

“Obesity is a risk factor for developing diabetes, and as our nation’s collective weight continues to increase, so do incidence rates of diabetes,” said (name of official).

The statistics on diabetes are alarming and growing:

- Currently, diabetes is a leading cause of blindness in the U.S., accounting for 12,000 to 24,000 new cases per year
- Diabetes is the 7th leading cause of death
- Diabetes is the foremost cause of kidney failure, accounting for 44 percent of new cases annually
- The disease affects over 25.8 million children and adults –8.3 percent of the total population
- Over 79 million Americans have a condition called “pre-diabetes” that can develop into diabetes unless diet and exercise-related lifestyle changes are made.

Complications associated with diabetes include visual impairment, nerve damage, and poor circulation in the hands and feet that may lead to amputations, sexual dysfunction and
skin issues. Diabetes can also put you at a higher risk for heart disease and bone and joint disorders.

Though diabetes is the general name for the disease, there are actually three different types of this disorder:

- **Type 1 diabetes**, formerly called “juvenile diabetes” or “insulin dependent diabetes,” is usually diagnosed in children, teenagers or young adults, but can also occur later in life. This type accounts for only 5 percent of all diabetes cases.

- **Type 2 diabetes**, the most common form, is also referred to as “noninsulin dependent diabetes,” or “adult onset” diabetes (though the latter term is misleading since its prevalence is on the rise among children). People at risk for type 2 diabetes include those who are overweight or obese, inactive, people with family history of diabetes, low HDL, high blood pressure, high triglycerides, women who had gestational diabetes during pregnancy, or who had a baby weighing 9 lbs or more at birth, and certain racial and ethnic groups.

- **Gestational diabetes** occurs in women who are pregnant. About 3 to 10 percent of pregnant women develop gestational diabetes and usually only spans the length of pregnancy.

Symptoms of diabetes include: frequent urination, blurred vision, unusual thirst, involuntary weight loss, recurring skin, gum, or bladder infections, and tingling or numbness in the hands and feet.

Be aware that people living with diabetes can also be asymptomatic, so routine doctor visits are important to screen your blood and be evaluated for risk factors.

We can all lower our risk of developing type 2 diabetes by maintaining a healthy weight, eat a well balanced diet, minimize intake of trans fat and saturated fat, get regular physical activity and by not smoking. To learn more about diabetes, visit the New York State Department of Health website at [www.health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/diabetes](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/diabetes).
Drunk or drugged drivers can affect many people. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, three in ten people will become involved in an alcohol-related motor vehicle crash at some time in their lives.

“If you are not directly involved in a motor vehicle crash caused by an impaired driver, the chances are that you will have a friend or family member who is affected. In 2001, nearly 16,000 Americans died in motor vehicle crashes caused by impaired driving,” said (name and title) of the (county health agency name).

December is Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, a time when drivers are urged to take extra precautions to avoid unnecessary tragedy during the holiday season.

A common misconception is that beer is less dangerous than liquor or wine. A driver’s judgement and reaction time becomes impaired with only one alcoholic drink, whether it is liquor, wine or beer.

“Only the passage of time metabolizes alcohol in the body and sobers a person. Coffee, a cold shower, fresh air or physical activity have no effect on how fast alcohol is metabolized,” (name of official) said.

(He/She) says you can help your guests get home safely by:

- Offering non-alcoholic beverages, such as fruit juices or soft drinks.
- Always serving food with alcohol. High protein and carbohydrate foods, such as cheese and meats, are especially good, because they slow the rate at which the body absorbs alcohol.
- Stop serving alcohol about two hours before the party is over. Your guests will then have time for their bodies to absorb any alcohol they’ve consumed. Serve coffee or other non-alcoholic beverages, as well as food.

If you observe that one of your guests is impaired, don’t hesitate to intervene. The (county health agency name) suggests that you:

- Drive your friend home or ask another sober person to provide a ride.
- Suggest that your impaired friend stay overnight in your home.
- Pay for a taxi ride home for your friend.
- Don’t give in. Friends don’t let friends drink and then drive.

“New York State recognizes that drivers who are under the influence of alcohol or other
drugs are a danger to themselves and others. The penalties for driving while intoxicated (DWI)
are severe so as to deter dangerous drivers and reduce the tragic toll of injuries and death,” (name
of official) said.

The penalty for a first-time DWI conviction is revocation of your driver’s license for at least
six months. To obtain a new driver’s license, you must re-apply to the State Department of
Motor Vehicles following the period of revocation. It is estimated that attorney fees, fines, auto
insurance surcharges and other expenses resulting from a DWI conviction can amount to $8,000
or more.

The New York State Zero Tolerance Law makes it illegal for a person under 21 to operate a
vehicle after consuming any alcohol. The penalties for a first-time violation include a six-month
license suspension and a fine and fee totaling $225.

For more information on preventing drunk and drugged driving, call the (county health
agency name) at (phone number).
NEWS RELEASE
November is Epilepsy Awareness Month

November is Epilepsy Awareness Month, when we are reminded that epilepsy has far too long been a “hidden” disorder that fosters misconceptions.

Seizures caused by epilepsy are among the most common disorders of the nervous system. Epilepsy affects people of all ages, races and ethnic backgrounds. It can develop at any age, although epilepsy most commonly develops in children under the age of 18 and adults over 65. Sometimes epilepsy is inherited; however, there is often no known cause,

“About 7,000 New Yorkers are newly diagnosed with epilepsy each year,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Within the brain, nerve cells pass electrical signals to one another, controlling the way the body functions. A seizure is a change in sensation, awareness or behavior brought about by the interruption of these signals. Seizures may vary from a momentary disruption to short periods of unconsciousness, staring spells or convulsions.

“For a person with epilepsy, seizures can happen randomly and unpredictably. But a variety of situations can trigger seizures, including extreme stress, lack of sleep, watching flashing or strobe lights, low blood sugar, excessive intake of alcohol, certain medications, hormonal changes and illness,” (name of official) said.

“Some people with epilepsy can pinpoint the triggers for their seizures. For people on medication to control their seizures, the most common trigger is not taking their medication as instructed,” (he/she) said.
Should you be around a person who is having an epileptic seizure, stay calm and keep the person safe until the seizure stops naturally by itself. Other things to remember are:

- Move things out of the way to help the person avoid injury.
- Don't hold the person down or try to stop his or her movements.
- Loosen any tight clothing around the neck.
- Put something flat and soft, like a folded jacket, under the head.
- Turn him or her gently onto one side. This will help keep the airway clear. Do not try to force the mouth open with your fingers. It is a misconception that a person having a seizure can swallow their tongue.
- Time the seizure with your watch for future reference for the individual and caregivers.
- Do not attempt CPR unless the person doesn’t start breathing again after the seizure has stopped.
- Offer to call a taxi, friend or relative to help the person get home, if necessary.
- Call an ambulance if the person was injured during the seizure or if the seizure lasted longer than five minutes.

To learn more about epilepsy, visit the New York State Department of Health website at health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/epilepsy.
NEWS RELEASE
October is Eye Injury Prevention Month

“Each year in this country, there are nearly 2.5 million eye injuries,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name). “Most of them are preventable.

“People tend to think that eye injuries are occupational health hazards, but that’s no longer entirely true. Most eye injuries now occur at home or while playing sports. So the use of activity-appropriate eye protection is critical to prevent a potentially tragic loss of vision,” (he/she) said.

‘Eye protection’ does not mean just wearing the contact lenses or glasses you might already be using for vision correction. The exact type of eye protection needed will depend upon the particular activity you are engaged in. For most activities around the home, standard American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-approved protective eyewear should be enough. Sports eye protection should meet the specific requirements of that sport. These are usually spelled out by the sport’s governing body, and by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). Wearing proper eye protection while playing sports can decrease the risk of eye injury by 90 percent. An eye care professional can recommend eyewear appropriate for a specific activity.

Different sports have varying levels of risk for eye injury. The American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Society of Ocular Trauma recommend that every home should have at least one pair of ANSI-approved protective eyewear, to be used when doing any activity that could pose a risk for eye injuries.
Many routine activities can pose a risk for eye injury:

Risks around the home include:

- Using hazardous chemicals and products such as oven cleaners and bleach. (Incidents involving common household products cause 125,000 eye injuries each year.)
- Cooking foods that can splatter hot grease or oil.
- Drilling or hammering screws or nails into walls or masonry surfaces.
- Using hot objects such as curling irons near the face.

Risks in the yard include:

- Mowing the lawn.
- Using a power trimmer or edger, or clipping hedges and bushes,
- Using fireworks.

Risks in the garage or workshop include:

- Using power or hand tools.
- Working with solvents or other chemicals.
- Performing any task that produces fragments, dust, or other irritants.
- Securing equipment or loads with bungee cords.

“For all of these activities, it’s important to keep in mind that bystanders also face significant risk, and should also take precautions against eye injuries,” (name of official) said.

“This is especially important for children, who love to watch their parents perform routine chores in and around the house. Bystanders of all ages need eye protection, too, or should leave the area where the activity is occurring,” (he/she) said.

To learn more about preventing eye injuries, visit the National Institutes of Health eye injury website at http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/eyeinjuries.html.
NEWS RELEASE
Halloween Safety

Many people think of Halloween as a time for fun and treats. But, roughly four times as many children ages five through 14 are killed while walking on Halloween compared with other nights of the year, and falls are a leading cause of injuries among children on Halloween. “Many Halloween-related injuries can be prevented if parents closely supervise school-aged children during trick-or-treat activities,” said (name and title) of the (county health agency name).

“Halloween poses special risks to young pedestrians,” noted (name of official). “For example, children spend most of their time outdoors during daylight hours. However, Halloween activities often occur after dark. Also, children engaged in “Trick or Treat” activities frequently cross streets at mid-block rather than at corners or crosswalks, putting them at increased risk for injuries.”

Many parents overestimate their children’s street-crossing skills. Young children may lack the physical ability to cross a street quickly, and their small size limits their visibility to drivers. They lack the ability to accurately judge the distance and speed of oncoming traffic. “Children are likely to choose the shortest, rather than the safest, route across streets, often darting out between parked cars,” stated (name of official).

Both adults and children need to think about safety on this annual day of make-believe. Before your children leave the house on Halloween night,

You should:
• Make sure that an adult will supervise children under age 12.
• Plan and discuss the route trick-or-treaters intend to follow.
• Instruct your children to travel only in familiar areas and along an established route.
• Teach your children to stop only at houses or apartments that are well-lit, and never to enter a stranger’s home.
• Establish a return time.
• Tell your youngsters not to eat any treats until they return home and you have inspected the goodies.

Costumes should:
• Be made from fire-retardant materials.
• Be loose enough to wear over warm clothes.
• Be short enough so that they won’t cause a tripping hazard.
• Be made of light-colored materials.
• Have strips of reflective tape to make children more visible.

Masks and accessories should:
• Not obstruct a child’s vision.
• Have nose and mouth openings and large eye-holes.
• Be made of cardboard or flexible materials.
• Be light-colored and trimmed with reflective tape.

Once back home, (name of official) advises parents to check the children’s treats to make certain that they have not been tampered with, and are safely sealed. Be especially careful with fruit—cut it open before allowing your child to eat it. Most importantly, if in doubt, throw it out! For more information on Halloween safety tips, contact the (county health agency name) at (phone number).
NEWS RELEASE
Tips for Healthy Eating Out

Eating out can mean anything from the convenience of fast food to the luxury of a long, leisurely dining experience. Whichever style you choose, you can make it a healthier experience by checking the calories and unhealthy fat, cholesterol and trans fat on menu items.

Obesity has reached epidemic proportions, both in New York State and across the nation. Almost 60 percent of New York adults were overweight or obese according to a Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey conducted by the New York State Department of Health in 2006. Overweight and obesity put them at increased risk for life-threatening conditions including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

“Poor nutritional choices, especially when combined with lack of physical activity, is fueling the obesity epidemic. Eating out can be a big contributor to the problem of poor nutrition, but knowing what to look for on the menu and talking to your server can make the experience both pleasurable and healthy,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

The average adult needs about 2,000 calories a day. A single meal of a double hamburger, large fries and soda can be more than half of the calories needed all day.

The (local health agency name) offers these tips to cut calories, fat and cholesterol:

- Look for restaurants that offer choices of smaller portions, have locally grown products on their menu and post nutrition information on their menu and on-line.
• When choosing items, be aware of calorie- and fat-packed salad dressings, spreads, cheese, sour cream etc. For example, ask for a grilled chicken sandwich without the mayonnaise.
• Breaded, batter-dipped and tempura all mean fried food, which is heavy in fat. Look instead for lower fat, grilled, broiled and flame-cooked. Other good choices include entrées that are steamed, poached, roasted or baked in their own juices.
• Order a baked, boiled or roasted potato instead of fries. Ask the server to leave off the butter and sour cream.
• When choosing from a salad bar, avoid items like grated cheese, prepared salads, cream dressings, chopped eggs, bacon bits and croutons.
• Don’t be afraid to special order. Ask for olive oil and vinegar for your salads or order the dressing “on the side” and spoon only a small amount on at a time.
• Watch portion size. At some restaurants a single serving provides enough for two meals. Choose a smaller portion size, order a side salad instead of fries and don’t supersize anything.

“Many restaurant foods may be prepared with trans fats. They include baked goods, fried foods and margarine. Trans fat is similar to saturated fat in meat and dairy fat and increases the risk of heart disease by raising total cholesterol,” said (name of official).

“Check the menu and ask your server about trans fat and saturated fat before ordering. Avoiding trans fat and saturated fat is part of a heart-healthy diet, which also includes eating more vegetables and fruit and choosing low-fat and non-fat milk and dairy products,” (he/she) said.

To learn more about obesity and healthy nutrition, visit the State Health Department web site at health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition.
NEWS RELEASE
Lead and Toy Safety

Although dust from lead-based paint is still the number one cause of childhood lead poisoning, children may also be exposed to lead from toys. Some toys made in other countries and imported into the U.S., and some antique toys and collectibles passed down through generations may put children at risk for lead exposure. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has recalled a number of toys containing high levels of lead. For a list of these toys, visit the New York State Department of Health’s web site at: http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/lead/recalls.

If you suspect that your child has a toy containing lead, remove the toy immediately. Children should not be allowed to play with recalled toys. Put the toys in a place where children cannot find them, until the toys can be returned or destroyed. Because each recall is different, the State Health Department recommends that you check the recall notice to learn how to return the toy for a refund or replacement. Recall notices are available through the State Health Department's web site or the Consumer Product Safety Commission's web site at http://www.cpsc.gov.

Parents should talk with their health care providers about the need for blood lead testing and any other questions they have about lead poisoning. The State Department of Health recommends that a blood lead test be done for all children less than six years old who have played with one of the recalled toys, especially if the child frequently chews on toys or puts toys in his or her mouth, or has the frequent hand-to-mouth activity that is typical of young children. Just holding or playing with the toy with hand contact alone may not result in as much lead exposure. As a reminder, all children should receive routine blood lead tests at age one and again at age two. Most children with blood poisoning have no symptoms.

“Lead dust is often invisible to the naked eye and has no smell,” warned (name and title) of the (local agency name). “Children may be exposed to it from consumer products through normal hand-to-mouth activity. They often place toys, fingers, and other objects in their mouth, exposing themselves to lead paint or dust.”

Only a certified laboratory can accurately test a toy for lead. Although do-it-yourself lead test kits are available, they are not reliable. You may have heard about
home test kits, which are sold for use in the home to detect lead in paint, soil, and dust (and, in some cases, water, dishware, glasses, and ceramics). A chemical reaction occurs when chemicals in the kit are exposed to lead, causing a color change. The State Health Department and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency do not recommend home test kits to detect lead in toys, paint, dust, or soil. Studies show that these kits are not reliable enough to tell the difference between high and low levels of lead.

In 2008, Congress passed the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act, which lowered the allowable level of lead in children’s products. However, some toys from other countries, and some older toys could have higher lead levels, and these toys can still be found in some homes, retail stores, and thrift shops.

“It’s important that parents and caregivers take steps to protect children from exposure to lead,” said (name of official). The (local health agency name) recommends the following:

- Regularly wash children’s hands, face, toys, bottles, and pacifiers. Hands and toys can become contaminated from lead in household dust or exterior soil.

- Fix peeling paint and make home repairs safely, to keep dust levels down. Call your local health department before you begin work, to learn how to make lead-safe repairs.

Children and pregnant women should not be present in housing built before 1978 that is undergoing renovation. They should not participate in activities that disturb old paint or in cleaning up paint debris after work is completed.

Regularly wet-mop floors and wet-wipe window components. Because household dust is a major source of lead, parents should wet-mop floors and wet-wipe horizontal surfaces every two or three weeks.

For more information about lead safety, call the (name of health agency) at (telephone number).
NEWS RELEASE
Low Cost Emergency Preparedness

Are you ready if an emergency disrupts your life? Do you have a plan in place to protect your family before a disaster happens?

“By using community resources, information from the Internet and even items from your own home, your family can develop an effective emergency plan that gives you peace of mind without a big price tag,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

(He/She) suggested these free or low-cost preparedness tips:

Add an entry called “ICE,” for “In Case of Emergency,” to your cell phone contact list. This number should dial the family member who can respond to medical decisions if you are injured or unconscious. List backup emergency contacts as ICE1, ICE2, etc.

Attend emergency preparedness events, including fairs, exhibits, first aid training, and children’s photo identification programs. These events often offer emergency planning kits, first aid kits, flashlights, and information on sheltering and emergency pet care. Take advantage of photo identification cards for your children. Some schools, in conjunction with school photography businesses, offer ID cards.

Use the Internet to find free templates for phone lists and ID cards, emergency plans and event notices. The American Academy of Pediatrics has emergency family card templates at www.aap.org. The Internet also has evacuation plans, personal assistance plans and recommended emergency supply lists for people with disabilities. Libraries offer free Internet services for people without personal computer access.

List numbers for ambulance, poison control center, doctors, and weather updates. Keep the list on the refrigerator and near all phones. Add these numbers to your ICE list.

Create a family and friends contact list and keep copies in your child’s backpack, your wallet and at work. Explain to your children when to use the contact list. If possible, include a recent photo of family members and pets.

Develop a comprehensive family emergency plan. Recycle a binder and keep these materials together. Include the following:

- An emergency plan to get out of the house. Practice regularly with your family.
- A location where family members will meet if they are separated and unable to return home. Review this with everyone.
• A family and friends contact sheet. Include an out-of-state person that can help coordinate your family’s whereabouts if separated.
• All emergency plans at school, work and home. Adults and children should know them.
• Copies of essential items, including identification cards, credit cards, extra set of house and car keys, insurance and health policies, current family photos and cash.
• A list of medications, medical history, allergies, blood type and other critical information for everyone in the household.
• Pet information, including photos, vet records, and boarding information. Most emergency shelters do not allow pets. Contact your County Emergency Management Office and ask where you could leave your pet if necessary.

Keep a backpack filled with clothing for each family member, high-energy foods, flashlights, and first aid kit. Visit emergency web sites for tailoring these “grab and go” bags. Pack one for work, too.

Purchase food and other emergency items in bulk or share costs with another family. Collect coupons to lower the cost of these items and watch for sales. Include powered milk, peanut butter, crackers, granola bars and other high-energy foods. Consider including flashlights and radios and extra batteries, disposable diapers, baby food and formula, paper products, bleach and plastic bags. Rotate as necessary.

Assemble an emergency car kit from extra items you may have at home. Consider: comfortable walking shoes, warm jacket, blankets, flashlight and extra batteries, portable or battery-operated radio, first aid kit, personal medical information, foil water pouches or bottled water.

For more preparedness tips visit www.nyhealth.gov, ready.gov or www.redcross.org. YouTube has informational videos, including, “Preparing a Family Emergency Kit in Plain English.” Local public broadcasting stations offer reading programs on health and emergency topics for people who are blind and visually impaired, and American Sign Language preparedness videos can be found at www.deafdoc.org.
NEWS RELEASE:
Healthy Pregnancy

Are you pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant? Get prenatal care early. This is the health care you get while you are pregnant. Prenatal care can help you and your unborn baby stay healthy. It’s important to see your doctor regularly and to keep all your scheduled doctor appointments.

“If you are pregnant, schedule an appointment with a doctor or health care provider right away. The doctor will do a complete physical exam, calculate your due date and answer any questions you may have,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

When a woman is pregnant, she should be in the best possible health. If you are pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant, follow these guidelines:

- Take a daily multivitamin that contains folic acid. Folic acid is a B vitamin that helps prevent serious birth defects of the brain and heart. You must take the folic acid prior to pregnancy and within the first three months.
- Stop smoking.
- Stop drinking alcohol and/or using illegal drugs.
- If you have a medical condition, be sure it is under control.
- Talk to your doctor about any prescription drugs or over-the-counter drugs you are taking. Some could be harmful to your baby.
- Avoid contact with toxic substances. Stay away from chemicals and cat or rodent feces.
- Avoid x-rays. If you need dental work, tell your dentist you are pregnant so that extra care can be taken.

While you are pregnant, prenatal visits to the doctor will include routine tests such as blood work to check for anemia or low iron, your blood type, and your HIV status (with your consent). Your health care provider may also check your blood pressure, measure your weight gain, measure your abdomen to check on your baby’s growth and check your baby’s heart rate.

If you are pregnant and need assistance, help is available. New York State offers insurance programs for women and teens who are pregnant and meet certain income guidelines. The insurance programs cover the costs of prenatal care services for eligible women, including routine medical check-ups and lab work, hospital care during pregnancy, and health care for the baby for at least the first year. There are also prenatal care providers and other organizations which can help pregnant women apply for insurance and other programs such as WIC.

For more information, call the New York State’s Growing up Health Hotline at 1-800-522-5006.
NEWS RELEASE
October is SIDS Awareness Month

It’s true, but not everyone knows that babies sleep safest on their backs. Babies from one month to one year of age are at risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). SIDS is when a baby dies suddenly without explanation. The (local health agency name) is calling attention to this problem during the month of October which is recognized as SIDS Awareness Month.

Although SIDS causes more than 2,000 deaths in the United States each year, said (name and title) of the (local health agency name), its cause is unknown. However, (he/she) said, there are ways to lower your baby’s risk. When your baby is getting ready to nap or go to bed for the night, one of the most important things you can do is to put your baby to sleep on his or her back. You should tell everyone - relatives, babysitters, daycare workers and friends – about putting your baby on his or her back.

Some parents are concerned that babies will choke if they spit up or vomit while sleeping on their backs. However, babies will automatically swallow or cough the fluid back up. There is no evidence that sleeping on the back causes choking, said (name).

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CSPC) warns against placing babies in adult beds. Room-sharing without bed sharing can reduce the risk of SIDS, said (name). Sharing your bed with your baby when you are very tired or after alcohol use can increase your baby’s risk of suffocation. Babies can become trapped between the mattress and bed frame, a wall, or other furniture. The only safe place for babies to sleep is in a crib that meets current safety standards.

To reduce your baby’s risk for SIDS:

- Always put your baby on his or her back to sleep or take a nap.
- **Place a baby on a firm, flat, crib mattress.** Don’t put your baby to sleep on soft surfaces, such as pillows, waterbeds, sofa cushions, beanbag chairs, sheepskins or futons.

- **Limit bedding to a fitted sheet.** Remove pillows, quilts, comforters, stuffed toys and other soft items. Avoid bedding that can bunch up around your baby’s face and block his or her breathing.

- **Keep your baby from overheating.** To keep your baby warm without covers, dress him or her in a blanket sleeper in cold weather. In warm weather, dress your baby in lightweight pajamas.

- **Don’t let anyone smoke near your baby.** Also, avoid alcohol and illicit drugs before and after birth.

- **Breastfeeding is recommended.** Nursing, may help protect your baby.

- **Make sure your baby gets all his or her shots.** Being immunized lowers your baby’s risk of SIDS.

  For more information about SIDS, visit the New York State Department of Health website at [www.health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/sids](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/conditions/sids).
No matter how old you are or how long you’ve smoked, quitting can help you live longer and be healthier. The (local health agency name) invites you to take the first step toward that goal by participating in the Great American Smokeout on the third Thursday of November.

Quitting smoking is not easy, but the good news is that the healing process begins on the first day that you quit. Twenty minutes after your last cigarette your blood pressure begins to decrease and pulse rate begins to drop. After eight hours the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal and the oxygen level increases to normal. Just 24 hours after your last cigarette your chance of a heart attack has decreased.

“In 2010, 74 percent of adult New York smokers said they wanted to quit,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name). “The Great American Smokeout provides them with an ideal opportunity.

“You will feel the difference when you quit,” (he/she) said. “You will breathe more easily, have more energy, lower your risk for a heart attack, have a better sense of smell and taste, and be able to walk more easily.”

Tobacco use is the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. Tobacco kills more Americans each year than alcohol, cocaine, crack, heroin, homicide, suicide, car accidents, fire and AIDS combined.

According to the 2010 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, there are about 2.3 million smokers in New York State, and smoking kills more than 25,500 New
Yorkers each year. Secondhand smoke kills 2,500. For every person who dies from a smoking related disease, 20 more suffer with at least one serious illness.

Cigarettes and other tobacco products are the only legal consumer products that are lethal when used exactly as the manufacturer intends. There are 70 known carcinogens in cigarettes.

Tobacco smoke contains at least 7,000 chemicals including: ammonia, cyanide, arsenic, and formaldehyde.

The New York State Smokers’ Quitline helps smokers in their goal to overcome the addiction of tobacco. Call the Quitline at 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) or visit the Quitline’s Web site at www.nysmokefree.com for free help and a free two-week starter kit of nicotine patches. This is a free, confidential service that can help you become smoke-free.

Smokers also can talk to their doctors, participate in stop-smoking groups, and talk to friends and family for encouragement and support. Here are some tips for quitting smoking:

- Visit your doctor for support and advice with your quit plan.
- Set a quit date and mark it on your calendar. Get rid of ashtrays, lighters and cigarettes.
- Make a list of reasons why you want to quit.
- Make a list of family and friends who will support you.
- Avoid triggers, including alcohol, caffeine and other smokers.
- Exercise to relieve stress, and to improve your mood and health.
- Consider using a safe nicotine alternative such as replacement patches, gum or lozenges.

For more information about the burden of tobacco use and secondhand smoke, visit the New York State Department of Health website at http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco_control.
NEWS RELEASE
STD Prevention and Screening

The most effective way to treat and prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) begins with screening. Screening is testing for a disease in someone who doesn't have symptoms. For many New Yorkers, STD screening is a part of routine health care. The (name and title) of the (local health agency name) recommends the following steps for:

- **Everyone.** The one STD screening test that everyone between the ages of 13 and 65 should have is a blood or saliva test for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. People who have new or multiple sex partners, or have other risks, should consider repeat testing. Most health care settings in the United States offer a rapid HIV test with same-day results.

- **Pregnant women.** Screening for HIV, hepatitis B, Chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis generally takes place at the first prenatal visit and sometimes later in the pregnancy.

- **Young women who are sexually active.** All sexually active women under age 25 should be tested for Chlamydia and gonorrhea. This test uses a sample of urine or vaginal fluid. Even if you’ve had Chlamydia or gonorrhea before, you can get it again. It is important to have your sex partner(s) tested and treated, to not re-infect each other.

- **Women ages 21 to 66.** The Pap test screens for cervical abnormalities, including inflammation, precancerous changes and cancer, which is caused by certain strains of human papillomavirus (HPV). Women should have a Pap test at least every three years.

- **Men who have sex with men.** Compared with other groups, men who have sex with men have a higher risk of STDs. Many public health groups recommend at least annual screening for HIV, herpes, gonorrhea, Chlamydia and syphilis.

- **People with HIV.** If you have HIV, it dramatically raises your risk of other STDs.
With improved testing and treatment, most people with access to health care can avoid the long-term consequences of STDs. The (local health agency name) strongly encourages these guidelines to offer the greatest possible margin of safety.

- Before any serious sexual contact, communicate with your partner about practicing safer sex. Reach an explicit agreement about what activities will and won’t be OK.
- Talk with every new partner about getting tested for STDs and HIV, and wait until you both are STD free before having vaginal or anal sex.
- Use a latex or polyurethane condom every time you have intercourse. For oral sex, use a condom or dental dam to prevent contact with your partner’s bodily fluids.
- Use water or silicone-based lubricant with latex condoms. Oil-based products such as petroleum jelly make the condom weak and easy to break.
- Having sex while sober means that you’re more likely to make better choices. Using alcohol or drugs can lower your inhibitions and take more risks.
- Stay with one sex partner who doesn’t have any STDs and HIV, and who only has sex with you.

For more information about preventing and treating STDs and HIV, visit the New York State Department of Health website at health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/std.
NEWS RELEASE
Tech Ready for Emergencies

Are you “tech ready” for emergencies? Knowing how to maximize today’s communication technology can keep you and loved ones healthy and safe. A cell phone and social media networks can quickly help you connect and check in with family, friends and neighbors, and get emergency help, breaking news and weather updates.

“Social media networks and cell phones – plus iPads and other digital devices - - can keep you informed, engaged, and able to communicate in real-time, 24/7, (name and title) of (county health department) said. Being tech ready includes having “the juice” to keep it going even in a power outage, (he/she) said, so have mobile battery packs and hand-crack, battery-operated or solar emergency chargers on hand for your phone and devices.

Here’s more “tech tips”:

- Keep your contacts lists updated across all your social media platforms.
- Program "In Case of Emergency" (ICE) contacts into your cell phone so emergency personnel can contact those people if you are hurt.
- Know how to download and use phone applications or apps. Apps can turn your phone into a flashlight, give you first aid instruction, and keep you updated on weather and road conditions, to give a few examples.
- If you have a traditional landline (non-broadband or Voice over Internet Protocol - VoIP) phone, keep at least one non-cordless receiver in your home because it will work during power outages. Also look into VoIP software that can turn a standard Internet connection into a way to place free phone calls.
- Forward your home phone number to your cell phone number if evacuated.
• Consider purchasing a NOAA weather radio. For details, go to noaa.gov
www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/. NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from the nearest National Weather Service Office. You cannot get this weather information using a regular transmittal radio.

If you have to make calls using your smartphone during or after a disaster:

• Keep the conversation short and share only vital information to emergency personnel and family. Don’t use mobile devices to watch videos, download music or play video games, all of which can add to network congestion. Limit use of these services to help potentially life-saving 9-1-1 calls get through.

• For non-emergency communications, use text messaging, e-mail, or social media. Data-based services like texts and emails are less likely to experience network congestion. Use social media to contact family and friends.

• If you are unsuccessful in completing a call, wait 10 seconds before redialing to help reduce network congestion.

• Conserve your cell phone battery by reducing the brightness of your screen, putting your phone in airplane mode, and closing apps you are not using.

• If you lose power, you can also charge your cell phone in your car. Just be sure your car is in a well-ventilated place (remove it from the garage) and do not go to your car until any danger has passed. You can also listen to your car radio for important news alerts.
“Search the internet for apps, web sites and social media sites that could be helpful during an emergency,” (he/she) said, and save that information to your phone, along with (county health department name)’s social media networks, and facebook.com/NYSDOH and twitter.com/HealthNYGov.
Cigarette smokers will be challenged to stop smoking for 24 hours during the Great American Smokeout on the third Thursday of November. The hope is that they’ll quit forever.

“In 2010, 74 percent of adult New York smokers said they wanted to quit,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name). “The Great American Smokeout provides them with an ideal opportunity.

“Good things will happen if you quit,” (he/she) said. “You will breathe more easily, have more energy, lower your risk for a heart attack, have a better sense of smell and taste, and be able to walk more easily.”

There are about 2.3 million smokers in New York State, and smoking kills 25,500 New Yorkers each year. Secondhand smoke kills 3,000. Another 570,000 New Yorkers are afflicted with serious disease caused by smoking.

The New York State Smokers’ Quitline helps smokers in their goal to overcome the addiction of tobacco. Call the Quitline at 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) or visit the Quitline’s website at www.nysmokefree.com. This is a free, confidential service that can help you become smoke-free.

Research indicates a greater success rate in beating the addiction when smokers have some means of support (when compared to quit attempts with no assistance), such as:

- telephone smoking cessation hotlines
- nicotine replacement products
- counseling
The NYS Smokers’ Quitline provides the above services free to eligible New Yorkers. Smokers also can talk to their doctors, participate in stop-smoking groups, and talk to friends and family for encouragement and support.

Here are some tips for quitting smoking:

- Call the New York State Smokers’ Quitline at 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487).
- Set a quit date and mark it on your calendar. Get rid of ashtrays, lighters and cigarettes.
- Visit your doctor for support and advice with your quit plan.
- Make a list of reasons why you want to quit.
- Make a list of family and friends who will support you.
- Avoid triggers, including alcohol, caffeine and other smokers.
- Exercise to relieve stress, and to improve your mood and health.
- Consider using a safe nicotine alternative such as replacement patches, gum or lozenges.

For more information about the Great American Smokeout, call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit the Society’s web site at www.cancer.org.
NEWS RELEASE
Winter Flood Preparedness

Flooding is the most common natural disaster in the United States. While flooding tends to be associated with warm weather months, floods are a year-round hazard. The risks associated with flooding don’t end when the cold weather begins, warns (name and title of official) of the (local health agency name).

This winter can bring a range of conditions across the state that could affect your community. Areas that receive less snow and rain this winter season may later experience drought-like conditions.

Fluctuating temperatures can cause intense rainstorms and sudden thaws increasing the likelihood and severity of localized flooding. Flash flooding can result when it does rain and when snow melts.

“Know the flood risks associated with winter weather in your area, and be prepared for whatever Mother Nature sends your way. As in any emergency, have a family emergency plan and escape plan and practice it,” (name of official) said.

Some of the most important emergency supplies to have on hand are:

- Non-perishable food such as canned goods
- Bottled water (two gallons/per person/per day)
- Flashlight with batteries
- A battery-powered weather radio
- First aid kit
- Prescription medications and extra eye glasses if needed
- Items for elderly or people with special needs
- Infant and children’s needs such as diapers and baby food.

Follow the news for weather updates and announcements from authorities. If they recommend an evacuation, leave as soon as possible with your emergency supplies.
If time permits, bring outdoor furniture inside. Move important documents and essential items to an upper floor in your house.

If instructed by authorities, turn off utilities at the main switches (unless there is a sump pump) or valves, and disconnect electric appliances. If the basement floods before you have time to shut off the electricity, do not enter the basement. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or are standing in water.

When you evacuate, don’t walk or drive through moving or pooled water. Avoid driving around barricades or into flooded areas. If your car stalls in rapidly rising water abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground.

Avoid parking your vehicle along streams, rivers, or creeks. Continue to listen to the radio for information and weather updates. Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.

Floods can be destructive and put your safety at risk. Take steps to prepare now and protect yourself and your family. To learn more about flood preparedness and other emergencies visit the New York State Department of Health website at

News Release
Workplace Emergency Plans for the Individual

Emergency planning extends beyond the arrangements that you make to keep your family safe and healthy at home.

“In your family’s general emergency plan, include an emergency workplace plan. Include instructions on how you will handle your health concerns and how you will contact your family or care for your children when you are at work and an emergency occurs,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

“Because many people spend most of their time each day at their job, it makes sense to be prepared and have a work place emergency plan that deals with your needs,” (he/she) said.

(Official) said nearly all workplaces have emergency plans for their employees.

“It’s important to know what the plan is and how its affects you. Be familiar with that plan by participating in emergency drills and evacuations. That way, you will know what to do if a real emergency occurs. Also, let your employer know if you need special accommodations or assistance, such as walking down the stairwell during a building evacuation. These procedures can also be practiced during the drill,” (he/she) said.

Your emergency workplace plan should work in conjunction with your employer’s plan. Your plan should include information on your health concerns, how you communicate with or locate your family if you become separated, and what provisions you need to make.
Consider the following checklist as you develop your personal workplace plan:

**Evaluate your workplace:**

- Know where there are safe places (e.g., in the stairwells, under heavy tables or desks, and corners of rooms away from windows) and dangerous places (e.g., near windows, and heavy furniture and equipment that may get knocked over) around your work area.
- Know the locations of fire extinguishers, first aid equipment, and fire alarms in your office, as well as any shared spaces.
- Post all emergency numbers in a location that is visible and accessible.
- Be familiar with your internal emergency broadcasting system. Be familiar with the name of the person and/or department who will give official instructions. Notify them if you have a disability that prevents you from seeing, hearing or understanding that emergency communication system.
- Know who are the floor wardens and other first aid attendants. If you will need assistance of any kind, let them know now, before an emergency occurs.
- Know the safe evacuation routes from your work area. Contact your floor warden or security staff if you don't know; if routes have not been established, or if you need assistance using these routes.
- Be aware of co-workers and your customers with special needs that might need your help.
- If you have a disability or will need assistance, know who can help you and plan ahead. Ask a person, or a group of people who you can rely on and trust, if they will be able to help you during an emergency.

**Make Personal Provisions:**

- Arrange with your family to have an out-of-area telephone contact to help coordinate your family's whereabouts.
- Familiarize yourself with your children’s daycare and/or school emergency plan and policies. Plan how your children will be cared for if your family is separated.
- Have emergency supplies available. Remember that power could be disrupted, water could be contaminated and phone lines could be damaged. Your emergency kit should be able to sustain you for at least 72 hours.
- Assemble a workplace emergency kit. Consider including: comfortable walking shoes; high-energy food bar; warm jacket; foil water pouches or bottled water; first aid supplies; medications; personal medical information; back-up durable equipment and spare eyeglasses; flashlight with fresh batteries, and a working AM/FM portable radio. Keep this kit in an easily accessible place.

For more information on workplace emergency plans, call the (local health agency name) at (telephone number).