

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

For more information, contact: *Melody Leisy*, 308-262-2217 or 855-227-2217

National Preparedness Month: September 2011

Be Prepared!

In the summer of 2011 the National Weather Service issued over 629 severe thunderstorm warnings in the Wyobraska area. Each year the storm systems in our valley seem to be getting more populated and more severe. The news stations do a very good job at letting people know a storm is on the way and when cover should be taken. Even though storm watchers let people know of impending storms, these systems have a mind of their own. You never know when your home and property will be the victims of wind, hail or tornado. Extra precaution should be taken in your own home to be prepared.

National Preparedness Month serves as a yearly reminder of the importance of being prepared for emergencies. Panhandle Region Medical Response System and Panhandle Public Health District encourage people to get a kit, make a plan, and be informed about emergencies that can happen in your area. Dawson Wiggins is one local youth who has put preparedness into action this summer.

With the high number of storms Morrill County was experiencing, the Wiggins family decided to get prepared. Leading this project was 8 year-old son Dawson. This year while traveling to a neighboring town for the weekly baseball game, the Wiggins family encountered a fast moving storm system that forced them to take cover. In the basement of a local church, they waited out the storm, thankful that no damage was done. It did cause them, however, to want to become prepared in their home, in the event of a storm.

Dawson began expressing an interest in the weather and became the family weatherman, giving this family updates on each evening's weather. With an eye on the sky, an active weather alert hanging on the wall, and checking weather radar online, his family is well informed of incoming thunderstorms. As a first year 4-H member, he enrolled in the Safety project where he learned about disasters and how to make a Disaster Kit. He exhibited his "Tornado Kit" at the Morrill County Fair.

Dawson assembled the family kit with enough supplies for 4 people in a large plastic tackle box. Supplies in a preparedness kit should be replenished or repacked yearly to ensure products are ready for an emergency. Dawson has also set up a safe station in the family basement with enough chairs for each member of the family, toys or activities to pass the time and a special place for the "Tornado Kit" and supplies.

The family spent time evaluating what essential items would be needed in the case of an emergency. The Wiggins took into consideration what could happen in an event, and what would be needed to survive. Bottles of water, granola bars, peanuts, flashlight, extra batteries, candles, lighter, tissues, hand sanitizer, bandaids, wipes, and towels are packed in their kit. Sleeping bags and a hand crank radio are also available in the safe station area. The 4-H Safety Project also provided a list of recommended supplies.

Dawson's family emphasized the importance of being organized ahead of time with supplies and a disaster kit. It is less stressful in a "take cover" situation, to already have the essentials in a safe spot, rather than running through the house grabbing items that might be needed at the last minute. With their

supplies already in place, all the Wiggins family has to worry about is getting to safety.

Who should have a preparedness kit? Dawson says, "Everyone. I am trying to help my Nana make one and get her basement ready." Dawson's family has utilized the safe station on several occasions. This summer has been a learning experience for the whole family on how to stay safe, and the role each member plays in the family. Dawson believes to "Be prepared so you don't get hurt."

For additional information about storm readiness, visit [www.pphd.org](http://www.pphd.org). The purpose of the Panhandle Region Medical Response System is to create and maintain a system for responding to public health emergencies by enhancing existing local planning efforts for resources, expertise, communication and personnel, in order to increase the capabilities to manage a disruption of services.

The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious diseases, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, PPHD believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.