



Severe weather season approaching

Be Prepared with “Ready in 3”

The sound of twittering songbirds and whispering breezes foretells spring in Missouri. However, the changing of the seasons can also bring more chilling sounds: the wail of outdoor warning sirens and the squawk of weather alert radios.

You and your family can prepare for these weather emergencies by taking part in Severe Weather Awareness Week. Observed this year from March 9-13, the goal of the week is simple: saving lives. The National Weather Service (NWS) encourages everyone to have a basic understanding of the threats we face in Missouri and to have a severe weather plan in place. Knowing what to do and where to go when skies threaten can literally mean the difference between life and death.

Practicing your severe weather plan is easy. On Tuesday, March 10, NWS offices across Missouri and the State Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the annual Severe Weather Drill. Around 1:30 that afternoon, a mock tornado warning will be issued, triggering outdoor warning sirens, Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages on TV and radio stations, and other public alert systems. Citizens are urged to use this time to practice their severe weather plan at work or school. In addition, families should

conduct their own household drill later that evening.

The annual Severe Weather Drill also gives Missouri residents a chance to check their emergency supply kits and restock if necessary. If you don't have an emergency kit prepared, “Ready in 3” can help.

“Ready in 3” is the citizen preparedness program developed by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. It focuses on three steps you can take to prepare for almost any type of emergency:

- Create a plan
- Prepare a kit
- Listen for information.

Preparing a kit is simple, and can often be done with items already in your home. At minimum, your kit should contain enough supplies to sustain you, your family, and your pets for three days. A well-stocked emergency kit contains one gallon of water per person per day, canned or

dried food, a manual can opener, a first aid kit, a battery-operated radio, flashlight, extra batteries, and any other comfort or safety items you or a family member may need.

To learn more about Missouri Severe Weather Awareness Week, visit www.crh.noaa.gov/lx. For more information about “Ready in 3,” or to order free educational materials, log on to www.dhss.mo.gov/Ready_in_3.



Tornadoes can strike any time of year in Missouri, but are most prevalent in spring and summer

From the Director



Gil Copley

If you are a senior or have an older relative or friend, it is important to plan for emergencies. The unique needs of older Americans are often overlooked when planning for an emergency. This is true whether living at home, in a retirement community, or in a long-term care residential facility.

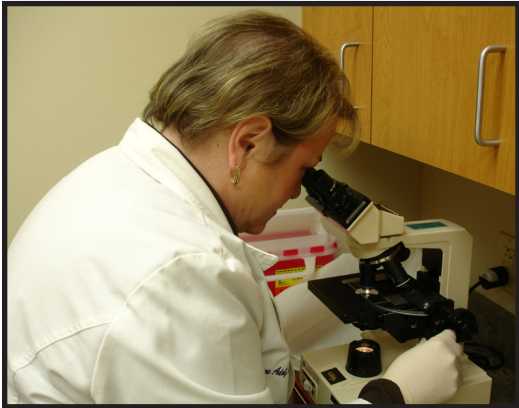
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently launched a new webpage with links to information for older Americans. The website contains information for facilities, families and individuals. If you or an older relative or friend have not prepared, [this link](#) will take you to information that may convince you that you should start now.

There is also additional material and guidance available at the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Citizens “Ready in 3” website which can be found by clicking on [this link](#).

To read the rest of this article, click on [From the Director](#)



Concern About STDs Grows



St. Charles County STD Program Manager Marianne Adolf peers through a microscope, looking for the pathogens that cause STDs

For the second year in a row, the city of St. Louis ranks first in the nation for gonorrhea and chlamydia rates, according to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). When taken as a whole, the St. Louis metro ranks eighth in both gonorrhea and chlamydia infection among the largest cities in the U.S.

Sexually transmitted diseases, also known as STDs, are among the most common infections in the U.S. The CDC estimates that more than 19 million Americans are affected by STDs every year, at a cost of up to \$14 billion. They affect men and women of all backgrounds and socioeconomic levels, but are most prevalent among teenagers and young adults. Nearly half of all STDs occur in people age 15 to 24 years old.

Understanding the basic facts about STDs - the ways they spread, their common symptoms, and how they can be treated - is the first step toward preventing them. Most of the time, STDs do not cause any symptoms, especially in women. However, if symptoms do occur, they are often confused with those of other diseases. Even when an STD causes no symptoms, a person who is infected can pass it on to their partner.

When diagnosed and treated early, many STDs can be treated effectively. However, some infections have become resistant to the medicines used to treat them and now require newer types of treatments. Everyone who is sexually active should learn more about STDs and make choices about how to minimize their risk of getting these diseases and spreading them to others. Knowledge of STDs, as well as honesty and openness with partners and healthcare providers, can be very important in reducing the incidence and complications of STDs. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, contact the St. Charles County STD Program at (636) 949-7401.

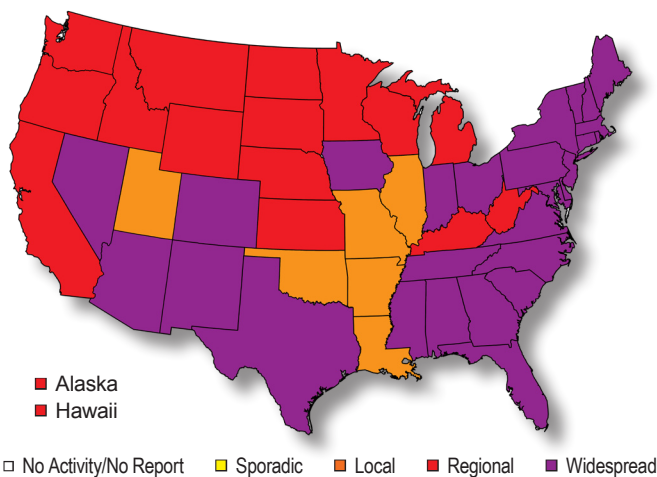
Flu Season Right on Time in St. Charles County

It appears that peak flu season has arrived in St. Charles County, with 487 cases reported to the health department so far this season. The majority of those cases are among children ages 5 to 14. Case numbers started spiking in early February, which is fairly typical for our area.

While 487 cases sounds like a lot, it is far below the numbers seen in 2007-2008, when the county recorded nearly 2,300 cases of the flu.

Flu Activity Update

CDC report for the week ending February 21, 2009. Follow [this link](#) for the latest map.



Protect Your Pet Against Rabies



Late last year, a man from southern Missouri died after contracting rabies. He had been bitten by a bat, but did not report the bite or seek medical treatment. The man was the first human rabies victim in Missouri in nearly 40 years.

While human cases of rabies are extremely rare, there is treatment available. This is not the case for animals, including our pets. The best defense is regular vaccination. Even "indoor" cats and dogs need to be protected against rabies, because they could have inadvertent contact with wild animals.

A new puppy or kitten should receive its first rabies vaccination when it is four to five months old, and a booster shot no more than a year later. After that, boosters should be given every one to three years, depending on the type of vaccine.

If you have questions about rabies vaccination or registration, contact the St. Charles County Pet Adoption Center at (636) 949-PETS (7387).



Live Like Your Life Depends On It

A new statewide campaign is underway encourage healthier lifestyles and prevent chronic disease. The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is partnering with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and dozens of other health advocacy groups across the state to urge Missourians to make healthy lifestyle choices to prevent and control chronic diseases including heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

The public education campaign, "Live Like Your Life Depends On It," targets people 45 years of age and older and encourages them to participate in regular physical activity, eat healthy, avoid using tobacco and get recommended health screenings to reduce their chances of developing a chronic disease.

Free educational materials for the campaign are available at the health department's main facility, located at 1650 Boone's Lick Road in St. Charles.

Nearly seven out of ten deaths in Missouri are caused by chronic disease. Risk factors for developing chronic disease include high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, tobacco use, physical inactivity, overweight and obesity, and eating less than five fruits or vegetables daily. The campaign messages provide specific actions to not only reduce risks, but also promote early detection and chronic disease management.

The Live Like Your Life Depends On It campaign was developed by the Live Well Message Alliance, a group of health-related organizations throughout the state, including the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. More information about the campaign can be found in the [Chronic Disease](#) section of www.dhss.mo.gov.



Live Well
MESSAGE ALLIANCE

Live Well: Be Tobacco Free



Editor's Note: This article is part of Live Like Your Life Depends On It, a new public education campaign from the Live Well Message Alliance and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

If you've smoked for years and think it's too late to quit, consider this: if you stop smoking today, your health

will begin to improve almost immediately.

- 20 minutes after quitting, your blood pressure drops.
- 24 hours after quitting, your chance of having a heart attack decreases.
- Two weeks to three months after quitting, your circulation improves and your lung function increases up to 30 percent.
- Within ten years of quitting tobacco, your risk for chronic diseases like lung cancer and heart disease is cut in half.

Choosing to be tobacco free will prevent disability and early death and help you live a longer and healthier life.

Tips to help you quit tobacco include:

Set a quit date. Tell your family, friends and coworkers when you're stopping and ask for their support.

Have a plan. Anticipate and plan for the challenges

you'll face while quitting. Make plans to do some of your favorite things, but do them smoke free. Realize that quitting tobacco will be challenging, but you deserve a longer, healthier life.

Remove temptation. Don't carry tobacco products with you. Avoid places where you normally smoked and stay away from people when they smoke or talk about smoking.

Talk to your doctor or health care provider. Discuss how to get help with the physical and mental symptoms you will likely experience when you stop smoking or using tobacco products.

In addition to improving your health, there's another benefit to quitting smoking. Your family and friends will no longer be exposed to your secondhand smoke. And that improves their health, too.

Take a major step toward better health by giving up smoking. Be tobacco free, and live like your life depends on it. More information about quitting tobacco can be found at www.dhss.mo.gov/SmokingAndTobacco.

The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment can also help you quit. Periodically, the department offers Freedom From Smoking classes, a seven-week program designed to help you quit and stay off cigarettes. There are also classes designed for children and teenagers to help them learn about the dangers of tobacco use and avoid picking up the habit. For more information about these programs, call (636) 949-7413 or visit www.scchealth.org.

Be on Alert for Diabetes



Diabetes has become the greatest public health threat of the early 21st Century. To address the burden of this disease, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) is issuing a “call to action” for Americans to find out their risk of developing diabetes during the 21st annual “American Diabetes Alert Day” on March 24.

Nearly six million Americans have diabetes, but don’t even know it. Another 57 million have pre-diabetes, placing them at risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

On Diabetes Alert Day, the ADA encourages people who are overweight, physically inactive, and over the age of 45 to take the Diabetes Risk Test. This test asks users to answer simple questions about their weight, age, family history, and other potential risk factors for type 2 diabetes. When complete, the Diabetes Risk Test will show

users whether they are at low, moderate, or high risk for diabetes or pre-diabetes. The Diabetes Risk Test is available in English or Spanish by calling 1-800-342-2383 or by visiting www.diabetes.org/alert.

Among the primary risk factors for type 2 diabetes are being overweight, sedentary, over the age of 45 and having a family history of diabetes. African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are at an increased risk, as are women who have had babies weighing more than nine pounds at birth.

Unfortunately, people with type 2 diabetes can live for years without realizing that they have the disease. While people with diabetes can exhibit noticeable symptoms, such as frequent urination, blurred vision, and excessive thirst, most people diagnosed with type 2 diabetes do not show these warning signs at the time that they develop the disease. If you have any of these symptoms, or the Diabetes Risk Test indicates you may be at risk of developing the disease, contact your healthcare provider. A simple blood test can help you determine your status.

“Lights Out” on March 28

Earth Hour 2009 highlights concern about climate change

On Saturday, March 28 at 8:30 p.m. local time, tens of millions of people around the world will turn out their lights for one hour - Earth Hour - to demonstrate their concern for our living planet and send a message to leaders that they support action on global climate change. Here are a few ideas for what your family can do when the lights go out.

1. Ask the kids to help make dinner using locally grown or organic ingredients. Even a regular family dinner by candlelight will make the evening feel special and provide a great opportunity to talk about the environment and the need to take care of our planet.

2. Have your children host a “lights out” slumber party for their friends, and eat pizza and ice cream by using flashlights.

3. Hold a “decorate the planet” ice cream party. Round scoops of ice cream represent the Earth, while colorful sprinkles and bits of candy can be used to decorate. Climate change will be inevitable for these planets!

4. Invite the neighbors over for a “lights-out” party and serve “green-themed” food and drinks selected with input from the kids.

5. Play a game of charades, Twister, or Scrabble with the family by candlelight. (Be sure to follow proper safety guidelines when using candles.)

6. Turn off the lights, the computer, the television, the video games, and the CD players. Light some candles. Use the hour to read a book aloud. Tell stories about your chil-

dren when they were first born. Recount funny tales about their grandparents they may not have heard before. Or listen to your children tell you how they would change the world if they could.

7. Have your kids research in advance what families did in the “olden days” before there was electricity. What would it have been like to live like Laura Ingalls Wilder in “Little House in the Prairie” or Abraham Lincoln in a log cabin? What creative ways did families have fun before there was electricity?

8. Hold an indoor “camp-out” with sleeping bags by flashlight. Tell ghost stories and sing songs. Make s’mores and pop popcorn over the stove or in the microwave.

9. Put away the breakables and organize a game of flashlight tag or Twister.

10. Go outdoors and just look at the sky and the stars.

Helpful Phone Numbers

Division of Public Health	WIC
(636) 949-7400	(636) 949-7402
Health Education	Division of Environmental Services
(636) 949-7401	Recycling Centers
Vital Records	(636) 949-7415
(636) 949-7558	Division of Humane Services
STD Prevention/Treatment	(636) 949-7387
(636) 949-7401	Animal Control
Environmental Public Health Program	(636) 949-7347
(636) 949-1800	