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Andrew Velasquez III, Director

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## **IEMA's 12-Month Preparedness Campaign Turns Focus to Workplace Preparedness**

*Will feature tips, guidance for employers and workers*

SPRINGFIELD – A 12-month campaign to encourage people to prepare for disasters will turn its focus to workplace preparedness during February. The campaign, sponsored by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), will offer preparedness tips and guidance for employers and workers and feature businesses that have preparedness plans.

“Disasters can strike at any time, day or night,” said IEMA Director Andrew Velasquez III. “While many people have a disaster plan at home, an emergency is just as likely to happen when they’re working, shopping or visiting some other type of business. Businesses that have preparedness plans, and regularly exercise those plans, are better able to ensure the safety of their workers and their customers.”

Velasquez said there are several aspects to workplace preparedness, including worker and customer safety and business continuity of operations. He said IEMA hopes to raise awareness of the importance of planning for disasters in the workplace through the preparedness campaign.

“Every part of Illinois is at risk for tornadoes, severe storm wind damage, intense winter storms, and even earthquakes,” said Chris Miller, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with the National Weather Service (NWS) in Lincoln. “It is extremely important that each business - no matter how big or small - have a plan in place to effectively manage disasters before, during and after an event. Having a plan for various incidents will help protect the greatest assets of a business - its employees.”

To help businesses begin the process of planning for natural disasters, NWS offices in Illinois have created a web page (<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/dvn/?n=industryppma>) with links to severe weather preparation strategies and worksheets.

According to the NWS guidance, the four basic elements of workplace preparedness are:

- **Plan** – Assess the threats in your area, such as lightning, tornado, or blizzard, and develop a plan that addresses each threat as it applies to your staff. Take into consideration time of day and different shifts.
- **Practice** – Conduct training meetings to ensure everyone knows the plan, then hold in-house drills to practice the plan.
- **Monitor** – Designate a Weather Watcher who is responsible for keeping an eye on the weather. This could include listening to a NOAA weather radio, monitoring TV and radio reports or even deploying local spotters.
- **Act** – Establish criteria on when to activate your plan, how to communicate activation to employees, where employees and visitors should seek shelter and how to communicate an “all-clear.”

During January, IEMA’s 12-Month Preparedness Campaign focused on home preparedness, with tips on preparing a disaster supply kit and family communications plan. Other topics to be addressed during the year-long campaign include earthquake preparedness, children and preparedness, weather-related preparedness, cyber security, preparedness for people with pets and livestock and preparedness for people with functional needs.

Information about the 12-Month Preparedness Campaign is available through the Ready Illinois website ([www.Ready.Illinois.gov](http://www.Ready.Illinois.gov)) and IEMA’s Facebook page.