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Preparing for disaster can help save lives

When our nation recently marked the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, emotions ran the gamut from somber to joyful, despondent to hopeful, as we reflected on one of the greatest disasters in our nation's history.

If we have learned anything from the heart-wrenching devastation endured by the Gulf Coast, it is that natural disaster can strike anytime, anywhere.

Though each situation is unique, taking action now can save lives, prevent injury, and minimize property damage in the event of a natural disaster.

September is National Preparedness Month, a nationwide effort to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and schools. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the goal of the month is to increase public awareness about the importance of preparing for emergencies and to encourage individuals to take action.

We cannot control Mother Nature, but we can make certain to be ready for her if and when she strikes. While many businesses, schools and communities have heeded the directives of emergency planning initiatives such as Ready America (www.Ready.gov), they may not have dusted off and reviewed those plans in some time.

Any organization or individual can be better prepared by establishing a quality plan and procedures for emergencies of all kinds. How quickly a homeowner, business, school or community can recover from the wreckage depends on the emergency preparation done today, so make a plan, know the plan and stick to it.

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