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TARRANT COUNTY
NEWS & INFORMATION

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www.tarrantcounty.com

County's Unincorporated Areas Get Emergency Alert System

Beginning today, most Tarrant County residents who do not live in a city will be able to sign up for an automated emergency notification system called "Send Word Now." The system will be used to warn them by telephone or email of natural and man-made disasters.

"In the event of an emergency, our number one priority is to be able to communicate directly with the public and get them the timely and relevant information they need," said Tarrant County Emergency Management Coordinator Melissa Patterson. "For the first time, we will be able to provide most people in our unincorporated areas with warnings about critical incidents that can affect them."

Only those residents with access to the Internet – at home or at their workplace – and a valid email address will be able to sign up for the program.

Last year, a tornado strike outside the Crowley city limits brought home the need for a way to warn county residents in unincorporated areas of approaching storms. While outdoor warning sirens are a cost-effective means to warn residents in densely populated urban areas, the widely spaced residences outside cities require a different approach, said Patterson.

She noted that some cities in Tarrant County were already supplementing their outdoor warning systems with e-mail and telephone-based emergency notification systems. However, the big challenge was in adapting this new technology to those people not already served by municipal warning systems — the county's residents in unincorporated areas. Cities can limit participants by using such established identification methods as water bill account numbers. The County is using Zip Codes.

The program is in the second phase of the three-phase roll-out. The first phase was open for County employees only so that the system's bugs could be worked out. The third phase – to be implemented in six to nine months – will allow county residents in unincorporated areas to register for the program by telephone.

"Send Word Now" is one of several providers of on-demand alerting and response services for both emergency and routine communication. It can transmit hundreds of thousands of voice and text messages in minutes and is designed to reach anyone, anywhere, anytime, with any device over any type of connection.

To sign up for the free service, county residents in the unincorporated areas can register up to five telephones or e-mail addresses by going to *www.tarrantcounty.com* and clicking the "Send Word Now" link. The alerts will come through at any time of the day or night — depending on when severe weather approaches the county or a major incident occurs. Caller ID will identify the call as coming from the Tarrant County OEM (Office of Emergency Management).

Back-to-School Roundup to provide low-income children with school supplies

Since 2005, the Back to School Roundup (a countywide collaboration) has provided low-income children with essential school supplies, a backpack, shoes, socks and a haircut if desired. Tarrant County students who will be entering Pre-K through 5th grades in the upcoming school year and who also qualify for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program are eligible to participate in the Roundup.

A day long event that is held before the start of each school year, the Roundup is a fun, family event that helps children prepare for and get excited about attending school. Roundup 2009 will be held on Thursday, August 20, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Amon G. Carter Exhibit Hall in Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum. Families also will have the opportunity to learn about a variety of social services agencies available to assist them in Tarrant County.

On-site registration on the day of the Roundup will be available. However, pre-registration is strongly encouraged - supplies will be distributed on a first come, first served basis. Pre-registration will be offered through August 14th at several locations throughout Tarrant County. You can call 2-1-1 for a list of the pre-registration sites or go to the website at *http://backtoschoolroundup.org*.

Donations needed

The 2009 Back to School Roundup needs donations to fulfill its goal to serve 8,000 children this year. Twenty-five dollars will provide one child with school supplies, backpack, shoes, socks, and haircut. Back to School Roundup is a 501(c)3 organization and is coordinated entirely by volunteers. One hundred percent of funds raised go directly to help the children who need it most. All donations are tax-deductible. For more information on donating, go to *http://backtoschoolroundup.org*.

Back-to-school immunizations

Parents can beat the back-to-school rush for immunizations by taking their child (up to the age of 18) to any of the following Tarrant County Public Health (TCPH) immunization events:

Everest College, Fort Worth
5237 N. Riverside Dr., Fort Worth,
Monday, Aug. 17; noon – 6 p.m.,
Tues – Fri, Aug. 18 – 21; 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Back-to-school Round Up
Will Rogers Complex
3401 West Lancaster Ave., Fort Worth,
Saturday, Aug. 22; 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

La Gran Plaza
4200 South Freeway, Fort Worth
Monday, Aug. 24; noon – 7 p.m.,
Tues – Fri, Aug. 25 – 28; 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.,
Saturday, Aug. 29; 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Mayfield Road Baptist Church
1701 East Mayfield Road, Arlington,
Monday, Aug. 10; noon – 6 p.m.,
Tues – Fri, Aug. 11 – 14; 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.,
Saturday, Aug. 15; 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Hispanic Wellness Fair, Will Rogers Complex
3401 West Lancaster Ave., Fort Worth,
Saturday, Aug. 1; 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

First Baptist Euless Campus West
209 North Industrial Blvd., Bedford,
Monday, Aug. 3; Noon – 6 p.m.,
Tues – Fri, Aug. 4 – 7; 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

The cost is $10 per child, with children under two receiving free diapers. Because each child's immunization history will differ, it is important for parents to bring their child's shot record with them. For more information call 817-238-4448 or visit the TCPH website at *http://health.tarrantcounty.com.*

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