**September is National Preparedness Month (NPM)**  
Is your home and business prepared?

Since 2004 FEMA and local communities have been working every September to help communities and families improve their preparedness for emergency response to natural and man-made disasters. In the following paragraphs, I will touch on family and business issues that are critical to making it smartly through an incident while minimizing impact.

When we think of preparedness, we like to think it starts with taking care of ourselves and then expands out from there to our families, neighbors, and broader communities. If we don’t take care of ourselves, how are we going to take care of others? From a home perspective you will find a list of items you should stock in such case that a disaster strikes at this Red Cross link below, along with a quiz to check on how prepared you are today. Link: [How to Prepare for Emergencies | Be Red Cross Ready | Red Cross](https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies.html)

Let’s talk BUSINESS impact! Most people look at it solely as a motion that applies to home, as business owners we need a business continuity plan. What is business continuity? It is a term that refers to the ability of a business to maintain or quickly resume its essential functions and services after a disruptive event, such as a natural disaster or a power outage.   
  
Key areas include (but not limited to):

* Identify key business processes that are required for continued operation. For example, power for items that could spoil or process transactions for customers.
* Identify all the risks your business faces and have a plan for mitigation.
* Communications! What is your communications plan and what employees & customers should be part of that plan.
* Have an emergency preparedness plan, share it and practice it with key employees.

Visit the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) to download the OFB-EZ (Open for Business-EZ) toolkit, it helps small businesses take important steps they need to keep functioning in the event of a major disaster or a small disruption. For their current document visit this link: [Disaster Planning – DISASTERSAFETY.ORG](https://disastersafety.org/business-protection/ofb-ez/#:~:text=The%20OFB-EZ%20%28Open%20for%20Business-EZ%29%20toolkit%20helps%20small,short-%20and%20long-term%20losses%20to%20your%20bottom%20line.)

Below are two local events I recommend attending in Maple Valley:

1. National Preparedness Fair this Saturday (09/30/23) at the Maple Valley Farmers Market, free to all and over 90 vendors and emergency service organizations will be participating.
2. The Safety & First Aid Fair. This free to the public event is hosted by American Red Cross Training Partner New Community Church of Maple Valley and will run from 9 AM to 3 PM. This Fair will have vendor displays, workshops and food trucks. Visit newcommunity.us for the address and more details.

As we close out the 2023 National Preparedness Month, I hope this gets you motivated and executing on a plan, minimal is better than none and none could be the end! 1 of 4 businesses that close operations over a few weeks during a disruption do not reopen, don’t be that 1 in 4!