



SURVIVING THE STORM: THE DISASTER DEFENSE DIGEST

Monthly Safety Message:

Emergency Supply Checklist for Spring

Spring is the perfect time to refresh and restock your emergency supplies before fire season, storms, or power outages catch you off guard. Start by checking expiration dates on food, water, and medications. Replace anything outdated and aim to store at least one gallon of water per person per day for several days. Make sure your first aid kit is fully stocked, including bandages, antiseptic, gloves, and any personal medical items.

Test flashlights and lanterns, replace batteries, and consider adding portable phone chargers or a backup power bank. Review important documents such as identification, insurance papers, and emergency contacts, and keep copies in a waterproof container or digital backup. Don't forget pet supplies, comfort items for children, and extra clothing appropriate for changing weather.

Spring cleaning is more than organizing closets. A well-prepared home brings peace of mind and ensures your family can respond quickly and safely when conditions change.



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Spring Into Action: Preparing Before Fire Season Begins

Spring has a way of making us feel hopeful. The days grow longer, the hills begin to green, and the air carries that familiar sense of renewal. But in many parts of California and across Tribal lands, spring is also the quiet beginning of fire season. What we do now, before the heat settles in and the winds shift, can determine how resilient our communities will be in the months ahead.

Preparation does not begin when smoke is visible on the horizon. It begins in conversations around kitchen tables, in Tribal council meetings, in maintenance yards, and in training rooms. Spring is the season of intentional readiness.

For families, this means taking simple but powerful steps. Clear defensible space around homes. Remove dry brush and debris. Clean roofs and gutters. Check that addresses are clearly visible from the road. Review evacuation routes and practice them. Make sure emergency go-bags are stocked with essentials: medications, important documents, water, flashlights, chargers, and supplies for children, elders, and pets. These tasks may seem small, but collectively they create a layer of protection that can save lives.

For organizations and Tribal programs, spring readiness means reviewing emergency plans before they are tested. Update contact lists. Confirm mutual aid agreements. Conduct tabletop exercises that walk through realistic wildfire scenarios. Ensure staff certifications

are current, radios are functioning, and equipment is serviced. Evaluate fuel loads around facilities, cultural sites, and critical infrastructure. Fire season is not the time to discover gaps in communication or coordination.

Wildfire response is physically demanding and emotionally taxing. Spring training should include not only operational refreshers, such as Incident Command System review and safety briefings, but also mental health awareness and peer support strategies.

Cultural knowledge plays an important role in readiness. Traditional ecological practices, seasonal observations, and intergenerational teachings offer insight into how landscapes behave. Preparation is not only technical, it is relational.

Spring readiness is about shifting from reactive to proactive. It is about understanding that fire is not a surprise in our region; it is a known risk that demands disciplined preparation. Every cleared brush line, every updated emergency plan, every trained responder builds a stronger foundation.

As the season changes, let us choose action over assumption. Because when the first red flag warning is issued, the work we do in spring will determine how confidently and safely we stand together.

Quick Tip:

Policy, Planning, and Protection

Strong communities are not built on reaction alone. They are built on thoughtful policy, intentional planning, and consistent protection. Policies establish clear expectations, define roles, and create accountability before emergencies occur. They guide how decisions are made, how resources are allocated, and how safety standards are upheld.

Planning turns policy into action. Emergency operations plans, hazard mitigation strategies, continuity plans, and communication protocols ensure that when an incident happens, there is structure rather than confusion.

Regular reviews and updates keep these plans relevant as risks, leadership, and community needs evolve.

Protection is the outcome. When policies are clear and plans are practiced, people are safer, response times improve, and recovery is more coordinated. Protection also includes safeguarding cultural sites, critical infrastructure, and the well-being of responders themselves.

Policy, planning, and protection work together as a foundation for resilience. They demonstrate leadership that is proactive, organized, and committed to long term community safety.



Training Today, Protecting Tomorrow: Tribal Responders in the Making

Every community has that moment when the call comes in. Smoke on the ridge. Floodwaters rising. Power lines down. In those moments, training matters. Preparation matters. And the people who step forward matter most of all.

Across Tribal communities, a new generation of responders is rising. They are young men and women who grew up on the land, who understand the rhythms of the seasons, who know the stories of fire, water, and wind from their grandparents. They are also earning certifications, learning incident command, studying safety protocols, and building the technical skills required to respond in complex emergencies. They are becoming workforce ready.

Training the next generation of Tribal responders is about more than employment. It is about sovereignty. When Tribes build internal capacity, they reduce dependence on outside agencies and strengthen self determination. A trained Tribal workforce means faster response times, culturally informed decision making, and protection of sacred sites and community infrastructure.

Modern emergency response requires layered skills. Responders must understand wildland fire behavior, heavy equipment operations, first aid and CPR, hazardous materials awareness, and the Incident Command System. They must know how to communicate across agencies, document incidents properly, and operate safely in high risk environments. These are not entry level skills. They require discipline, mentorship, and structured training pathways.

But technical skill alone is not enough. The strongest responders are grounded in purpose. Many Tribal training programs are intentionally integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge with contemporary



safety standards. Fire is not just an incident to suppress; it is a natural force that has long been managed through cultural burning practices. Land stewardship is not just mitigation; it is a responsibility passed down through generations.

Humanizing the workforce means investing in wraparound support. Young responders often juggle family responsibilities, education, and economic pressures. Providing stipends, paid field experience, mental health awareness training, and peer support systems ensures that participants can stay engaged and complete their certifications. Mentorship from experienced firefighters, emergency managers, and cultural leaders builds confidence and resilience.

There is also a clear economic impact. Workforce development creates career pathways in fire, emergency management, environmental protection, and public safety. It keeps talent within the community. It creates living wage jobs tied directly to community protection and land stewardship. When a young person earns their first certification patch or completes their first deployment, it is more than a credential. It is a step toward long term stability and leadership.

Being workforce ready is not a slogan. It is a strategy. It is an investment in people before disaster strikes. It means creating pathways that allow young people to see themselves not only as responders, but as protectors of their people, their land, and their future.

Strength Behind the Shield: Honoring Responder Wellness

When the sirens fade, when the smoke clears, when the floodwaters recede, responders carry more than equipment back with them. They carry images, conversations, decisions, and sometimes the quiet weight of what could not be changed. Mental Health and Responder Wellness Month is a reminder that the strength of our response systems depends on the well-being of the people within them.

First responders are trained to act quickly, stay calm under pressure, and protect others in moments of crisis. They are skilled in triage, containment, coordination, and logistics. What they are often not trained to do is talk about how those moments affect them. The culture of emergency response has long emphasized toughness and endurance. While resilience is a powerful trait, silence can become a burden.

Wellness begins with acknowledgment. It is normal to feel stress after a difficult incident. It is normal to replay events in your mind. It is normal to feel fatigue after extended deployments. Recognizing these responses as human, not as weakness, is the first step toward building a healthier workforce.

Departments and Tribal programs are increasingly integrating mental health awareness into their training cycles. Peer support teams, critical incident stress debriefings, and access to counseling services are becoming part of operational planning, not afterthoughts. Leaders are learning that responder wellness must be addressed before burnout or crisis occurs. Prevention is just as important in mental health as it is in fire mitigation.

Wellness is also built through everyday habits. Adequate sleep, hydration, regular



exercise, and time with family are not luxuries for responders. They are essential protective factors. Encouraging balanced schedules, limiting excessive overtime, and creating safe spaces for conversation contribute to long term sustainability. A responder who feels supported at work and at home is better equipped to serve the community.

In many Tribal communities, cultural practices provide an additional layer of healing. Time on the land, ceremony, storytelling, and intergenerational connection help responders process what they experience. These practices remind them that they are part of something larger than any single incident. Community support and cultural grounding can strengthen emotional resilience in ways that policies alone cannot.

Mental Health and Responder Wellness Month is not about a single workshop or awareness post. It is about shifting the culture of response to one that values the whole person. Strong communities need strong responders, and strong responders need support.

When we care for the mental health of those who protect us, we are not reducing standards. We are reinforcing them. Wellness is readiness. And caring for the caretakers ensures that when the next emergency arises, they can step forward with clarity, strength, and hope. It creates a culture where seeking support is viewed as professional responsibility, not vulnerability, strengthening both the individual and the entire response

FREE CERTS...!

Get Them While You Still Can!

FEMA offers a range of free certifications through the Emergency Management Institute's Independent Study (IS) website. These certifications cover various aspects of emergency management, disaster response, and preparedness, providing valuable training and credentials to individuals involved in emergency services, community planning, and public safety. From courses on incident command systems and disaster response operations to specialized training in areas like hazardous materials management and crisis communications, FEMA's IS certifications offer comprehensive learning opportunities accessible to anyone with internet access. Whether you're a seasoned emergency responder or a concerned citizen looking to enhance your knowledge and skills, these certifications equip you with the tools and expertise needed to effectively respond to emergencies and contribute to resilient communities. Take advantage of FEMA's free certifications through the IS website to strengthen your preparedness and make a difference in emergency management efforts.

Register for your FEMA Student Identification (SID) at the following address:

<https://cdp.dhs.gov/femasid/register>

Take a look at the courses they offer:

<https://training.fema.gov/is/crslist.aspx?lang=en>