

Jonathon Monken
Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 1, 2011

CONTACTS:
Patti Thompson 217/557-4756

IEMA Encourages People to Prepare for Possible Disasters While on Vacation

Offers tips for safe vacations

SPRINGFIELD – Summertime means vacation time for many people. Whether your plans will take you across the state or around the world, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) encourages people to include emergency preparedness in vacation planning. As part of IEMA's 2011 Preparedness Campaign, the agency is highlighting vacation preparedness throughout June.

"A disaster can strike at any time and any place, even when you're on vacation," said IEMA Director Jonathon Monken. "While you're familiar with the disasters that are common in your community, you could encounter unfamiliar hazards on vacation. A little research, planning and strategic packing could go a long way toward keeping your family safe throughout your vacation."

Monken said a first step in vacation emergency planning is to conduct an Internet search to learn about natural and man-made hazards for the area you plan to visit. If you're not sure how to prepare for certain disasters, research preparedness measures for those hazards, such as hurricanes, tsunamis or major earthquakes.

Even if your vacation spot is prone to dangers you're already familiar with, such as tornadoes and severe thunderstorms, dealing with those emergencies can be challenging in a new environment. When you arrive at your destination, identify safe locations to go to when severe weather approaches and find out how weather warnings are communicated in the area (are there outdoor warning sirens, does your hotel or resort have a public address system). Also, locate a hospital near where you're staying.

"The most important way for travelers to be prepared is to stay informed," said Chris Miller, warning coordination meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Lincoln. "Know the weather conditions for your entire route and the forecast during your stay. This will help prepare

you so that hazardous weather conditions will not catch you off guard when you are away from home."

To help travelers prepare for vacation, IEMA offers the following tips:

Before you leave

- Pack a travel-size emergency supply kit with water, snacks, a first-aid kit, flashlight, small battery-operated radio, extra batteries and an emergency contact card with names and phone numbers.
- Pack extra supplies of critical items, such as prescription medications and baby formula, in case your return is delayed by a disaster.
- Let family and friends know your itinerary and how to reach you.
- Develop a communications plan and make everyone in your traveling group aware of the plan. Make sure everyone has the cell phone numbers of the others in your group. Designate an out-of-area person to contact in case your group is separated during an emergency and unable to place local calls.
- If traveling internationally, register with the U.S. Department of State through a free online service at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>. The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) allows travelers to enter information about upcoming trips abroad so that the Department of State can better assist them in an emergency.

During your trip

- If traveling by car, check the forecast for your entire route before and during your trip. Weather conditions can change drastically, especially if thunderstorms are expected.
- Bring along a travel weather radio, which will automatically switch to the weather radio station closest to your travel area and will alert you to any hazardous weather.
- Become familiar with the names of the counties you are traveling through because hazardous weather warnings are issued by county.
- If you are in a vehicle when a tornado warning has been issued or you see a tornado approaching, seek shelter in a sturdy building until the storm passes. If you're unable to reach a sturdy building, pull over and find a low area, such as a ditch, and take cover there.
- Familiarize yourself with emergency plans in your hotel or place you are staying as soon as you arrive.

If disaster strikes your vacation spot, you can register on the American Red Cross' "Safe and Well" website at www.redcross.org so family and friends will know that you are safe.

More preparedness information is available on the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.