



# NEWSLETTER

Support Alliance For Emergency Readiness

CREATING A **SAFER** SANTA ROSA

[www.safersantarosa.org](http://www.safersantarosa.org)

5 July 2011

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. - Aesop

## **NEEDS, REQUESTS, DONATIONS**

*We can do no great things -- only small things with great love. --Mother Teresa*

### **FAMILY RESOURCE PROGRAM IS IN NEED OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:**

Children's underwear (all sizes)  
Children's socks (all sizes)

Diapers (all sizes)  
Meats for their food pantry.

\*Please do not donate adult clothing.

If anyone is doing extreme couponing, this is a great charity to build a stock pile for. Or if your church, business, agency or civic group would like to collect or do a drive to support them, that would be great!

Contact JoAnn at (850) 626-2054 or email [familyresourcemilton@yahoo.com](mailto:familyresourcemilton@yahoo.com).

### **SANTA ROSA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT OFFERS FREE HIV TESTING**

In observance of National HIV Testing Day (NHTD), the Santa Rosa County Health Department will be offering free HIV testing June 27, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at its Milton Clinic. All testing is strictly confidential and anonymous testing is available. Appointments are encouraged but not required. Both the blood test and Orasure (oral swab) will be offered.

The National Association of People with AIDS began the observance in 1995 to promote HIV testing and early diagnosis. Early diagnosis and treatment can help individuals who are HIV positive to live healthier, longer, more productive lives. Individuals who know their HIV status can also take steps to help ensure that the virus is not passed on to others.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment, call the Santa Rosa County Health Department's Milton Clinic at (850) 983-5200

### **HELP PROTECT OUR SOLDIERS**

You can donate Mary Kay products to help comfort the troops who are sizzling under the hot sun in the Middle East. Selected independent Mary Kay distributors have teamed up with Soldiers' Angels to get our troops the skin protection they need. Some distributors donate a duplicate of each product sold, while others give a percentage of their profits. Check with your [local Mary Kay distributor](#) to see if she is participating in this project!



Help Protect Our  
Soldiers.docx



Operation Mary Kay  
from Soldiers Angels \

## **CRAM THE VAN**

As we reach the end of the school year, this is a great time to remind you of our 13th annual Cram the Van countywide school supply drive. If your organization or business would like to participate, please email [marianne@unitedwaysrc.org](mailto:marianne@unitedwaysrc.org) by July 11th. The sooner the better!

## **INFORMATION**

*When you cease to make a contribution you begin to die. - Eleanor Roosevelt*

### **WILDFIRE SAFETY UPDATE**

On June 13, Governor Scott signed a declaration of a State of Emergency due to the ongoing danger of wildfires and drought conditions in Florida. This order ensures that state, regional and local governments can take necessary actions to protect the lives and property in threatened communities. The KBDI average, or Keetch-Byram drought index of 0-800, for the state is 648. According to the Florida Division of Emergency Management, there are currently 109,485 acres burning throughout Florida. If you spot a brush or wildfire, immediately call 9-1-1.

**As a precaution, the Florida Division of Forestry Blackwater Forestry Center is not issuing burn permits for Santa Rosa County at this time. Although no burn ban has been instituted at this time, Santa Rosa County encourages residents to delay any burning activity until the area receives significant rainfall.** With below normal rainfall expected to continue through June and temperatures significantly above normal, Santa Rosa County Emergency Management is working closely with the local division of forestry officials to daily monitor our wildfire risk. If conditions change, the board of county commissioners can take action quickly to enact any necessary burn ban.

Local fire departments are encouraging residents to dispose of debris at a landfill instead of burning vegetative debris. For many, it only takes a few minutes to take it to a landfill, and it's much safer for you and those around you. At only \$3 for up to 320 pounds of yard debris, the Central Landfill located on Da Lisa Road in Milton is a very economical means of disposal. Additionally, residents living in the new solid waste franchise area, generally in the 32563 and 32566 zip codes, will have yard waste pickup every other week beginning July 1.

For more information on fire weather conditions, contact the Division of Forestry Blackwater Forestry Center at (850) 957-6140 or online at [www.fl-dof.com/fire\\_weather/forecasts.html](http://www.fl-dof.com/fire_weather/forecasts.html)

### **SRC HEALTH DEPARTMENT OFFERS TIPS TO "BEAT THE HEAT"**

According to the calendar, the first official day of Summer is June 21, but temperatures in our area have already risen to over 100 degrees on several days. Many of us enjoy spending time outside and others have to work outside. As temperatures continue to climb, the Santa Rosa County Health Department urges residents and visitors to know the warning signs of heat-related illnesses and the steps to take to help prevent them.

#### **TIPS FOR PREVENTING HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS**

- Drink plenty of fluids that don't contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar
- Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink
- Limit outside activity to morning and evening hours
- Rest often in shady areas, or remain inside in an air conditioned space
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose fitting clothing and a wide-brimmed hat
- Don't forget to protect your eyes and skin by wearing sunglasses and sunscreen (sunscreens with SPF 15 that protect against both UVA and UVB rays are the most effective)

#### **HEAT EXHAUSTION**

Heat exhaustion is a form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids. Those who are most

vulnerable to heat exhaustion are the elderly, infants and small children, individuals with medical conditions such as high blood pressure, and those working or exercising in a hot environment.

Warning signs of heat exhaustion vary, but may include:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting
- Moist and cool skin
- Fast and weak pulse
- Fast and shallow breathing

### **IF HEAT EXHAUSTION IS SUSPECTED**

Cooling measures that may be effective include:

- Drinking cool, non-alcoholic beverages as directed by a physician
- Resting in an air-conditioned environment
- Taking a cool shower, bath or sponge bath

### **HEAT STROKE**

Left untreated, heat exhaustion may progress to heat stroke, which occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature. Seek medical attention immediately if any of these symptoms are present:

- Hot, dry skin or profuse sweating
- Hallucinations
- Chills
- Throbbing headache
- High body temperature
- Confusion/dizziness
- Slurred speech

For more information, visit <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.asp>.

## **BUSINESS BRIEF: SAVING ENERGY AND YOUR MONEY DURING THE SUMMERTIME**

Running a successful business can be difficult and it's important to make every dollar count. Cutting back on unnecessary energy costs will lower your bills and save money. Your BBB offers business owners advice on reducing energy bills:

- **Turn all equipment off or sleep mode when not in use.** At the end of the day, turn off all your equipment, especially if your business is closed on weekends and holidays.
- **Create set temperatures in the office space.** Set the thermostat to 78 degrees during work hours and raise the temperature to 85 when the business is closed.
- **Maintain your AC and heating unit.** Maintain a regular filter replacement and cleaning schedule. Don't forget to check air ducts and pipe insulation. If you have to buy a new unit, look for models that are 20 to 30 percent more efficient than your existing unit.
- **Install ceiling fans and wall insulation.** Fans have the ability to make a room feel about four degrees cooler and will help save money on monthly utility bills.
- **Turn off unnecessary lighting.** When a room is not in use and after hours, turn off all lights. Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lights that can use up to 75 percent less electricity. Use natural light whenever possible.
- **Use laptops if available.** Laptops have the ability to save up to 90 percent more energy than the standard desktop computer.

- **Use a smaller monitor.** Buy the smallest monitor that will meet your needs. The bigger the monitor, the more energy it uses. A 17-inch monitor consumes 35 percent more electricity than a 14-inch monitor.

For additional advice on saving energy for your business, start with [bbb.org](http://bbb.org).

### **Consumer Corner: Hiring a Lawn Service**

A green lawn can be a source of pride for homeowners. Hiring a lawn service can ease the burdens of caring for your yard. Your BBB offers the following advice to help consumers find a trustworthy lawn care business:

- **Know what you want.** Lawn care businesses provide many services, so it is important to figure out your needs and budget.
- **Request references.** You will be able to figure out the business' reputation and quality of work.
- **Check for BBB Accreditation.** Make sure the lawn service is accredited. View important information about the business using the BBB Business Review.
- **Ask for a lawn inspection and free estimate.** Lawn care companies that quote a price without seeing your lawn cannot be sure what you need. Quality businesses will only offer an estimate after they see what they are working with.
- **Request a written contract.** A contract should clearly state the services you will receive, as well as how you will pay for it. If you are contracting for a recurring service such as mowing, it should state how and how often the business will service your lawn.

To find a BBB Business Review on a specific business or to get a list of BBB Accredited lawn service businesses, start with [bbb.org](http://bbb.org)

### **2011 ADA CELEBRATION AND TALENT SHOW FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**



2011\_ADA\_Celebration\_Announcement.pdf



Talent\_Show\_Registration.pdf

When: July 30, 2011, 9:00 AM—11:30 AM

Where: University of West Florida, Building # 22 Student Conference Center

COME OUT AND HELP US HIT A HOME RUN FOR THE ADA!

### **BUSINESS BRIEF: MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS DURING THE SUMMERTIME**

Starting a summer marketing campaign can help your business focus on its uniqueness and allow you to maintain current customer loyalty, but also attract more during the hot months. Here are tips that you can use to enhance your summer marketing plan:

- **Alter your advertisements.** Make sure your ads are bright, colorful and have a fresh look. If your business is busier during the summer months, use it to your advantage and incorporate it into the ads.
- **Take advantage of goofy holidays.** There are plenty of bizarre holidays during the summer. Look to see if there is a holiday that matches what your business' offers and turn it into a promotional day.
- **Partner with another BBB business.** See if you can create special deals with another business you have an existing relationship with. Consumers appreciate any deal they can find, especially if it will give them more bang for their bucks.
- **Start a loyalty program.** Give out punch cards or start a referral program to reward your customers.
- **Promote your business' website.** It will drive traffic to your site and social media sites if they are linked. This will increase your search engine optimization when consumers are looking for a specific service.
- **Showcase a product.** Create an item of the week and give a discount on the product.

- **Sponsor a giveaway.** For anyone that leaves a comment or picture of your business on your social media site allow them to come into your business and pick up special coupons or a treat.

If you would like to find another BBB business to partner with or for additional tips on how to market your business, start with [bbb.org](http://bbb.org).

### **CONSUMER CORNER: FINDING A POOL CONTRACTOR**

If you're looking to cool off during the hot months and a pool in your backyard seems refreshing, you may want to research first before the digging begins.

- **Seek at least three bids.** Discuss the prices in detail to figure out what you are paying for. Remember, the cheapest business might not offer the best quality.
- **Request references.** Any reputable contractor should be willing to share their past work.
- **Check to see if the contractor is license and insured.** Verify the licensing at [www.myfloridalicense.com](http://www.myfloridalicense.com).
- **Read the contract thoroughly.** Get any verbal promises in writing including start and completion dates, the terms and conditions and warranties.
- **Locate water lines.** Find where the electric and water lines are and become aware of hook up charges prior to construction.
- **Check your insurance.** Talk to your insurance agent to find out about additional homeowner coverage for a new pool.
- **Know the law.** Local laws usually require some kind of fences around the perimeter of the pool. A self-closing gate with a latch accessible only to older children and adults is a wise safety precaution.

**Never pay in full until the job is completed and inspected.** Most contractors ask for some form of payment at the start of the process to cover materials needed, but you should never fully pay until the end once you are satisfied with the job.

### **FIRST EVER NATIONAL EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM TEST SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 9, 2011**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will conduct the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The nationwide test will occur on Wednesday, November 9, at 2 p.m. Eastern Standard Time and may last up to three and a half minutes.

The EAS is a national alert and warning system established to enable the President of the United States to address the American public during emergencies. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service, governors, and state and local emergency authorities also use parts of the system to issue more localized emergency alerts.

Over the past two years, as part of ongoing national preparedness planning efforts, FEMA, the FCC and other federal partners, state, local, tribal and territorial governments, Emergency Alert System participants and other stakeholders have been working toward making this national test a reality. The national test will help the federal partners and EAS participants determine the reliability of the system and its effectiveness in notifying the public of emergencies and potential dangers nationally and regionally.

Similar to local EAS tests that are conducted frequently, the nationwide test will involve broadcast radio and television stations, cable television, satellite radio and television services and wireline video service providers across all states and the territories of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and American Samoa.

On November 9, 2011, the public will hear a message indicating, "This is a test." The audio message will be the same for both radio and television. Under the FCC's rules, radio and television broadcasters, cable operators, satellite digital audio radio service providers, direct broadcast satellite service providers and wireline video service providers are required to receive and transmit presidential EAS messages to the public.

Damon Penn, FEMA's Assistant Administrator of National Continuity Programs, notes, "A national test of our Emergency Alert System, with the vital communications support and involvement of participants, is a step towards ensuring that the alert and warning community is prepared to deliver critical information that can help save lives and protect property. Because there has never been an activation of the Emergency Alert System on a national level, FEMA views this test as an excellent opportunity to assess the readiness and effectiveness of the current system. It is important to remember that this is not a pass or fail test, but a chance to establish a baseline for making incremental improvements to the Emergency Alert System with ongoing and future testing. It is also important to remember that the Emergency Alert System is one of many tools in our communications toolbox, and we will continue to work on additional channels that can be a lifeline of information for people during an emergency."

As the federal, state, tribal, territorial and local governments prepare for and test their capabilities, this event serves as a reminder that everyone should establish an [emergency preparedness kit](#) and [emergency plan](#) for themselves, their families, communities, and businesses. Anyone can visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) for more information about how to prepare for and stay informed about what to do in the event of an actual emergency.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. We can be reached most easily by phone today at (202) 646-4600.

Respectfully, FEMA's Intergovernmental Affairs Division

### **FREE COAWFLA CAREGIVER TRAINING EVENT ~**

In partnership with and location of event: Santa Rosa Medical Center, Locklin Education Center  
6002 Berryhill Road, Milton, FL 32570 When: July 28, 2011 12:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Topic: *Taking Care of Both Caregiver and Care Receiver*

COAWFLA Caregiver Training Manuals will be provided free of charge to attendees and will be utilized as the curriculum

Refreshments will be provided Reservations Required: 850-432-1475 NLT July 25, 2011

### **CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS ~ FREE to ATTEND**

County of Residence is NOT a requirement

Pensacola ~ 6:00 p.m ~ Last Thursday Monthly at COAWFLA , 875 Royce Street ~ Next Meeting is June 30th. Refreshments and Door Prizes provided each month by various community resources.

Milton ~ 6:00 p.m. ~ First Thursday Monthly at *St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church, 6451 Park Avenue*. Refreshments and Door Prizes provided monthly by various community resources. Next Meeting is July 7<sup>th</sup>.

Century ~ 6:00 p.m. ~ The third Thursday of each month at Century Care Center, 6020 Industrial Blvd. *Refreshments and Door Prizes provided monthly by various community resources*. Next Meeting is June 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and other Relatives** ~ Second Thursdays Monthly 6:00 P.M. at Homewood Suites by Hilton, 5049 Corporate Woods Drive, Pensacola, FL 32504. FREE Dinner beginning at 5:30 P.M. Child Care Provided FREE on-site. Reservations requested by calling 850-432-1475. Next Meeting is July 14th

**Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) Support Group and Training Opportunities** ~ meets on



Wednesdays of the Second full week each month from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Families Count, 5139 Elmira Street, Milton, FL 32570.

COAWFLA Caregiver Programs has provided the Facilitation for this group under Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support for the last year, however this meeting will be the last meeting that COAWFLA does provided the facilitation. Families Count will continue this group and provide the facilitation in the future.

Reservations are requested at 850-393-5216. Next Meeting is June 15th.  
FREE Refreshments, child care, and activities provided monthly.

### **2011 NOAA COASTAL EXTREME WEATHER SHEETS AVAILABLE...**

The 2011 NOAA Extreme Weather Information Sheets have been released for the coastal and near coastal areas. Northwest Florida...

[http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/files/Florida\\_Northwest\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/files/Florida_Northwest_2011.pdf)

### **BUSINESS BRIEF: GETTING YOUR BUSINESS READY FOR SUMMER**

With Memorial Day kicking off the unofficial start to summer, your BBB encourages business owners to prepare for the summer season:

- **Consider your merchandise requirements.** Prepare for a change in seasonal demand by communicating with your suppliers if you expect to need more or less stock for particular items. Depending on your business, your hours may change during the summer which may require new delivery days and times.
- **Schedule vacations well in advance.** Tell staff to plan their vacation early so you can assign work and resources accordingly. Have a shared calendar set aside when employees have requested off to ensure there are enough employees working. Don't forget about your own vacation time and take a break yourself!
- **Plan your summer marketing campaign.** If you have a special seasonal product or service, stress the appeal of your offer by creating time-limited summer offers to encourage purchases. Look to see if you can tie holidays or the sunny weather to advertise a product or service.
- **Become social.** Consider including digital marketing such as a Facebook page or a Twitter account as part of your overall marketing strategy. Through these sites, customers can share their experience with your business with their friends. Word-of-mouth marketing can be powerful, but remember that social/digital marketing needs to be updated regularly to be effective.
- **Get involved in local special events.** Consider sponsorship opportunities for local holiday events and annual traditions. By sponsoring an event, your business has a chance to get your name on banners or merchandise, set up booths, and connect with existing and potential customers.

For additional tips on preparing your business for the summer, start with [bbb.org](http://bbb.org).

### **Consumer Corner: Preparing for disaster**

Hurricane season starts tomorrow, and every year hurricanes, tornados, violent thunderstorms, flooding and fires wreak havoc across the country. In the past month, the U.S. has witnessed devastation across the Midwest and South leaving hundreds of families' homes destroyed. It's never too early to start preparing to protect your belongings.

Your BBB offers the following tips to help homeowners and renters prepare and what to do while filling insurance claims:

#### **Preparing for a Disaster:**

- **Create and maintain an inventory of your personal possessions.** This includes taking pictures or creating a video, as well as keeping receipts and serial numbers for major items. The inventory should be saved in a safe place outside the home, such as in a safe deposit box at your financial institution.
- **Carry all important numbers.** Always have policy and insurance numbers ready at all times. You never know when a disaster may strike.

- **Read your homeowners' or renters' insurance policy carefully.** Read the fine print so you'll know what is and is not covered, especially what you are entitled to following a disaster. Remember that home insurance does not cover floods; you need a separate flood insurance policy. With few exceptions, flood insurance policies have a 30-day waiting period, so it's important to review your insurance needs now. After a disaster, be sure you know the deadline to file claims.

#### **After a Disaster:**

- **Take pictures.** If possible, photograph the interior and exterior of the home, showing the damage.
- **Immediately report your claim.** The agent will prepare a Notice of Loss form and an adjuster will be assigned to assist you. If your house is unlivable, you might be eligible for loss-of-use benefits, depending on the terms in your policy.
- **Organize the damage.** Separate the damaged from the undamaged property, and put it in the best possible order for the adjuster's examination.
- **Use updated records.** Good records of your insured property can be of significant assistance to you and your adjuster. Use your inventory to work with the adjuster in presenting your claim.

To check out an insurance company or to get a list of BBB Accredited insurance agencies, start with [bbb.org](http://bbb.org) or call 800.729.9226

### **TROPICAL CYCLONE PREPAREDNESS GUIDE**

<http://www.weather.gov/om/hurricane/resources/TropicalCyclones11.pdf>

### **FACEBOOK**

SAFER is on Facebook, find us and become our friend ;- ) We are up to 264 people! Invite friends.



Use of barricades policy: Free to parades in Santa Rosa County that are sponsored by a chambers or government entities (Christmas parades, Mardi Gras, 4<sup>th</sup> of July etc...) that are free and open to the public, with the understanding that the user is responsible for transportation of barricades, AND banners advertizing sponsors MUST be put on barricades. Others wishing to use the barricades must provide transportation and rent barricades at a cost of \$5 per barricade. Additional fees may be applicable if barricades are not returned within 7 days of pick up. Barricades will cost \$8 each if delivery is required. Average rental price for barricades is \$9-\$13 each. SAFER barricades are a bargain.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

There is no better exercise for your heart, than reaching down and helping to lift someone up. - Bernard Meltzer

### **REGISTER NOW FOR WEBINAR: INTRODUCTION TO DISASTER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC) is pleased to present the Introduction to Disaster Behavioral Health webinar.

The goals of this webinar are to educate participants about the mental health, substance abuse, and stress management needs of people who have been exposed to human-caused, natural, or technological disasters. This 60-minute webinar will help build awareness about preparedness and response efforts in this area by providing:

- An overview of core disaster behavioral health concepts
- Guidance on basic actions disaster response personnel can incorporate in their interactions



with disaster survivors without the need for extensive training

- Guidance on recognizing severe reactions to disasters and need for a referral for a behavioral health assessment

Featured speakers include Anthony Barone of ICF International, Curt Drennen of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Emergency Preparedness and Response Division, and April Naturale of the Mental Health Association of New York City.

SAHMSA DTAC encourages non-mental health professionals who are involved in emergency management/disaster response and interested in learning more about mental health and substance abuse issues to participate in this webinar.

Register now! Access the registration page using this link:

<https://cc.readytalk.com/r/dc0xxykw6ak1>. After you complete registration, you will receive a confirmation email with all of the information and instructions needed to access the webinar on July 14, 2011 at 2:00 p.m. ET

### **PICTURES FROM SAFER PREPAREDNESS EXPO**



**EM with Shelter in Place**

**Hometown Contractors**

**Santa Rosa Medical Center**



**CERT**

**RSVP**

**Lifeguard Ambulance**



**Oval Office**

**Handing out Preparedness goodies**

### **NEWS (blue is new)**

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. --Margaret Mead

# What happened inside the hospital during the Joplin, MO tornado

*Dr. Kevin Kikta was one of two emergency physicians on duty at St. John's Regional Medical Center in Joplin, MO on Sunday, May 22 when an EF-5 tornado struck the hospital.*

by Kevin J. Kikta, DO

You never know that it will be the most important day of your life until the day is over. The day started like any other day for me: waking up, eating, going to the gym, showering, and going to my 4 pm ED shift. As I drove to the hospital, I mentally prepared for my shift as I always do, but nothing could ever have prepared me for what was going to happen on this shift.

Things were normal for the first hour and half. At approximately 5:30 pm, we received a warning that a tornado had been spotted. Although I work in Joplin and went to medical school in Oklahoma, I live in New Jersey, and I have never seen or been in a tornado. I learned that a "code gray" was being called. We were to start bringing patients to safer spots within the ED and hospital.



At 5:42 pm, a security guard yelled to everyone, "Take cover! We are about to get hit by a tornado!" While others scattered to various places, I ran with a pregnant RN, Shilo Cook, to the only place that I was familiar with in the hospital without windows — a small doctor's office in the ED. Together, Shilo and I tremored and huddled under a desk. We heard a loud horrifying sound like a large locomotive ripping through the hospital. The whole hospital shook and vibrated as we heard glass shattering, light bulbs popping, walls collapsing, people screaming, the ceiling caving in above us, and water pipes breaking, showering water down on everything. We suffered this in complete darkness, unaware of anyone else's status, worried, scared. We could feel a tight pressure in our heads as the tornado annihilated the hospital and the surrounding area. The whole process took about 45 seconds, but seemed like eternity. The hospital had just taken a direct hit from a category EF-5 tornado.

Then it was over. Just 45 seconds. 45 long seconds. We looked at each other, terrified, and thanked God that we were alive. We didn't know, but hoped that it was safe enough to go back out to the ED, find the rest of the staff and patients, and assess our losses.

"Like a bomb went off" — That's the only way that I can describe what we saw next. Patients were coming into the ED in droves. It was absolute, utter chaos. They were limping, bleeding,

crying, terrified, with debris and glass sticking out of them, just thankful to be alive. The floor was covered with about 3 inches of water. There was no power, not even backup generators, rendering it completely dark and eerie in the ED. The frightening aroma of methane gas leaking from the broken gas lines permeated the air — we knew, but did not dare mention aloud, what that meant. I redoubled my pace.

We had to use flashlights to direct ourselves to the crying and wounded. Where did all the flashlights come from? I'll never know, but immediately, and thankfully, my years of training in emergency procedures kicked in. There was no power, but our mental generators were up and running, and on high-test adrenaline. We had no cell phone service in the first hour, so we were not even able to call for help and backup in the ED.

I remember a patient in his early 20s gasping for breath, telling me that he was going to die. After a quick exam, I removed the large shard of glass from his back, made the clinical diagnosis of a pneumothorax (collapsed lung) and gathered supplies from wherever I could locate them to insert a thoracostomy tube in him. He was a trooper — I'll never forget his courage. He allowed me to do this without any local anesthetic since none could be found. With his life-threatening injuries, I knew he was running out of time and it had to be done. Quickly. Imagine my relief when I heard a big rush of air and breath sounds again. Fortunately, I was able to get him transported out.

I immediately moved on to the next patient — an asthmatic in status asthmaticus. We didn't even have the option of trying a nebulizer treatment or steroids, but I was able to get him intubated using a flashlight that I held in my mouth.

A small child of approximately 3-4 years old was crying. He had a large avulsion of skin to his neck and spine. The gaping wound revealed his cervical spine and upper thoracic spine bones. I could actually count his vertebrae with my fingers. This was a child, his whole life ahead of him, suffering life-threatening wounds in front of me, his eyes pleading me to help him. We could not find any pediatric C collars in the darkness, and water from the shattered main pipes was once again showering down upon all of us. Fortunately, we were able to get him immobilized with towels, and start an IV with fluids and pain meds before shipping him out. We felt paralyzed and helpless ourselves.

I didn't even know a lot of the RNs I was working with. They were from departments scattered all over the hospital. It didn't matter. We worked as a team, determined to save lives. There were no specialists available — my orthopedist was trapped in the OR. We were it, and we knew we had to get patients out of the hospital as quickly as possible. As we were shuffling them out, the fire department showed up and helped us to evacuate. Together, we worked furiously, motivated by the knowledge and fear that the methane leaks could cause the hospital could blow up at any minute.

Things were no better outside of the ED. I saw a man crushed under a large SUV, still alive, begging for help. Another one was dead, impaled by a street sign through his chest. Wounded people were walking, staggering, all over, dazed and shocked. All around us was chaos, reminding me of scenes in a war movie, or news footage from bombings in Baghdad. Except this was right in front of me and it had happened in just 45 seconds.

My own car was blown away. Gone. Seemingly evaporated. We searched within a half mile radius later that night, but never found the car, only the littered, crumpled remains of former cars. And a John Deere tractor that had blown in from miles away.

Tragedy has a way of revealing human goodness. As I worked, surrounded by devastation and suffering, I realized I was not alone. The people of the community of Joplin were absolutely incredible. Within minutes of the horrific event, local residents showed up in pickups and sport utility vehicles, all offering to help transport the wounded to other facilities, including Freeman,

the trauma center literally across the street. Ironically, it had sustained only minimal damage and was functioning (although I'm sure overwhelmed).

I carried on, grateful for the help of the community. At one point, I had placed a conscious, intubated patient in the back of a pickup truck with someone, a layman, for transport. The patient was self-ventilating himself, and I gave instructions to someone with absolutely no medical knowledge on how to bag the patient until they got to Freeman.

Within hours, I estimated that over 100 EMS units showed up from various towns, counties, and four different states. Considering the circumstances, their response time was miraculous. Roads were blocked with downed utility lines, smashed up cars in piles, and they still made it through.

We continued to carry patients out of the hospital on anything that we could find: sheets, stretchers, broken doors, mattresses, wheelchairs — anything that could be used as a transport mechanism.

As I finished up what I could do at St John's, I walked with two RNs, Shilo Cook and Julie Vandorn, to a makeshift MASH center that was being set up miles away at Memorial Hall. We walked where flourishing neighborhoods once stood, astonished to see only the disastrous remains of flattened homes, body parts, and dead people everywhere. I saw a small dog just whimpering in circles over his master who was dead, unaware that his master would not ever play with him again. At one point we tended to a young woman who just stood crying over her dead mother who was crushed by her own home. The young woman covered her mother up with a blanket and then asked all of us, "What should I do?" We had no answer for her, but silence and tears.

By this time news crews and photographers were starting to swarm around, and we were able to get a ride to Memorial Hall from another RN. The chaos was slightly more controlled at Memorial Hall. I was relieved to see many of my colleagues, doctors from every specialty, helping out. It was amazing to be able to see life again. It was also amazing to see how fast workers mobilized to set up this MASH unit under the circumstances. Supplies, food, drink, generators, exam tables, all were there — except pharmaceutical pain meds. I sutured multiple lacerations and splinted many fractures, including some open with bone exposed, and then intubated another patient with severe COPD, slightly better controlled conditions this time, but still less than optimal.

But we really needed pain meds. I managed to go back to the St John's with another physician, pharmacist, and a sheriff's officer. Luckily, security let us in to a highly guarded pharmacy to bring back a garbage bucket-sized supply of pain meds.

At about midnight, I walked around the parking lot of St. John's with local law enforcement officers looking for anyone who might be alive or trapped in crushed cars. They spray painted "X"s on the fortunate vehicles that had been searched without finding anyone inside. The unfortunate vehicles wore "X's" and sprayed-on numerals, indicating the number of dead inside, crushed in their cars — cars that now resembled flattened recycled aluminum cans the tornado had crumpled in her iron hands. An EF-5 tornado, one of the worst in history, whipping through this quiet town with demonic strength.

I continued back to Memorial Hall into the early morning hours until my ED colleagues told me it was time for me to go home. I was completely exhausted. I had seen enough of my first tornado.

How can one describe these indescribable scenes of destruction? The next day, I saw news coverage of this horrible, deadly tornado. It was excellent coverage, and Mike Bettes from the Weather Channel did a great job, but there is nothing that pictures and video can depict that compares to seeing it in person. That video will play forever in my mind.

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to everyone involved in helping during this nightmarish disaster. My fellow doctors, RNs, techs, and all of the staff from St. John's. I have worked at St John's for approximately two years, and I have always been proud to say that I was a physician at St John's in Joplin, MO. The smart, selfless, and immediate response of the professionals and the community during this catastrophe proves to me that St John's and the surrounding community are special. I am beyond proud.

To the members of this community, the health care workers from states away, and especially Freeman Medical Center, I commend everyone on unselfishly coming together and giving 110% the way that you all did, even in your own time of need. St. John's Medical Center is gone, but her spirit and goodness lives on in each of you.

EMS, you should be proud of yourselves. You were all excellent, and did a great job despite incredible difficulties and against all odds.

For all of the injured who I treated, although I do not remember your names (nor would I expect you to remember mine), I will never forget your faces. I'm glad that I was able to make a difference and help in the best way that I knew how, and hopefully give some of you a chance at rebuilding your lives again. For those whom I was not able to get to or treat, I apologize whole heartedly.

Last, but not least, thank you, and God bless you, Mercy/St. John's for providing incredible care in good times and even more so, in times of the unthinkable, and for all the training that enabled us to be a team and treat the people and save lives.

*Kevin J. Kikta is an emergency physician at Mercy/St. John's Regional Medical Center, Joplin, MO. This post first appeared in [The Central Line](#), the blog of the [American College of Emergency Physicians](#).*

Officials see above-average hurricane season looming

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Think the Unthinkable in Disaster Planning

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Scott, emergency management chief stress storm prep (Florida)

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Social Media: Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse

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Miami imam, 2 sons due in court on terror charges (Florida)

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Children's Involvement in Disaster Planning Calms Fear

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How to prepare for the zombie apocalypse? CDC has you covered

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*Disaster victims expect more than Facebook can deliver, FEMA director says*  
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