

April 4, 2007

Dear Health Professional:

Emergency Preparedness Week, which runs from May 6 - 12, 2007, is held annually to promote the importance of personal preparedness in reducing the risks and lessening the consequences of a disaster.

In Ontario, we have had our share of emergencies. From the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak and the blackout in 2003, to yearly forest fires in Northern Ontario to early spring flooding, we know first hand that emergencies are unpredictable and can dramatically change in scope and impact.

Emergencies can threaten public safety, the environment and property, the economy, our health – and our health care system. We also know that emergencies can have devastating impacts on us personally - whether an adult or a child, a senior citizen or a new comer to Canada.

As health professionals we have a very important role to play in preparedness. Being prepared and planning ahead is critical to protecting our own health and safety, as well as responding to the health needs of the public during an emergency or disaster. Emergency Preparedness (EP) Week allows organizations to feature their planning initiatives. To this end, the Emergency Management Unit (EMU) has prepared a list of on-line resources and activities which health care organizations and professionals may find useful, build on, or modify to promote and support the importance of personal preparedness during EP Week.

The on-line resource entitled: *The EP Week Virtual Kit for Health Care Organizations* can be accessed on-line at www.health.gov.on.ca/emergency, and includes the following materials:

- An "Ideas List" with helpful suggestions on how you can promote EP Week in your organization and amongst staff, colleagues, and stakeholders;
- Articles that you can use for your organization's newsletters or post on-line and on bulletin boards;
- A personal preparedness tip sheet for health professionals;
- A cross word puzzle and word search that you can distribute to staff members in your workplace;
- An emergency contact card that you can give employees to keep their emergency contact information handy;
- A guide to creating your own personal preparedness plan;
- Emergency kit checklists - including supplies you'll need to prepare for a flu pandemic.

Emergency Preparedness Week can also be used as an opportunity to promote awareness of emergency management related initiatives at your workplace, such as the work of your emergency planners or Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, including any infection prevention and control initiatives that are underway.

We encourage you to be innovative, and invite you to share your EP week highlights, stories and pictures with us. Submit your highlights, stories and pictures to emergencymanagement@moh.gov.on.ca by **May 18, 2007** to be profiled on the EMU's website.

Emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility; it is up to each and every one of us to learn what to do before, during, and after an emergency situation. I hope your organization will share the message of taking the time to plan ahead and be prepared.

Sincerely,

(Original signed by)

Allison Stuart, Director
Emergency Management Unit
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care