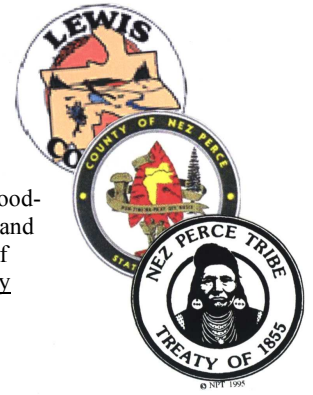
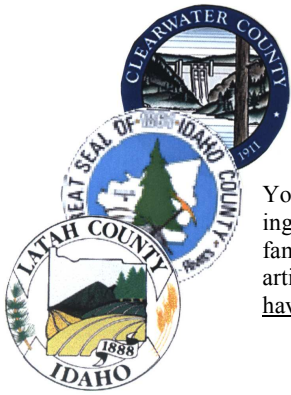


Get Pandemic Ready



Your Office of Emergency Management plans and prepares for disasters, ranging from localized flooding to worldwide events. Preparation includes local government, the private sector and individuals and families. Pandemic flu is a rapidly emerging threat affecting all of us. The purpose of this series of articles is to inform citizens of what they can do to protect themselves. We recommend each family have three months of food, water, medications, and other supplies on-hand.

Issue 3: Pandemic Preparedness mindset

Complex system researchers Steve Barth and Dave Pollard have looked at large-scale disasters, and conclude that perhaps it is not in our nature to prepare for emergencies - especially ones we haven't experienced. We can apply their thoughts to pandemic flu. It is no longer if it will happen, but when it will happen. Unknowns are: infection rate, fatality rate, and the impact on critical systems. How will we react? What will we do?

Planning doesn't work, because there are just too many variables, too many outcomes. Instead of planning, we need to be ready. Hence, our banner - "Get Pandemic Ready" not "Get Pandemic Planned." A pandemic preparedness mindset has five key ingredients in a prescription for *how to figure out* what to do:

- **Establish trust:** We are all part of a larger community. If you are with family members who know and love each other, trust is not a problem. But what if you don't know, or don't get along with, your neighbors? It's going to be iffy whether in an emergency, you will work with them, or even know what each of you is capable of doing (and what each of you urgently needs) so you can work together effectively.
- **Learn to improvise:** In some ways improvisation is the opposite of planning. It's about staying resilient, adapting to what others do, and trusting your instincts. We see this in rural Idaho as neighbors help neighbors when disaster strikes.
- **Improve attention skills:** We need to study and learn about how nature and cultures deal with emergencies, and cope with them. We need to be able to draw on this knowledge and focus our attention on what needs to be done. That means listening, seeing what's really happening, noticing and communicating what's urgent and what's important, and keeping everything in perspective.
- **Improve collaboration skills:** We are so used to divvying up work and doing almost everything individually, that we rarely *really* collaborate in real time. We need to learn the things that we can do together that we cannot do, no matter how well coordinated, separately. Teamwork is important.
- **Practice:** Those with the foresight to practice essential preparedness skills will be much better equipped when the next emergency occurs. Communities that regularly practice what to do, over and over, are much more ready. There is no substitute for exercise.

And now, here's our mindset: trust yourselves, trust your judgment. We do.

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Lewis County Emergency Management 937-2380
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For more information, or to participate in local pandemic flu planning, contact your local Emergency Manager.