Georgia is reporting widespread flu activity across the state. So far, the state has reported more than 400 hospitalizations and nine confirmed flu-related deaths. Although it is typical for flu season to peak in January and February, this flu season is unique because the virus appears to be hitting young and middle aged adults the most. How can you be sure that you are protected from the flu?

The most effective way to prevent the flu is to get the flu vaccine. Because the flu can occur as late as May, it is not too late to get your vaccine now. There are two types of vaccines available: a flu shot and a nasal spray. Your healthcare provider can help you determine which type is the best for you. Vaccines are available at the University Health Center, local health departments, pharmacies and health care providers. Because influenza viruses change constantly, the vaccine is updated each year; therefore, it is recommended to get vaccinated every year.

There are also a number of steps people can take to protect themselves from getting the flu:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands.
- Cover your cough and/or sneeze with a tissue or your arm instead of your hands.
- If you are sick, stay home from school or work.

Be a Force of Nature by knowing your risk, taking action and being an example in your community.

From tornadoes to lightning to floods, Georgia is susceptible to a variety of natural disasters. Severe weather is dangerous and can strike with very little warning, which is why it’s important to get ready in advance. Severe Weather Awareness Week runs from February 3 - 7, and it’s a great time to make sure you and your family are prepared.

Each day, Severe Weather Awareness Week (SWAW) focuses on a different type of threat faced by Georgians. The Office of Emergency Preparedness is encouraging all residents to take a few minutes to learn about how to deal with each emergency situation by visiting www.prepare.uga.edu or the Ready Georgia website at www.ready.ga.gov.

During severe weather, emergency workers might need at least three days to open roadways and restore utilities. If you are prepared to survive independently, it not only helps your family, it also frees up resources to quickly deal with the most urgent threats.

The SWAW activities begin with Family Preparedness Day on Feb. 3, when households are encouraged to program their NOAA Weather Radios and create Ready Profiles. With a Ready Profile, you can create a customized checklist of emergency supplies and a tailored family and/or roommate communications plan.

On Wednesday, when tornado safety is emphasized, a statewide tornado drill will be issued by the National Weather Service. Severe Weather Awareness Week’s
specific observations are:

Monday, Feb. 3 – Family Preparedness/NOAA Weather Radio Day

Tuesday, Feb. 4 – Thunderstorm Safety

Wednesday, Feb. 5 – Tornado Safety and Statewide Tornado Drill (issued by NWS) - along with a test of the UGA Alert system

Thursday, Feb. 6 – Lightning Safety

Friday, Feb. 7 – Flood Safety (alternate tornado drill date)

Another valuable new tool for Georgia residents is the Ready Georgia smartphone app. This free app, available for both iPhone and Android devices, provides mobile access to a variety of emergency preparedness tools.

A UGA Emergency App is now available for FREE from both the iTunes App Store and Google Play. The UGA emergency app has student emergency procedures, faculty/staff emergency procedures, and international travel safety tips. Download the free app from In Case of Crisis today.

The Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) will conduct a TEST of UGA’s emergency mass notification system, UGA Alert, on February 5, 2014 around 9 AM in conjunction with the Statewide Severe Weather Drill. After the TEST, a short survey will be posted on OEP’s Website at www.prepare.uga.edu. UGA Alert users are encouraged to participate in this short survey. Feedback from this survey will provide valuable information to help improve future drills and emergency alerts. UGA Alert is used to send emergency messages to the UGA campus community when immediate action is needed due to life threatening campus-wide emergencies.

Prior to the TEST, users are encouraged to update their contact information at www.ugaalert.uga.edu. Contact John Newton, Office of Emergency Preparedness, at jmnewton@uga.edu for any questions about the UGA Alert system.

Frozen Pipes

Winter is here and not going anywhere soon so don’t be fooled by some of the more recent milder days. It is entirely possible that we will experience several more very cold snaps like the week of January 6th when temperatures dropped to single digits. Temperatures that low caused major damage to residential and commercial buildings due to the water pipes freezing and breaking the lines. Here are some tips to prevent this from happening to you:

- If your lines do freeze DO NOT turn off the water at the street. That could lead to frozen lines in your yard, between the water meter and your house – a very expensive proposition.
- Open the spigots. That will help relieve pressure as the ice in the lines melts.
- Do NOT try to use a hand torch on plastic or PVC pipe – only on copper and only if you have experience heating pipes. Too often people heat the pipes to the point where they begin to melt, causing an entirely different set of problems.
- To prevent freezing, turn the water on to a trickle – a slow but steady stream rather than a few drips per second.
- If the pipes run through a cabinet or vanity, leave those doors open to the surrounding heated air.

Volunteer in the newly established UGA Medical Reserve Corps!

The University of Georgia has a brand new Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The MRC is a national volunteer organization under the Citizen Corps and is a sister organization of CERT under that umbrella.

Major emergencies can overwhelm the capabilities of first responders and the healthcare community, particularly during the first 12 to 72 hours. Having
Severe Weather Shelter Signs are now available for your building. OEP will gladly assist all Building Safety & Security Representatives with installation. Contact us today at prepare@uga.edu or visit www.prepare.uga.edu for more information.

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The UGA MRC is co-directed by the Office of Emergency Preparedness and the College of Public Health. In an emergency, the UGA MRC will provide support to organizations in Clarke County and on the UGA campus that request assistance with mass dispensing of medication, triage, and post-event medical education and follow-up. Additionally, volunteers can participate in campus and community health and preparedness education and outreach opportunities. Both medical and non-medical volunteers are invited to participate in the unit.

The first meeting of the UGA MRC will be February 18 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm. If you are interested in signing up as a volunteer, go to www.prepare.uga.edu and look for MRC under the “Training” tab for additional instructions on how to register. If you have additional questions about the UGA MRC, contact their Co-Directors Nina Cleveland (ninac64@uga.edu; 706-542-3648) or Noelle Broadnax (broadnax@uga.edu; 706-542-1289).

John Newton will speak on the upcoming Severe Weather Awareness Week, Feb. 3-7, to include a test of the UGA Emergency Notification System (including UGAAlert) on Wednesday, Feb. 5. He will also discuss how to conduct Severe Weather Drills. A checklist for the upcoming severe weather drill will be provided.

The OEP staff will be on hand to distribute Severe Weather Shelter Signs and NOAA Weather Radios (available for check out).

Option 1: Monday, January 27, 2014 from 10 -11 AM - Tate Center Room 481
Option 2: Wednesday, January 29, 2014 from 3 - 4 PM - Tate Center Room 480

Severe Weather for BSSRs

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