

March/April 2009

Administrator's Office

Energy Reduction Initiative

Late last year, Daryl Delabbio appointed an Energy Use Reduction Work Group comprised of County employees from 10 different departments, and gave them the charge to identify ways in which the County could achieve significant reductions in its energy use and the associated cost. The Work Group presented its report in late December, and the recommendations were forwarded to the Board of Commissioners in February of this year, where they were enthusiastically approved. The Group selected 11 initiatives to be implemented this year, ranging from replacing manual thermostats with programmable ones and reducing mowing at County facilities and parks to training drivers of County vehicles in fuel-efficient driving techniques. The County will also be conducting an employee awareness and information campaign, since such activities have been proven by research to reduce organizational energy costs. To kick off the initiative, two brown-bag lunches were scheduled. More than 50 people attended the first brown bag luncheon held recently at the Courthouse. Not only did attendees receive valuable information about the impact of energy usage and costs on the County's bottom line, they also learned techniques about how to cut energy costs at work and at home.

Reduce – Recycle – Reuse

From time to time, the County has equipment and supplies that are no longer needed and are thus declared surplus. Until a couple of years ago, the County held an annual public auction for surplus and confiscated property. With the implementation of online internet sales, the County now uses a much more cost-effective disposal process. The online auction service, now utilized almost weekly by the County, not only saves staff time and lowers administrative costs, but the sales revenues have increased dramatically—in fact, have more than doubled. Generally, the County website, <https://www.accesskent.com/RFPPublishing/Surplus.jsp> has items for sale. You can also find this information on AccessKent.com under Purchasing/Sale of Surplus Goods.

The County also holds vehicle auctions twice a year. The next vehicle auction will be held on Thursday, May 14 at 4 p.m. Information about this auction is at <https://www.accesskent.com/RFPPublishing/Vehicle.jsp>.

Reuse is win-win for everyone – check out these sites before buying new!

Prescription Discount Card

The Kent Rx Prescription Discount card continues to be popular. The Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan (AAAWM) has distributed 25,000-plus cards in Kent County. In March, a local Hispanic radio station conducted an hour long call-in show on the use of the card. As a result AAWM has requested that United Networks of America (UNA), the program administrator, have the card be printed in Spanish. The local Michigan Works offices have taken several thousand cards to distribute. The card usage has been tracked at the following levels: December - 50, January - 200, February - 600 and a projection of over 1,000 uses in March. Ron Gamel, UNA representative, has indicated that the County is doing a great job in promoting the program. AAWM has received informational requests about the card from Ottawa, Allegan and Newaygo counties.

Senior Millage Needs Assessment

The Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan (AAAWM) is conducting a senior millage needs assessment survey through the month of April. The survey is targeted to older adults for their comments on their current knowledge and use of the millage services along with what their projected needs will be in five years. The results of the survey will be used by the Kent County Millage Review Committee in funding decisions for 2010. You can access the survey on the AAWM website, <http://www.aaawm.org>.

Intergovernmental Efforts Highlighted

The Center for Michigan has highlighted the work that the cities of Grand Rapids, Wyoming, Kentwood, Walker, Grandville, East Grand Rapids, and Kent County have been collaborating on in a recent article posted online. The link to the article and accompanying attachments that list specific efforts can be found at: <http://www.thecenterformichigan.net/blog/seven-cities-coming-together>.

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Cooperative Extension

Experience Japan, Belize, and Poland through 4-H International Programs

Are you interested in traveling this summer but not sure if the timing is right? Bring the world into your home this summer by hosting a student from Japan, Belize, or Poland! These young people are excited to learn about your family's customs and culture, your values, foods, clothes, and lifestyle. But mostly they want to make friends, meet other young people, and try communicating in English!

The **4-H Japanese Exchange program** is one of the largest exchange programs involving North American and Japanese youth in the world.

- There will be 60 Japanese youth, boys and girls between the ages of 12 to 15, traveling to Michigan.
- The Japanese youth are seeking host families to stay with during the month of July 24th through August 22nd.
- The program is open to any family with a youth of the same age and gender as the Japanese youths.

Do you have a Polish background? The **Poland Exchange** may be an awesome opportunity for your family to learn more about their Polish heritage.

- The Polish delegates are seeking host families for a month long stay from June 23rd to July 22nd.
- The delegates are between the ages of 15 and 19 years of age and will be accompanied by chaperons who will also need host families.
- Exchange travel to Poland will be in 2010.

Looking for a chance to expand your global competencies? **We are searching for a group of teens to travel outbound to Belize** to represent the Michigan 4-H Youth Development program. Travel to Belize will last approximately 14 days during the month of July. **Host families are also needed to welcome youth from Belize** or a chaperone into their family and home from June 26-July 6th.

For more information **contact Farris Withers, 4-H Youth Development educator** at the Kent/MSU Extension office: withersf@msu.edu or 616-336-4761. Keep in mind you do not have to be a 4-H member to host an exchange student.

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Sheriff Department

Severe Weather Safety Tips

Tornado/Thunderstorm Safety

Preparing for a tornado/thunderstorm:

- **Plan ahead.** Be sure **everyone** in your household **knows where to go** and what to do in case of a tornado warning.
- **Know the safest location** for shelter in your home, workplace and school. Load bearing walls near the center of the basement or lowest level generally provide the greatest protection.
- **Know the location of designated shelter** areas in local public facilities, such as schools, shopping centers and other public buildings.
- **Have emergency supplies on hand**, including a battery-operated radio, flashlight and a supply of fresh batteries, first-aid kit, water and cell phone.
- **Make an inventory of household furnishings** and other possessions. Supplement it with photographs of each room. Keep in a safe place.



Grayling Funnel, July 15, 2008

What to do when a thunderstorm approaches your area:

- **Seek safe shelter** when you first hear thunder, see dark threatening clouds developing overhead or lightning. Count the seconds between the time you see lightning and hear the thunder. You should already be in a safe location if that time is less than 30 seconds. Stay inside until 30 minutes after you last hear thunder. Lightning can strike more than 10 miles away from any rainfall!
- When you hear thunder, **run to the nearest large building** or a fully enclosed vehicle (soft-topped convertibles are not safe). **You are not safe anywhere outside.**
- If you are boating or swimming, **get to land** and shelter immediately.
- **Telephone lines and metal pipes can conduct electricity.** Unplug appliances not necessary for receiving weather information. Use plug-in telephones only in an emergency.

What to do when a tornado warning is issued for your area:

- **Quickly move to shelter** in the basement or lowest floor of a permanent structure.
- In homes and small buildings **go to the basement and get under something sturdy**, like a workbench or stairwell. If no basement is available, go to an interior part of the home on the lowest level. A good rule of thumb is to put as many walls between you and the tornado as possible.
- **In schools, hospitals and public places move to designated shelter areas.** Interior hallways on the lowest floors are generally best.
- Stay away from windows, doors and outside walls. Broken glass and wind-blown projectiles cause more injuries and deaths than collapsed buildings. Protect your head with a pillow, blanket or mattress.
- Mobile homes and vehicles offer virtually no shelter. Leave them and go to the nearest shelter. Highway overpasses **do not** offer shelter.
- If there is no shelter nearby, the best alternative is to find a low spot away from trees, fences and poles, but not in a place subject to flooding. Shield your head with your arms.
- If you are boating or swimming, get to land and shelter immediately.

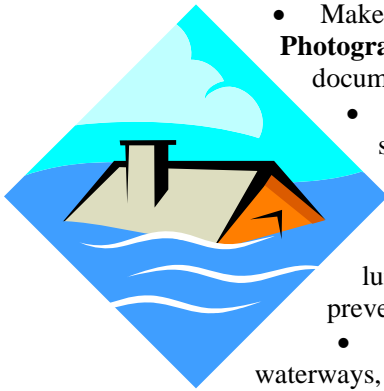
After a tornado/thunderstorm:

- Inspect your property and motor vehicles for damage. Write down the date and list damages for insurance purposes. Check for electrical problems and gas leaks and report them to the utility company at once.
- Watch out for fallen power lines. Stay out of damaged buildings until you are sure they are safe and will not collapse. Secure your property from further damage or theft.
- Use only approved or chlorinated supplies of drinking water. Check food supplies.

For more information visit www.mcswa.org

Flood Safety

Preparing for a flood:



- Make an **itemized list** of personal property well in advance of a flood occurring. **Photograph the interior and exterior** of your home. Store the list, photos and documents in a safe place.
- **Memorize the safest and fastest route to high ground.** Assemble a disaster supplies kit containing: first aid kit, canned food and can opener, bottled water, extra clothing, rubber boots and gloves, NOAA Weather Radio, battery-operated radio, emergency cooking equipment, flashlight and extra batteries.
- If you live in a frequently flooded area, keep sandbags, plastic sheets and lumber on hand to protect property. Install check valves in building sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Know the elevation of your property in relation to nearby streams and other waterways, and plan what you will do and where you will go in a flood emergency.

When a flood threatens:

- If forced to leave your property and time permits, move essential items to safe ground, fill tanks to keep them from floating away and grease immovable machinery.
- Store a supply of drinking water in clean bathtubs and in large containers.
- Get out of areas subject to flooding. This includes dips, low spots, floodplains, etc.

During a flood:

- Avoid areas subject to sudden flooding.
- Even six inches of fast moving floodwater can knock you off your feet, and a depth of two feet will float your car! Never try to walk, swim or drive through such swift water.
- Do not attempt to drive over a flooded road. **STOP!** Turn around and go another way.
- Keep children from playing in floodwaters or near culverts and storm drains.

After a flood:

- Boil drinking water before using. If fresh food has come in contact with floodwaters, throw it out.
- Seek necessary medical care at the nearest hospital. Food, clothing, shelter and first aid are available at Red Cross shelters.
- Use flashlights, not lanterns or torches, to examine buildings. Flammables may be inside.
- Do not handle live electrical equipment in wet areas. Electrical equipment should be checked and dried before being returned to service.

Where can I find additional safety information?

“Turn Around, Don’t Drown” are literally words to live by. This slogan highlights the nationwide flood safety public awareness campaign to help reduce flood-related deaths in the United States. The poster, a [Turn Around, Don’t Drown](#) sign, window sticker, FLASH card and a NOAA National Weather Service flood safety brochure are also available online at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/water/tadd>.

Lightning Safety

Lightning can provide a spectacular display of light on a dark night. This awesome show of nature also causes death and destruction. Lightning is the visible discharge of electrical energy. It is often accompanied by thunder – which is a sonic boom created by the same discharge. **If you hear thunder, lightning is a threat**, even if the storm seems miles away and the sky is blue. Lightning’s electrical energy seeks a path to ground – your home, the trees in your yard or even *you* can be that chosen path!



SAFETY TIPS

1. **PLAN** your evacuation and safety measures. At the first sign of lightning or thunder, activate your emergency plan. Lightning often precedes rain, so do not wait for the rain to begin before suspending activities. No place is absolutely safe from lightning; however, some places are much safer than others. The SAFEST location during lightning activity is a large enclosed building, not a picnic shelter or shed. The second safest location is an enclosed metal vehicle, car, truck, van, etc., but NOT a convertible, bike or other topless or soft top vehicle.
2. IF **OUTDOORS**, get **INSIDE** a suitable shelter **IMMEDIATELY!** When a safe location is not nearby: The lightning safety community reminds you that there is NO safe place to be outside in a thunderstorm. Don’t kid yourself--you are NOT safe outside. Being stranded outdoors when lightning is striking nearby is a harrowing experience. Your first and only truly safe choice is to get to a safe building or vehicle. If you like to camp, climb, bike (motorcycle or bicycle), boat, scuba dive, or enjoy other outdoor activities and find yourself in a place where you cannot get to a safe vehicle or shelter, outdoor safety tips are available at www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/outdoors.htm. These will not prevent you from being hit, just SLIGHTLY lessen the odds.
3. IF **INDOORS**, avoid:
 - Water
 - Doors and windows
 - Using the telephone and headsets. Turn off, unplug, and stay away from appliances, computers, power tools, and TVs. Lightning could strike exterior wires, inducing shocks to inside equipment.
4. **SUSPEND ACTIVITIES** for 30 minutes after the last observed lightning or thunder.
5. Individuals struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge and can be handled safely. Apply First Aid procedures to a lightning victim if you are qualified to do so. Call 911 or send for help immediately. **Know Your Emergency Telephone Numbers! For additional information visit NOAA’s lightning safety website: www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov**

Health Department

Health Notes

A service of the Kent County Health Department

April 2009: *Respect Works!*

If you think that sexual violence is not an issue where you live, learn, work, or play, consider these facts:

- According to the 2007 Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey, **14 percent of females and 7 percent of males in Michigan high schools** report having been physically forced to have sexual intercourse against their will.
- While working or on duty, **U.S. employees experienced 36,500 rapes and sexual assaults from 1993 to 1999**, according to the U.S Department of Justice and U.S Equal Opportunity Commission. This excludes the more than 12,000 annual reported acts of sexual harassment at work.
- **In 2007, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program in Grand Rapids provided services to 258 female and male victims of rape.** 35% were teens 13 to 19 years old and 76% of all victims knew their assailant.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This year's slogan, ***Respect Works***, highlights the role that respectful behavior at both the individual and organizational levels can play in creating and maintaining safe and healthy communities and workplaces.

While this year's theme focuses on reaching people at work, the ***Respect Works*** campaign is ultimately about moving beyond the victim or perpetrator-focused view of sexual violence and focusing on the larger environment in which sexually violent acts occur. Whether at home, work, or school, healthy relationships are based upon respect. When we care about those around us, we have a responsibility to be involved and help out when others are in harm's way. This is the essence of promoting social change that can result in a reduction in sexually violent behavior. Below are a few ways that you can get on board. Help create a healthy workplace by demonstrating respect for everyone!

- Lead by example and promote a safe work environment where people feel comfortable.
- **Interrupt insensitive comments, sexist jokes, demeaning emails or other forms of harassment.**
- Recommend policies and practices that contribute to respect and productivity.

Victims of sexual assault age 13 years and older can call the YWCA Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program for free and confidential medical and counseling services at (616) 776-7273.

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