



Secure & Prepared

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Teenager wants to help those having the “worst day of their lives”

At this time of year, most high school seniors are focused on graduation, parties and making plans for college. One Mahaska County teenager, however, continues to focus on serving his community.

Austin Witt, a resident of New Sharon and a senior at North Mahaska Junior-Senior High School, is giving back to his community through his work on the Mahaska County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). A member of the CERT since 2011, Witt currently serves as vice president of its board and is a captain, leading his own team of eight people.

“I saw people around our school that had joined CERT and I decided I wanted to be one of those people,” said Witt. “I never imagined I would gain the experiences I have.”



The CERT program educates members of a community about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills such as fire suppression and first aid. CERT members are an important part of a community’s emergency response in the aftermath of a disaster, when emergency services may not be immediately available to everyone.

As part of the Mahaska County CERT, Witt has had an opportunity to learn about and

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work closely with multiple emergency response organizations. Activities he has been involved in as part of his team include cleanup of tornado debris, traffic control, and distributing water to local residents after the city's water supply became contaminated.

Mahaska County Emergency Management Agency Director Jamey Robinson said Witt has brought amazing leadership and ideas to the CERT program and praises him for his leadership on the team. “Austin has been a part of this team since he was a freshman in high school, his sophomore year he was made captain and now helps lead the CERT team during training or real world events, directing members of the team no matter what their age is.”

Witt said he has gained a lot of beneficial training through the CERT program. “I've been to the State Emergency Operations Center and Des Moines National Weather Service twice, become a trained weather spotter, have learned how to assist fire departments with specific tasks, learned how to provide search and rescue, have been trained on the incident command system, and have been taught other very important skills,” he said.

The CERT program also sparked his interest in finding other ways



***North Mahaska senior Austin Witt.
Photo by Tracey Brown Photography.***

to help people, leading him to take emergency medical technician (EMT) training. “When a tornado is bearing down on a town, there will always be a need for first responders, which is another reason I am taking EMT classes.”

Witt, who said he used to be “scared to death” of storms, will attend the University of Oklahoma in the fall and will major in meteorology. He said CERT allowed him to be involved with and volunteer in his community, and that he plans to continue that involvement when he joins the university's recently-established CERT program.

Witt credits his involvement with CERT with fostering an interest in helping those in need. “I want to be able to help people when they may be having the worst day of their lives. It gives me a lot a pleasure knowing an impact I make can change somebody's life,” he said.

Robinson says CERT is a great program for people of all ages, but particularly for youths. “I think it gives them a taste of all response areas and gives them ideas about where they want to go throughout their academic life.”

Witt encourages anyone who wants to serve their community to get involved with a CERT program. When a major event takes place, he said, it is a huge relief for officials to have trained personnel who can take over small tasks so first responders can focus on larger tasks they need to accomplish.

For more information on CERT, visit the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management website at www.homelandsecurity.iowa.gov/programs/IDHRC.html#CitizenCorps.

Additional information about the Mahaska County CERT can be found at www.mahaskaready.com/C.E.R.html. Ω

[Submitted by HSEMD Public Information Officer Lucinda Robertson]

Social media course earns positive feedback

On March 20, HSEMD and the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center (NDPTC) at the University of Hawaii conducted the **Social Media for Disaster Response and Recovery** course at the Coralville fire station. The course drew approximately 20 participants representing law enforcement, state and local governments, and nonprofit organizations.



Above: Students at the Coralville course.

The course provides both information and hands-on experience to help participants begin developing social media plans and strategies.

When asked what parts of the course they felt were beneficial, one student said, "Just figuring out how to navigate through Facebook and Twitter, as well as knowing how to leverage the media outlet."

Another commented, "As a basic user of social media, the entire course ...more than satisfied my needs. The course was complete and effective."

This was the second offering of the course sponsored by the State. In October 2013, 80 people were trained after the 10th Annual Homeland Security Conference. Ω

Staff changes at HSEMD

As of April 11, 2014, the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management has four new bureau chiefs among its ranks.

The Planning and Financial Services Division has been split between two new bureaus: HSEMD Planner Susan Dixon has been chosen as the Planning and Training Bureau Chief, and Amy Meston has assumed responsibilities as chief of the new Grants and Financial Bureau. Dixon and Meston report directly to Planning and Financial Services Division Administrator Angela Chen.

The Recovery Division also has two new bureau chiefs. Katie Waters has been appointed chief for the Public Assistance Bureau (the position formerly held by Hazard Mitigation Bureau Chief Dennis Harper), and Aimee Bartlett has been named chief for the new Recovery Operations Bureau. Both Waters and Bartlett report to Recovery Division Administrator Patrick Hall.

Please join us in welcoming these ladies to their new positions! Ω

Advanced storm spotter training offered in May

The Des Moines National Weather Service forecast office has scheduled an advanced storm spotter training webinar on May 7, 2014. The course is intended for those who wish to do mobile spotting and desire a deeper understanding of meteorology as it relates to storm spotting. Visit www.weather.gov/dmx for details. Ω

ON THE CALENDAR: MAY

Public Service Recognition Week (4-10)
National Nurse's Week (6-12)
National Police Week (11-17)
National EMS Week (18-24)
National Public Works Week (18-24)
Memorial Day (26)*

*State holiday. HSEMD offices will be closed.

Training opportunities



Hazardous Materials Transportation Workshop **NEW!**

When: May 15, 2014
8 am.–4:30 p.m.
Where: Linn County EMA
6301 Kirkwood Blvd. SW
Cedar Rapids

This workshop provides a basic overview of how to use the Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMR) and a summary of many of the requirements found in the HMR – for shipping and transporting hazardous materials which can affect transportation safety to include: training requirements, packaging, hazard communications, and security.

Who should attend? Anyone who fills, marks, labels, placards, creates shipping documents, offers, transports or manufactures packagings for hazardous materials in commerce. Persons that have a desire to learn more about US DOT's Hazardous Materials Regulations are encouraged to attend.

What is the HMR? The Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMR; 49 CFR Parts 171-180) specify requirements for the safe and secure transportation of hazardous materials in commerce by rail car, aircraft, vessel, and motor vehicle. These comprehensive regulations govern transportation-related activities by offerors (e.g., shippers, brokers, forwarding agents,

freight forwarders, and warehouseers); carriers (e.g., common, contract, and private); packaging manufacturers, re-conditioners, testers, and re-testers; and independent inspection agencies.

Register online at http://opsweb.phmsa.dot.gov/hm_seminars/default_workshop.asp. For more information, call: 1-847-294-8580.

EOC Management & Operations (IS-775) **NEW!**

When: June 4-5, 2014
9 am.–4 p.m. (June 4)
8 am.–4 p.m. (June 5)
Where: Cedar County Law
Enforcement Center
711 E. South St.
Tipton

This course describes the role, design, and functions of emergency operations centers and their relationships as components of a multi-agency coordination system. The course contains disaster-related examples, activities and case studies that relate to EOCs and multi-agency coordination systems at the local, state and federal levels of government. The target audience includes emergency managers, first responders, public/private entities and disaster coordinators.

Register online at <http://homelandsecurity.iowa.gov/>

training. For more information, contact: **Susan Green** (susan.green@iowa.gov) or **Beth Lewis** (beth.lewis@iowa.gov) at 515.725.3231.

Local Volunteer and Donations Management (G288)

When: June 25-26, 2014
10 am.–4 p.m. (June 25)
8 am.–4 p.m. (June 26)
Where: Henry County EOC
900 W. Washington St.
Mt. Pleasant

This one-and-a-half day training will support local governments and their emergency management partners in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disaster events at the local level.

The target audience for this course is local elected officials, emergency management coordinators, faith-based organizations, non-profit organizations, public and private businesses, law enforcement, fire and health disciplines.

Register online at <http://homelandsecurity.iowa.gov/training>. For more information, contact: **Susan Green** (susan.green@iowa.gov) or **Beth Lewis** (beth.lewis@iowa.gov) at 515.725.3231. Ω

Legislative update

The legislature is working its way toward adjournment. However, on what date that will occur is still to be determined. The appropriation bills have been moving through the chambers with most pointed toward landing in a conference committee. The conference committees will work to resolve the differences between the two chambers and pass the final budgets for the upcoming fiscal year.

The House moved its version of the mass notification and emergency messaging system bill that was introduced by HSEMD. The Senate will now be considering the House version. Look for this policy bill to be tied to the budget



discussions over the course of the next few days. We remain optimistic that both the policy and budget for this effort will succeed. Ω

[Submitted by John Benson, HSEMD legislative liaison]

Take part in America's PrepareAthon!

Do you know what you would do during a disaster? Do you know if your community is at risk of tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires or flood?

Only about two-in-five Americans say that they have a plan for what to do in an emergency. We need to change that. On April 30, and throughout the spring, America's PrepareAthon! activities will focus on preparing individuals, organizations, and communities for tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. Be Smart. Take Part. And prepare today! Register for America's PrepareAthon! at www.ready.gov/prepare. Ω

**AMERICA'S
PrepareAthon!**

FEMA announces hazard mitigation funding opportunity

FEMA has announced the funding availability for the Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant program for FY2014; HMA includes both the Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) and the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) programs. The HMA grant program will provide funds to states, territories, Indian tribal governments, and communities for hazard mitigation planning and mitigation projects prior to a disaster event.

Projects submitted for consideration must be consistent with the goals and objectives identified in Iowa's State Hazard Mitigation Plan and lo-

cal mitigation plan for the jurisdiction in which the activity is located.

HMA program guidance provides critical information about eligibility, the evaluation process, and other key aspects of each program. FEMA has recently changed program guidance. The guidance can be found at: www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance.

Both FMA and PDM grants are cost-share programs, with FEMA covering 75 percent of eligible costs and local entities contributing 25 percent of eligible costs.

The grant application period opens April 21, 2014. FEMA has established the application deadline for states to submit their applications by July 25, 2014. In order to meet FEMA's deadline, HSEMD must receive local sub-applications by July 7, 2014.

Visit www.homelandsecurity.iowa.gov for additional information. Ω



FEMA

Apply for the 2014 FEMA preparedness awards today

The application period for the 2014 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Awards is now open. Download an application, and apply or nominate an individual or organization who inspires you today!

The awards application period is open through May 30, 2014. All applications must feature achievements taking place between January 1, 2013, and May 30, 2014. Please submit your application to citizencorps@fema.dhs.gov. A distinguished panel of representatives from the emergency management community will select winners in each of the following categories:

- Outstanding State Citizen Corps Initiatives
- Outstanding Local Citizen Corps Initiatives
- Outstanding Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Initiatives
- Community Preparedness Heroes
- Outstanding Youth Preparedness Initiatives
- Awareness to Action
- Survivor Empowerment and Integration



FEMA

Ready.

citizen★**corps**



- Technological Innovation
- Preparing the Whole Community

Winners of the 2014 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Awards will be announced in fall 2014 and will be FEMA's honored guests at a community preparedness roundtable event. As you prepare your application, don't forget to take a look at previous winners on the FEMA website.

Visit www.ready.gov/citizencorps/citizen-corps-awards for more information on how to apply and access to application materials. Ω

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HSEMD MISSION

Lead, coordinate, and support homeland security and emergency management functions in order to establish sustainable communities and ensure economic opportunities for Iowa and its citizens.

Secure & Prepared is published for those involved in the homeland security/emergency management system in the state of Iowa. For more information, contact Stefanie Bond at stefanie.bond@iowa.gov.

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