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(Neb.)-Lt. Gov. And First Lady Join Effort To 'Text Not Call' During Crises



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 03/14/2014 09:42 AM

(LINCOLN)-Nebraska Lt. Gov. Lavon Heidemann and First Lady Sally Ganem are encouraging those involved in an emergency or disaster situation to send a text message rather than a voice call to get through when wireless networks are overwhelmed during a crisis. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) advises people to know what to do before, during, and after an emergency to be prepared when disasters strike.

As Homeland Security director, Lt. Gov. Heidemann and First Lady Sally Ganem, along with other first spouses across the nation, are encouraging those in emergency situations and crisis to "Text First. Talk Second." In crisis scenarios, there are times when text messages get through the network even when wireless networks are too overwhelmed for voice calls.

First Lady Ganem says, "In an emergency, when citizens are all trying to use their phones, it can overload the system. A simple message could be a saving grace for friends and loved ones letting them know that you are okay."

"Even though our extensive communications systems are among the world's most dependable, many conditions can put a strain on these systems, which is why it is important to text in order to keep phone lines open for the most urgent emergency calls," said Lt. Governor Heidemann.

Each year, Nebraska observes Severe Weather Awareness Week. This year it is taking place March 24th-28th and Heidemann says it serves as a reminder that we all need to think about what we would do if a weather emergency affected our home and family.

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is asking that all Nebraskans learn what risks there are and take action before severe weather strikes. Items to have ready in case of an emergency include water (one

gallon per person, per day), non-perishable food, a battery-powered radio, flashlight with extra batteries, medicines, a hand-operated can opener, a utility knife, pet supplies, and first aid supplies. Be sure to copy important documents, such as medical records, contracts, property deeds, leases, banking records, insurance records, and birth certificates and keep them in a safe place.

Dry conditions leading to wildfires are a concern for Nebraskans this year. Individuals are urged to pay attention to Red Flag or Fire Weather Warnings, which mean conditions are favorable for a fire to start and spread rapidly. If you are in an area where warnings have been issued or where wildfires are burning, listen to local radio and television stations for updated emergency information and be prepared to take action if needed.

It is recommended to know the difference between a watch and a warning. For instance, a tornado watch is issued when weather conditions are favorable for the formation of tornadoes. Stay tuned to local weather reports for up-to-date information. A tornado warning is issued when a tornado funnel is sighted or indicated by weather radar. In this instance, take shelter immediately.

To learn more about what to do before, during, and after an emergency, visit NEMA's Website at www.nema.ne.gov or www.Ready.gov. Being prepared can make a big difference when seconds count.

--Office of the Lieutenant Governor