

City Talk Column for Sept. 27, 2023
Police Department
Stephanie Foley, police chief

Chief talks emergency management

The most important element to any emergency management plan is the community's effort in preparedness. Before I talk about Sedona though, I want to acknowledge upfront that regarding the recent tragedy and loss of life in Lahaina, Hawaii, the topics of emergency management systems and procedures are more important than ever. Today I will outline a few current strategies for our residents but rest assured that we are following the tragedy closely to look for what lessons can be learned and applied to Sedona. At least what we can tell so far is a major difference between the city of Sedona and Lahaina is that the fiber infrastructure used for cell phone communications was overhead and therefore burned in Lahaina, resulting in potentially not being able to get out messages that day. However in Sedona, our cell phone fiber is buried and we have also confirmed there are back up generators at each of the cell towers. Our thoughts will continue to be with the Maui community as they work through the aftermath of their tragedy and begin to rebuild.

There are many ways to become prepared for an event since there are different hazards that potentially could impact our community like storms and floods, fire, active attackers and other disasters. The city works to reduce these risks and trains to be prepared should an event occur in our city. We need to make sure our community members are prepared and knowledgeable about what to do when disaster happens.

First make sure to sign up for the city's emergency alert notification system Nixle. Depending on which county you live in, I recommended you sign up for additional notification systems as well; Coconino County utilizes Rave and Yavapai County Everbridge. You can find links to all three of these systems at www.sedonaaz.gov/alerts.

Next, make sure and understand what READY, SET, GO messaging means. We will use this messaging to communicate with you through emergency alerts. READY status means you should prepare your house and supplies in case you would need to evacuate. You should always be in ready status. SET status means you should be alert and potentially evacuate as soon as you are notified. This is when the threat level has increased, and danger is near. As a precaution, during SET status, you can voluntarily decide to leave the immediate area and monitor the situation in a safer location. GO status means you should evacuate; it has been determined a threat is near and the risk of danger and loss of life is imminent. While notification will be given through the alert system, when able, attempts will be made by law enforcement and other partners to notify residents door by door.

On the city's website we have an Emergency Management Preparedness Guide. There is a checklist for materials and supplies you will want to have easily accessible should a hazard/emergency arise. When minutes matter you want to know where important documents, prescriptions and other items are located -- possibly already packed or made so they can be grabbed quickly. Depending on your home, if you have children or pets/livestock you will want to plan to have enough supplies for everyone.

Lastly, all Sedona residents live within one of twelve evacuation zones, so make sure and Know Your Zone to help you understand the different routes you may need to take during an evacuation. We will use this

zone to communicate with you on evacuation information during an emergency. You should have received a magnet and letter in the mail with directions on how to find your zone, but you can visit www.sedonaaz.gov/evacuation with more information. If you need assistance in locating your zone, please attend the next community meeting on this topic, which will be this fall and announced via press release and social media. At the meeting, we will go over all these recent efforts in emergency management in detail and explain the process of notification and preparedness efforts the city of Sedona and our partners have developed.

We are also holding our Community Outreach Event (formally known as National Night Out) to come mingle with the Sedona Police Department and get to know us better. This event will be at Posse Grounds on Saturday, October 21, 2023, from 3 to 5 p.m. We will have a booth with our Yavapai and Coconino County emergency management partners to answer questions and discuss topics associated with preparedness and the city's efforts to ensure our community safety.

Know that the Sedona Police Department and its partners are prepared in the event of an evacuation and thank you for doing your part to be prepared also.