

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

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**Ministère de la Santé
et des Soins de longue durée**

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Dear Health Professional:

Emergency Preparedness Week is held annually during the first full week of May to promote the importance of personal preparedness in reducing the risks and lessening the consequences of a disaster. This year's event runs from May 4 – 10, 2008.

In Ontario, we have had our share of emergencies. From the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak and blackout in 2003 to seasonal forest fires and flooding, we know first hand that emergencies are unpredictable and can dramatically change in scope and impact.

Emergencies can threaten public safety, the environment and property, the economy, our health – and our health care system. We also know that emergencies can have devastating impacts on us personally.

Health professionals have an important role to play in emergency preparedness. Being prepared and planning ahead is critical to protecting our own health and safety, as well as responding to the health needs of the public during an emergency or disaster. Emergency Preparedness Week is a great opportunity for health organizations to promote personal preparedness among staff and management. To this extent, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Emergency Management Unit has developed resources that can be used to promote awareness of this important event among Ontario's health sector.

Visit the "What's New" section at www.health.gov.on.ca/emergency to access the *Emergency Preparedness Week Virtual Kit for Health Organizations*. This on-line kit contains a variety of materials to promote this event within your organizations, including the following:

- An "Ideas List" with helpful suggestions on how you can promote Emergency Preparedness Week within your organization and amongst staff, colleagues, and stakeholders;
- Articles that you can use for your organization's newsletters or post on-line and on bulletin boards;
- A personal preparedness tip sheet for health professionals;
- A cross word puzzle and word search that you can distribute to staff members in your workplace;
- An emergency contact card that you can give employees to keep their emergency contact information handy;
- A guide to creating your own personal preparedness plan;
- Emergency kit checklists, including supplies you'll need to prepare for a flu pandemic.

Emergency Preparedness Week can also be used as an opportunity to promote awareness of emergency management related initiatives at your workplace, such as the work of your emergency planners or Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, including any infection prevention and control initiatives that are underway.

Emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility; it is up to each and every one of us to learn what to do before, during, and after an emergency situation. I hope your organization will share the message of taking the time to plan ahead and be prepared.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tiffany Jay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tiffany Jay, Acting Director
Emergency Management Unit
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care