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## ‘Prepare Kansas 2015’ Registration is Open

Forty-two. That’s how many Kansas counties have been declared major disaster areas this year alone, due to severe weather events that swept through the state May 4 through June 21.

Those 42, out of Kansas’ 105 total counties, stretched from Atchison in the northeast, to Hodgeman in the southwest, and Sumner in the south central. The disaster designation, announced by President Obama in a July 20 White House news release, makes them eligible for federal aid.

There is no question Kansas has its share of disasters, but not all come in the form of a major storm. When any home floods or is ravaged by fire, it’s a disaster for the individual homeowner, renter or business owner involved. For that reason, some emergency responders say “all disasters are local.”

K-State Research and Extension has developed a way for Kansans and others to prepare. Prepare Kansas is an online challenge, now in its second year, which focuses on simple activities every week during September. A goal is to make it as easy as possible for individuals or families to complete each activity – and become better prepared.

This year, the activities focus on creating an emergency supply kit; assembling a “grab and go” kit for each family member (including pets); creating a communication plan; and practicing a fire drill. Each week will focus on different emergencies that can happen.

The program coincides with National Preparedness Month, designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

“We’ve had such good response to this program. We look forward to working with past participants on new activities this year, as well as with Kansans who are new to extension programs,” said Kansas State University associate professor Elizabeth Kiss.

Working step-by-step on each Prepare Kansas activity helps participants to be better prepared for emergencies, whether at home or at work. It can also spark discussions among families or co-workers about preparedness in general and the best ways to handle future disasters, Kiss said. By the end of September, participants will be more prepared for any emergencies, which can make recovery easier.

A Prepare Kansas blog is an ongoing resource available to anyone, whether they participate in the annual challenge or not. It addresses seasonal threats and other topics with links to more information.

Register for Prepare Kansas at <http://bit.ly/1It2tpU>, or read the blog at <https://blogs.k-state.edu/preparekansas/>.