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Editor,
Refugio County Press
Refugio, TX 78377

June 22, 2008

Dear Editor and Citizens of Refugio County

I am pleased to see the activity involving the Refugio County's emergency management team as recently reported in the Press. There are a few incidents in our past that make this a timely issue, regarding lack of preparedness because of failure to practice or drill on the procedures already in place. Let's tighten up on procedures.

Several years ago one of my patients noticed that I was keeping an eye on the weather system brewing on the northwest side of town and wanted to know what it was that had caught my attention. Answer? "That green cloud." The patient immediately recognized it as one of the signs of a brewing tornado and asked me what would happen if there was a tornado. I answered that "the sheriff's department would blow the fire whistle in a continuous cycle, as a sign of an emergency, and I would head for my basement one minute away with everyone in the office in tow." A few moments after that, the fire whistle blew, and the patient jumped up ready to run for shelter. I assured him to wait, if it was a fire, it would blow three times, if it was an emergency, it would continue to cycle.

After three cycles, as usual, the whistle quit blowing, and we went back to work. Some time later, the child of one of our employees came in the office and said "Guess what mother! You should have seen the tornado that hit the stadium and blew some seats up in the air. We all ran to the windows and watched it go over!"

That was a real reassuring plan for an emergency. A tornado touches down, the school lets all of the kids rush the windows so that they would be standing in the path of greatest peril if the tornado intensified, then the sheriff's department blows the whistle three times so the members of the fire department who didn't have their radios on are at the fire house when the tornado hits. Meanwhile, none of the townspeople are otherwise warned of an emergency, thinking it is another fire. This little tornado apparently transversed the entire length of Refugio since it apparently also hit a tree at the Refugio County library.

Concerning hurricane emergency preparation. The defacto plan for hurricane preparation for the businesses in town selling gasoline is to raise the price of the gasoline already paid for and in their underground storage tanks and then lock up the pumps and flee town. Meanwhile, during the last emergency evacuation of Houston, we all got to see again first hand just how incompetent is TXDot. Instead of bringing out the back hoes and blocking

off all entrance ramps to the incoming lanes to Houston and reversing traffic, police were stationed to chase the occasional frustrated driver trying to leave town on the vacated incoming lanes. That meant that instead of the usual 400 mile range on a full tank, many Houston drivers were lucky enough to make it the 180 miles to the unmanned pumps in Refugio after the spineless cowards abandoned our town. I did what I could and handed out my lawnmower gas to a lucky stranded recipient. That was more than any of the businesses selling gasoline in our town did to help out in this emergency. Shame on them.

Along with the right to make money within our city also comes some responsibility, and I do not agree with a total emergency evacuation plan. There should be a plan in place to open essential facilities as soon as possible, and that includes pumping gasoline after an emergency if you plan to sell gas in Refugio during the good times. Does the committee have a better plan, what is that plan, and how does the committee plan to implement it?

This article is available on the www.jtimrainey.com website. Dr. Rainey can be reached @ drrainey@jtimrainey.com Or 888 (888) 733-8446, or (800) 866-3054, or 361 526 4695
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