

Mariners Baseball: Peanuts, Cracker Jacks and ... Emergency Preparedness

King County Office of Emergency Management in Seattle, Wash., has enlisted the boys of summer to help drive home to the public the critical need for personal preparedness.

Every time the Seattle Mariners complete a double play in their home stadium, a fan in the stands wins a two-person disaster supply kit (*see sidebar*). The 30-pound kit, with a cash value of \$130, is supplied by Philips Medical Systems, an Andover, Mass.-based company. "The goal is to raise awareness for the need to prepare each and every household in King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties and the city of Seattle for emergencies and disasters like natural hazards and terrorism," according to the emergency management office.

Director Eric Holdeman told *EPN* that he has 90 kits to distribute, although that may be an optimistic number, given the Mariners' performance so far this season. "These are not rinky dink packs, so this is a good way to get the fans excited and involved," he said. "We realized that we've got to take scarce funding and put it to the best use. We decided to put it toward public education." In addition to the backpack giveaway, Holdeman said his organization has passed out 500 information preparedness brochures during three games, as well as run public safety messages on television and radio. "The Mariners have also given us signage in the stadium and booth space to hand out our materials. We've gotten a lot of free publicity out of this."

Seattle as Prime Disaster Target

Terrorism is a concern in Seattle because of its position as the only major city in the Northwest with three ports within 50 miles of one another. "Those ports receive 25 percent of the nation's container shipments," Holdeman said. "We're also close to the Canadian border, and known terrorists have crossed into the States from there. Plus, we have the eighth largest transit system in the United States, and we're home to some of the largest companies—Microsoft, Starbucks, Boeing."

But Holdeman stressed that terrorism is only one component of the threat potential. "This is a high risk natural disaster area," he said. "In the last 40 years, we've had 19 presidentially-declared disasters." Seattle and the surrounding area is subject to volcanoes, avalanches, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, hurricane-force winds, ice storms, blizzards, and power outages. "Mt. Rainier is a volcano," Holdeman pointed out. "It's the most dangerous volcano in North America."

Given the threat level, Holdeman said his goal is to make sure people are prepared. "They have to know how to evacuate, how to shelter in place, including how to shelter in place in their car," he said, explaining that many people have half-hour to hour-long commutes to and from the city.

Shifting public opinion about emergency preparedness is an uphill battle, Holdeman said. "There are four stages of denial. First, it won't happen. Then, it won't happen to me. Then, even if it happens to me, it won't be that bad. Finally, if it's really bad, I'll be dead so there's nothing I could've done anyway." Holdeman said that he finds this line of thought maddening. "I call it stinkin' thinkin'. The reality is that only two percent of people die in a major catastrophe, so your quality of life comes down to how prepared you are." He added that terrorism and earthquakes are similar in that there is no warning. "It's not like a hurricane that you can see brewing off the coast. Terrorism and earthquakes hit, and it's a matter of being ready or not. My goal is that no one in this area can say, 'you didn't warn us; you didn't tell us what to do and how to get prepared.'"

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Two-Person Disaster Supply Kit

- 20 emergency drinking water pouches
- 2 food packets
- 2 emergency survival blankets
- 4 body/hand warmers
- 2 ponchos
- 4 light sticks
- 2 flashlights with batteries
- 1 AM/FM radio with batteries
- 2 whistles
- 1 multi-function knife
- 1 box of waterproof matches
- 1 two-gallon collapsible water jug
- 1 deck playing cards
- 2 dust masks
- 1 pair leather palm gloves
- 1 5' x 7' tarpaulin
- 1 50-foot rope
- 1 pry bar

Hygiene pack (tissue packets, wipes, bio-hazard waste bags, toothpaste, toothbrush)

First aid pack (compress, dressings/pads, bandages, first aid guide, gloves, scissors, tweezers, aspirin, ointments, first aid tape, finger splints)