



For Immediate Release

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For More Information:

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Would you know if a large anhydrous ammonia leak is blowing a cloud of chemicals across your community? How about a warning to boil your water because of a water main break? These events have occurred in Story County and emergency responders can, and have, used a mass notification system called Story County Iowa Alerts to provide residents urgent information for these emergencies. Keith Morgan, Story County Emergency Management Coordinator commented, "We know keeping the public informed makes for better outcomes. Our best tool to communicate with residents is our mass notification system Story County Iowa Alerts and we'll be testing the system on Sept 27<sup>th</sup> at 10 am. If you've registered, you should receive a test message either through a recorded message, text, or email. If you haven't registered and want to make sure to get emergency messages, you can sign up by going to <http://www.storycountyiowa.gov/alert>."

Story County Iowa Alerts gives residents and businesses the ability to select how messages are sent to them and the communities for which they get messages. As they register for the alerts, they will be asked to enter the phone number to which the alerts go and how they arrive, either as a text or voice message. They can also select to receive the messages via an email. Residents can also identify which communities they for which they want to get alerts, for example they many want alerts for the towns in which they live, where their children go to school, where they work, and where their elderly parents live. Those that have special needs such as dependency on electricity for medical devices will have the opportunity to self-identify needs as they register. Finally, the address input by the resident will also help emergency management target messages. Melissa Spencer, the Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator, said, "Residents inputting this information into Story County Iowa Alerts to allow us to really target emergency messages to people who need to get them."

Using the example of the anhydrous leak near a community, Story County Emergency Management can work with the first responders of the community to draft a message notifying residents of the leak, telling them to evacuate to a shelter, and how to get further information. A box delineating the evacuation zone can be drawn on a map in the system and the message can specifically be sent to those whose address is in the evacuation zone, plus the message can be sent to those that wanted emergency messages for the community, regardless of their address. This same concept works for a business that may be in the evacuation zone. By registering business phones for the alerts, the company can be aware of hazards in their community.

Story County Emergency Management is also encouraging Iowa State University students to sign up for Story County Iowa Alerts in addition to ISU Alert. ISU Alert may not cover all emergencies happening outside the university setting. Signing up for both notification systems will ensure students receive any emergency information that comes from the City of Ames or Story County. Parents of Iowa State Students



who live inside or outside Story County can also register on Story County Iowa Alerts using their child's dorm or apartment address in Ames.

The test of the Story County Iowa Alerts on Sept 27<sup>th</sup> is a part of Emergency Management's efforts to get all residents, businesses, and communities better prepared for emergencies and disasters during September, which is Preparedness Month. Keith Morgan emphasized, "Registering for Story County Iowa Alerts is just one part of overall emergency preparedness. We don't need to be victims of disasters. By thinking through how you will react during each step of a potential emergency, you can identify how you can reduce your risk, plan for how you'll react, ensure you have the right tools and supplies, and be better prepared for the event." He stressed the mass notification system is just one way to get important information and that severe weather alerts are not broadcast on Story County Iowa Alerts, because a weather radio and phone apps were deemed to be better at providing this information. Emergency Management also has a Facebook Page for non-emergency communications at <https://www.facebook.com/storycountyema/> and more preparedness information at [www.storycountyiowa.gov/ema](http://www.storycountyiowa.gov/ema) . This information can be used by families or businesses to build plans for severe weather, hazardous materials situations, or other emergencies. Once these plans are put together, everyone can practice them so they will know what to do during a disaster. Doing this work now can save lives during a disaster and make the recovery much quicker when the danger has passed.

For more information on Story County Iowa Alerts, contact Keith Morgan or Melissa Spencer with Story County Emergency Management Agency at 515-382-7315