

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Lucinda Robertson or Stefanie Bond
515-725-3231
HSEMDPIO@iowa.gov

Governor Branstad Designates April as 9-1-1 Education Month

DES MOINES – Governor Terry E. Branstad has designated April as 9-1-1 Education Month in Iowa.

The Iowa 9-1-1 Communications Council and the Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division are hoping the month-long campaign will help Iowans of all ages recognize the importance of 9-1-1 and the role they play in ensuring effective and efficient emergency response in times of crisis. Both the U.S. Congress and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) have also recognized April as National 9-1-1 Education Month, and are encouraging the media, the 9-1-1 community, the wireless industry, and public information providers to engage in 9-1-1 awareness and education activities this month.

“9-1-1 is an ever-expanding program. The technology is changing all the time,” said 9-1-1 Communications Council Chair Steven Ray of the Iowa Department of Public Safety.

As consumers utilize new communications technologies and devices, 9-1-1 education takes on an increased importance for everyone, but especially for children, teens and parents. One misconception about the capabilities of 9-1-1 has to do with cell phones and text messaging.

“Currently, 9-1-1 cannot receive text messages,” said Barbara Vos, Iowa’s 9-1-1 program coordinator, however, “the technology is being developed.”

NENA has made a number of public safety educational resources available for the media, 9-1-1 professionals, educators, and citizens via website at www.nena.org/education/911-education-month, including an electronic brochure entitled ***Making 9-1-1 Work for YOU!*** The brochure is designed to provide essential information about the 9-1-1 system and emergency response.

“Children are taught from kindergarten on how to use 9-1-1, but they tend to forget as they get older,” Vos said. “There are a lot of times that people will call 9-1-1 for something that they think is an emergency, but it really, truly isn’t.”

For example, she said, people will call 9-1-1 around Thanksgiving every year to ask how to cook a turkey. Prank calls are also one of the biggest issues 9-1-1 call centers have to deal with, even though in most states, making prank calls or calling 9-1-1 for a non-emergency is a crime. “We try to teach people that if somebody’s in danger or immediate need of assistance – medical assistance – that’s the time you call 9-1-1.”

Iowa HSEMD will have information available on both of its websites, www.iowahomelandsecurity.org and www.BeReadyIowa.org, throughout the month of April, including a series of weekly blogs and podcasts. You can also link to HSEMD’s Facebook page and Twitter feed for regular updates during April.

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