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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Disaster Preparedness

MADISON – During week four of Building Safety Month the Alliance for Regulatory Coordination joins the International Code Council in encouraging disaster preparedness. Natural disasters are increasing in severity and frequency. Planning in advance for devastating events like floods, tornadoes, snow storms and wildfires helps individuals and communities increase the health and safety of their population during a disaster, protects the local tax base, ensures continuity of essential services, and supports a faster recovery in the aftermath of a disaster. Here's how you can help your family and community.

Build to the Latest National Model Codes

One of the best ways for communities to prepare for disasters is to build to the most up-to-date, modern building codes. Disaster mitigation through the adoption and enforcement of building codes provides you, your family and your community, protection in the event of a natural disaster. Wisconsin state adoption of the most current [International Residential Code](#) (IRC) would provide Wisconsin the benefits of the nations most hazard resistant code for one- and two-family dwellings.

Although, in 1980, Wisconsin was one of the first states to implement a statewide code for one- and two-family dwellings, we have since fallen years behind in keeping up with nationally accepted practices in design and construction of homes. Wisconsin has the lowest ISO [building code effectiveness grade](#) for one- and two-family home construction, when compared to our neighbor states that also have statewide codes for new home construction; Michigan and Minnesota. Regular code updates, based on the IRC, are the best way to ensure Wisconsin homes are disaster resistant.

The National Institute of Building Sciences found that adopting the International [Residential](#) and [Building](#) Codes generates a national benefit of \$11 for every \$1 invested. The I-Codes, developed by the International Code Council, are a family of fifteen coordinated, modern building safety codes used in all 50 U.S. states and in many other countries that protect against disasters like fires, weather-related events and structural collapse.

The development and widespread adoption of building codes creates a uniform regulatory environment in which design professionals and contractors are held to a set of standards adopted by and applicable to the jurisdiction in which they work. The Rebuilding of London Act of 1666, after the Great Fire of London that same year, was the first building code of the modern era. Building regulation in the United States began in the late 1800s when major cities began to adopt and enforce building codes, also in response to large fires in densely populated urban areas. Over time, the scope of building codes broadened. Today, building codes address structural integrity, lighting, ventilation, safe egress, construction materials as well as fire resistance. They specify the minimum requirements to safeguard the health, safety and general welfare of building occupants.

It is also very important that codes are properly applied. Proper application requires that building departments be sufficiently staffed with plan reviewers, inspectors and other qualified professionals, and that building officials are trained and stay up to date with code advancements through continuing education. Studies show good code enforcement decreases loss following disasters by up to 25 percent. When states and local jurisdictions apply the latest codes and they are diligently enforced, they are more likely to qualify for federal pre-disaster mitigation funding and for more post-disaster recovery assistance.

Prepare Your Family

Making sure your family is prepared for any natural disaster is important. Here are some steps you can take to prepare your family and protect your home from natural disasters. Your actions can ensure that no matter what Mother Nature brings, you, your family, and your community will be resilient.

- ❖ Identify and understand possible hazards and emergencies as your first step.
- ❖ Develop a family disaster plan that includes a list of food and water supplies needed for each member of your family and supplies for your pets. Make copies of important documents like insurance policies, the deed to your home, and other personal papers, important phone numbers and a home inventory. Create a checklist of important things to do before, during, and after a disaster.
- ❖ Review your evacuation route and emergency shelter locations with your family. Options for evacuation would include staying with friends and relatives, seeking commercial lodging, or staying in a mass care facility operated by disaster relief groups in conjunction with local authorities.
- ❖ Taking shelter is critical in times of disaster. Sheltering in place is appropriate when conditions require that you seek protection in your home, place of employment, or other location where you are when disaster strikes.

Protect Your Home

The power of natural disasters can be overwhelming. While you can't necessarily stop them from happening, there are steps you can take to increase your home's chance of survival, even in the face of the worst that Mother Nature can dish out. Protecting your home can range from taking simple measures like protecting windows or elevating appliances, to more complete building retrofit measures. See Additional Information and Resources below for links to hazard-specific guidance on protecting your home.

Several lines of insurance are available to cover financial damage from various hazards. To learn more about protecting your home financially through insurance, see FLASH's [Homeowner's Insurance Guide to Natural Disasters](#).

Flood insurance can be the difference between recovering and being financially devastated. Just one inch of water in a home can cost more than \$25,000 in damages. The average flood insurance claims payment to homeowners was about \$90,000 from the Baton Rouge floods in 2016 and \$65,000 for Superstorm Sandy that struck the Northeast in 2012.

FEMA's Individual Assistance Program, during times of federally-declared disasters, can provide financial assistance for home repairs, rental assistance, and other needs in the U.S., but the average payouts are much smaller, on the order of \$6,000 to \$8,000 per household — why risk it? For more information on flood insurance, visit floodsmart.gov.

The [Alliance for Regulatory Coordination](#) is a consortium of 24 business, professional, trade and advocacy organizations involved in building design, construction and regulatory services in Wisconsin. The Alliance seeks regulatory services provided in the most efficient manner possible to effectively promote the health, safety and welfare of Wisconsin citizens and visitors.

The [International Code Council](#) is dedicated to developing model codes and standards used in the design, build and compliance process to construct safe, sustainable, affordable and resilient structures. Most U.S. communities and many global markets choose the International Codes.