



News Release

WISCONSIN ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Joint Force Headquarters ▪ 2400 Wright Street ▪ Madison WI ▪ 53704

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NEWS: Department of Military Affairs helps students prepare for emergencies

Tod Pritchard

Wisconsin Emergency Management

Eleven thousand students across Wisconsin will be better prepared for an emergency, thanks to the STEP program.

STEP, or Student Tools for Emergency Planning, is a turnkey classroom curriculum for teachers to prepare 5th graders for various emergencies and disasters, including tornadoes, flooding and storms. The program also shows students how to put together an emergency kit and develop an emergency plan.

STEP is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs' Division of Emergency Management.

More than 40 volunteers from the AT&T Pioneers, Wisconsin Emergency Management and the Wisconsin National Guard assembled 11,000 starter emergency kits and other STEP materials in Madison, Wisconsin, Jan. 5. Those kits will go to 185 schools across the state.

Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general and Wisconsin's homeland security advisor, thanked the volunteers for their efforts.

"Getting students excited about emergency preparedness is the goal of the STEP program," Dunbar said. "Students bring emergency preparedness information that they learned in the classroom back home. They are able to encourage their parents, siblings and friends to put together their own family disaster plan and disaster kits to help them be better prepared for emergencies."

During a visit to Sun Prairie's Royal Oaks Elementary School last month, Dunbar joined Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch to announce the STEP program's return to Wisconsin classrooms, thanks to a \$15,000 Innovation and Investment Award from AT&T.

"When disaster strikes, it's important that Wisconsin communities know how to respond and act quickly," Kleefisch said. "The STEP program not only teaches students how to prepare for emergencies, but it also encourages them to share that information with their families. We are



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excited to kick off this program to help schools like Royal Oaks Elementary and others across the state prepare their students for emergencies and disasters.”

AT&T has a long-standing commitment to disaster preparedness and business continuity, and is the first company in the nation to earn U.S. Department of Homeland Security certification for disaster preparedness. AT&T has provided \$58,000 since 2012 to support the STEP program in Wisconsin.

“We know how critical it is to be ready and prepared to respond in the event of a disaster or emergency,” said Scott T. VanderSanden, president of AT&T Wisconsin. “Not only are we proud that our network operations are state of the art when it comes to performing during and after a disaster, but we are also proud to help prepare Wisconsin families to respond to emergencies through our support of the STEP program.”

Royal Oaks Elementary Principal James Ackley said emergencies and disasters can happen at any time to anyone.

“That’s why we think it’s important to prepare our students,” Ackley said. “We’re excited to participate in the STEP program and help give our students the confidence and potentially life-saving tools they need to respond in an emergency situation.”

Wisconsin became the first state in the Midwest to teach the STEP program during the 2010-11 school year. Approximately 40,000 students have participated in the program over the past six years.

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