



Press Release

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Students at Freedom Elementary School Learn How to Be Prepared for Disasters & Emergencies

STEP Program Teaches Kids How to Assemble Emergency Kits and Develop an Emergency Plan with Their Families

FREEDOM, Monday, April 1, 2019 – With more severe weather expected this spring in Wisconsin, nearly 115 4th graders at Freedom Elementary School learned today how to be prepared to respond in the event of a disaster or emergency.

The students are participating in the STEP program, which stands for Student Tools for Emergency Planning. The statewide program, run by Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) and sponsored by AT&T and the Wisconsin Wireless Association, teaches students how to be prepared for various emergencies and disasters, including blizzards, tornadoes, flooding, storms and fires. The program also shows students how to put together an emergency kit and develop an emergency plan with their families.

“STEP is such an important program because disasters and emergencies can happen to anyone of us at any time, with little to no warning,” said Principal Tammy Lipsey. “And not being ready is a disaster in itself. The STEP program helps prepare our students and their families so they know what to do in an emergency.”

Students heard from officials with Wisconsin Emergency Management, Outagamie County Emergency Management, and AT&T, as well as State Representative Jim Steineke, about actions they can take to be prepared in an emergency or disaster situation.

“Getting students excited about emergency preparedness is the goal of the STEP program,” said Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin’s adjutant general. “We want students to bring the emergency preparedness information they learn in the classroom back home, so they encourage their families to put together their own disaster plan and disaster kits to better prepare for emergencies.”

The STEP program is being funded this year through a \$7,000 contribution from AT&T Wisconsin and a \$7,000 contribution from the Wisconsin Wireless Association.

“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.”

Teachers are provided with all STEP materials at no cost to the schools. All students participating in the program also receive an emergency kit to take home, which includes a flashlight. The basic lesson is only one hour of instruction, but teachers can expand the lessons to cover eight hours of materials.

“STEP is a great program that helps prepare our 4th graders to be ambassadors for emergency preparedness in their schools, their communities, and their homes,” said State Representative Jim Steinke. “Through STEP, students not only learn disaster preparedness skills, but they also gain the confidence they need to react quickly should they encounter a disaster or emergency situation.”

Wisconsin became the first state in the Midwest to teach the STEP program. Over 65,000 students have participated in STEP since the program began during the 2010-11 school year. Another 10,000 students are expected to participate in the 2018-19 school year in 150 schools around the state.

For more information on the STEP program, please visit <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov/step/> to view a STEP video and download a brochure, or contact Andrew Beckett at andrew.beckett@wisconsin.gov or 608-242-3211.

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 (DHS) certification for disaster preparedness. Since 2012, AT&T has provided \$85,000 to support the STEP program in Wisconsin.

Additionally, AT&T is investing in its network in Wisconsin to benefit public safety and first responders on [FirstNet](#) – public safety’s dedicated communications platform. FirstNet is being built with AT&T in a public-private partnership with the First Responder Network Authority. It is designed to help first responders in Wisconsin and across the country connect to the critical information they need – when they need it – so they can keep themselves and the communities they serve safer.

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**Based on GWS OneScore Sept. 2018. Excludes crowd sourced studies.