



Press Release

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Students at Schurz Elementary in Watertown 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

WATERTOWN, Tuesday, April 3, 2018 – With severe weather this spring fast approaching, over 100 4th and 5th graders at Schurz Elementary School in Watertown 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.

“If an emergency or disaster happens, we want our students to be prepared,” said Tanya Wyse, a 4th and 5th grade teacher at Schurz Elementary. “The STEP program is a perfect way to provide the knowledge and tools our 4th and 5th graders need to know what to do in an emergency situation.”

Students heard from officials with Wisconsin Emergency Management, Jefferson County Emergency Management, the Watertown Fire Department, and AT&T, as well as State Representative John Jagler, 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 \$10,000 Innovation & Investment Award from AT&T Wisconsin and a \$10,000 donation 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, including instructor guides, DVDs and copies of student handouts. 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.

“The STEP program not only takes emergency preparedness into our schools, but it also encourages our young people to take home the information they learn so they can help prepare their families,” said Rep. Jagler. “Disasters can happen at any time anywhere, so it’s important that all Wisconsin communities are ready and prepared should disaster strike.”

Wisconsin became the first state in the Midwest to teach the STEP program. Over 52,000 students have participated in STEP since the program began during the 2010-11 school year. Another 12,000 students are expected to participate in the 2017-18 school year in 150 schools around the state.

For more information on the STEP program, please visit <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov/STEP/default.asp> to view a STEP video and download a brochure, or contact Joy Staab at joy.a.staab@mail.mil or 608-242-3079.

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 \$78,000 to support the STEP program in Wisconsin through the AT&T Wisconsin Innovation & Investment Award program. The program provides funding to organizations that improve the community by advancing education, enhancing the environment, promoting economic development, or delivering other community services.

Additionally, [AT&T](#), in a public-private partnership with the First Responder Network Authority, has a plan to build, operate and maintain a highly secure wireless broadband network for Wisconsin’s public safety community. FirstNet will bring advanced technologies that will help first responders save lives and protect communities during disasters and emergencies.

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