

# THE HOOSIER RESPONDER

DECEMBER 2020

Once Abandoned,  
Dog Now Works  
to Find the Missing

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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The COVID-19 response continues to evolve, yet our mission and message remain consistent: stay diligent, social distance and wear masks to slow the spread as we await the first of several vaccines expected soon.



Doctors and nurses in hospitals, ICUs and long-term care facilities (LTCs) have been designated as the top priority for the first COVID-19 vaccines expected in Indiana. Other high-risk populations will follow, including all certified EMS personnel and other frontline health care workers (according to CDC guidance and the [Indiana COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Plan](#)). We expect final word soon on the delivery date, and the Indiana Department of Health, IDHS and individual healthcare networks across the state have been working for weeks to adequately plan for the storage and distribution of these vaccines. However, it will take extreme collaboration and patience to help this massive network function as planned. Vaccines that require two injections for each recipient, complicated storage needs and the required distribution and administration requirements present early challenges.

All current indications point toward Q2 of 2021 for the vaccines to be available to the general public. Each state is receiving initial vaccines based on population, but it is still uncertain as to how quickly subsequent shipments will reach Indiana populations. Indiana EMS personnel alone account for 45,000 vaccinations (potentially 90,000 shots) in this early, second phase of healthcare and high-risk groups. The rest of the first responder community (police, fire, EMA, dispatchers, etc.) will receive vaccinations according to the guidelines and availability.

Unfortunately, the long-awaited vaccines also come with unsavory scams that have consistently been an issue since the pandemic started in March. Knockoff PPE and other critical supplies created problems early, accounting for more than \$27 million nationally in fraud costs, according to the U.S. Homeland Security Investigations Unit. Once vaccines become available, people are reminded to only accept a vaccine from an approved medical provider and be wary of any offer to move you up the priority scale for vaccination.

While all these moving parts develop into a coherent vaccination strategy — never seen at such a global scale—personal responsibility remains key to keeping yourself and others safe. This means avoiding large gatherings of friends and families during the holidays. It is a tough ask, without question, but the logic is to take caution now to help us move beyond the pandemic as soon as possible. Continual surges leave us no option, as the positive impacts and changes of COVID-19 vaccines remain months away.

None of us want to hear this during the holidays. We all miss our loved ones, especially those doctors, nurses and health care providers barely holding on due to the surge of hospitalizations. We have no choice but to focus on the greater good. Sacrificing now may mean some return to normalcy later in 2021.

Stay safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Cox'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light gray background that features a faint, stylized graphic of a quill pen.

Steve Cox  
Executive Director

# GET



# PREPARED

♪ He sees when you are reckless.  
He knows when you are safe. ♪  
Follow us this holiday.  
Get prepared for goodness' sake!



#PrepareYourElfIN

## 2020 'PREPARE YOUR ELF' PREPAREDNESS CAMPAIGN

Holiday traditions will likely look very different for many Hoosiers this year. As such, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) is spreading some holiday cheer with a safety twist!

Preparedness has always been a focus of IDHS, and the agency's [GetPrepared.in.gov](http://GetPrepared.in.gov) website is a repository for safety tips of all types. This year, Santa has kindly assigned an elf to IDHS Public Affairs in order to assist in public safety education. His name is Jasper!

Throughout December, keep an eye on the agency's [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts for fun and interesting safety tips focused on winter and the holidays.

Jasper will be spreading safety (and cheer) through Christmas Eve under the hashtag #PrepareYourElfIN. We encourage you to support this new tradition, and promote holiday safety, by sharing to your own social networks.

# Happy Holidays





# NEW HUB FOR FIRST RESPONDER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) has published a new [First Responder Behavioral Health](#) webpage to help public safety workers manage extreme stress, mental strain or substance use disorders.

The new page lists contact information for services first responders can call for immediate help when they feel distressed or need to be connected with life-crises resources. This includes phone numbers for suicide prevention hotlines and an interactive map for community mental health centers.

“In the current environment, we see too many first responders in need of assistance from mental health resources,” said Steve Cox, executive director of IDHS. “We want to provide as many avenues as we can to

address this issue for all first responders.”

Other resources on the page are links to an online self-assessment, IDHS mental health course and COVID-19 behavioral health resources. The page also offers information on how public safety agencies or individuals can get involved to help their colleagues.

“Managing daily stress is incredibly important to all of public safety. Providing ways to deal with this increases longevity, not only in lifespan but in career, improves daily performance and overall results in happier and more effective employees,” said State EMS Medical Director Dr. Michael Kaufmann.

One resource listed on the page is volunteering for

or requesting the services of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) teams, which provide support to first responders experiencing negative effects of a traumatic incident.

“CISM, and psychological first aid as a practice, is not to fix people, and it’s not therapy. It’s to keep people on the job. It’s how to mitigate the traumatic effects so first responders can keep on doing what they’re doing and get referrals for help if they choose,” said David Berman, vice president of harm reduction and crisis stabilization programs for Mental Health America of Indiana.

Many incidents are over within hours or a few days, but some may continue for long periods of time, like the COVID-19 pandemic. During the

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pandemic, call volumes have gone from all-time lows during the lockdown to all-time highs, and the statewide EMS system has been stressed like never before, Kaufmann said.

“Providers are both mentally and physically stressed from not only the volume, but also from the uncertainty of knowing if someone might be COVID-positive. Our provider agencies are strained to provide PPE, staff their emergency response vehicles and respond to calls quickly. Our system of health care has never seen anything like this and will likely not look or function the same after this is all over and done,” Kaufmann said.

In addition to frequently dealing with life and death situations, he says first responders experience many other stressful types of events throughout their day-to-day operations. That daily stress, or secondary trauma, accumulates.

“If not dealt with, it builds up and can have devastating consequences,” Kaufmann said, encouraging Hoosier public safety workers to visit the new page to familiarize themselves with the content and linked resources so that in times of crisis, such as the pandemic, they can make use of it for whatever issue has reached a tipping point.

# COVID-19 RESOURCES AND UPDATES

## BEST PRACTICES FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

A myriad of resources exist online to assist with COVID-19 information. However, three specific pages have curated content that *Hoosier Responder* readers may find especially helpful:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has compiled [best practices and lessons learned for emergency managers](#).

U.S. DHS has a large number of [guidance documents available for first responders](#), including disinfection procedures for firefighting gear, among a number of other links.

The CDC also has published a series of [“What you need to know” information for all types of first responders](#).

## COVID-19 AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

IDHS continues to update the [COVID-19 EMS Manual](#) with the most up-to-date information on PPE, exposure and operational guidance for agencies. Recommendations include using appropriate PPE, social distancing and limiting aerosol-generating procedures, as appropriate. To receive notifications when this guidance is updated, sign up for IDHS [email updates through GovDelivery](#).

## VACCINATION ASSISTANCE

Paramedics and advanced EMTs are allowed to administer vaccinations as part of their Indiana EMS scope of practice. The state has an immediate need for all of EMS to get involved in the vaccination administration efforts. Individual providers can help by reaching out to their county health departments to assist with local vaccination clinics. Hospitals will act as the primary COVID-19 vaccine distribution sites following the Indiana Department of Health’s [COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Plan](#).

This effort will place an additional strain on the health care system, and so the state is asking all EMS provider agencies to reach out to their local hospitals to offer assistance with mass vaccination efforts. For those agencies working with their local health departments or registering as their own Vaccines for Children and adult provider agency, there will be reimbursement opportunities available.

## SERVING ESL COMMUNITIES

Counties with English as a second language (ESL) populations can find several translated resources, including information on quarantine and business safety guidance, on the [Indiana Department of Health COVID-19 website](#).

# HOW TO BE WARM — BUT SAFE — THIS HEATING SEASON

Although the warm temperatures stuck around longer than usual this year, the weather has finally taken a turn to the cold side. With the shift in temperatures, many Hoosiers may start using alternative-heating sources to try to stay warm.

Sharing alternative-heating best practices with communities will help save lives this heating season. Historically, nearly half of home heating fires in the United States occur in December, January and February. The high numbers often are attributed to unsafe alternative-heating practices.

Precautions to prevent home heating fires are often simple. The more Hoosiers are reminded of these straightforward tips, the safer they will be this winter.



## ALTERNATIVE-HEATING SAFETY TIPS

- Heat sources should be turned off before leaving the room or going to sleep.
- If a space heater is necessary, consider purchasing one with a built-in tilt sensor.
- Only one space heater should be plugged into each electrical outlet and always directly into the wall.
- Space heaters should be kept at least three feet away from loose or flammable objects (clothing, curtains, bedding and furniture). These items can catch on fire when put too close to a heater.
- Appliances such as ovens should never be used for heating because they can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Small changes such as wearing long underwear reduces loss of body heat and can limit the need for alternative heating sources.
- Smoke alarms can provide vital seconds to escape a home fire. All Hoosiers, especially those using alternative heating, should check their smoke alarms regularly.



# IDHS SETS MILESTONE WITH IPPW



The Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop (hosted by the Indiana Department of Homeland Security) held on Oct. 14-15 not only solidified Indiana's three-year preparedness priorities, but also became the first IPPW conducted at the state level in the United States.

Created by FEMA as a replacement to the former Training and Exercise Preparedness Workshop (TEPW), the IPPW is an interactive forum for local, state and federal organizations and jurisdictions to come together and identify hazards that may impact their communities. All hazards identified and discussed during the IPPW are then applied in the Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP), which establishes preparedness priorities and an outline of all the preparedness activities that will occur for the next three years.

While Denver, Colo., was the first jurisdiction in the country to complete an IPPW, Indiana is the

first to implement it statewide. Ashley Baldwin, state exercise officer with IDHS, spearheaded the coordination of the IPPW and said its new advantages are a big step up from the former TEPW model.

"The IPPW model is a more progressive process to identify and achieve Indiana's multi-year preparedness goals," Baldwin said. "We now have the capability to integrate risk assessments, planning efforts and grant priorities, which will help drive emergency preparedness exercise activities in Indiana."

A combined 103 individuals from various local Indiana jurisdictions and organizations attended the IPPW sessions on Oct. 14 and 15, which were held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Mick Newton, director for Noble County EMA, attended the Oct. 14 session. Having participated in the previous years' TEPW sessions, Newton said he feels confident working in the IPPW and using its new process.

"For me, the three-year exercise cycle is like the missing link in this process, since it goes deep into the different risks and follows a proven and logical process," Newton said. "The result will be a more robust response capability to locally identified risks. This, to me, is one of the biggest improvements to this planning process."

FEMA described Indiana's IPPW as one for other states to follow as they develop their own IPPWs.

Marc Chmielewski, regional exercise officer for FEMA Region V, said IDHS exceeded FEMA's expectations with its IPPW.

"It was well-thought-out and coordinated, very detailed and professionally presented in a virtual environment," Chmielewski said. "IDHS should be proud of its staff that contributed and of the obvious hard work and preparation that went into conducting their first IPPW."



## ONCE ABANDONED, DOG NOW WORKS TO FIND THE MISSING

After a long day of training, firefighter Jeremy Pell came home, flipped on the TV and immediately was drawn to two of the most beautiful, intense eyes staring back at him.

He admits he was hooked at that moment by Rosie, the 2-year-old shepherd mix.

Rosie's emotional story brought him in even more as he learned from the news report that she was found abandoned, left alone and tied to a tree in Johnson County. Her only possession — a collar with a note attached.

**I was a spoiled girl. My dad gave me my own couch to lie on and my own memory foam bed. My dad lost his job and soon his home from COVID. Please pray for him and give him hope that I will find a good home!**

It sounds like just another sad story in these trying times, but Rosie's story didn't end there. Neither did Pell's. As a firefighter for 31 years, currently serving as chief of White River Township Fire Department, Pell recently began searching

for a dog to launch a new search and rescue team with his department. Finding Rosie seemed meant to be.

"I thought adopting her would make a great new chapter to her story, but first I had to see if she could do the work," said Pell, who also serves as a reserve deputy for the Johnson County Sheriff's Department.

Johnson County Animal Control allowed Pell to visit and evaluate Rosie. Not all dogs are able to do the hard work that goes into finding missing people.

"There isn't one particular breed that makes a good search and rescue dog," says Lillian Hardy, search and rescue manager for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS). "The important things to look for are temperament, intelligence and what motivates them."

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After some time together, Pell determined Rosie would make an excellent search and rescue (SAR) dog candidate, because she is not only smart, but also highly motivated by treats and toys.

“I couldn’t ask for anything better,” he added. “What I love about her is, not only does she have that athleticism, she has some natural intelligence. She can follow commands and learns quickly. And she *loves* the game of search, which dogs view as a game.”

Pell has had Rosie just more than 10 weeks now. He hopes to have her mission-ready by next spring.

“She has all the makings of a very good SAR dog,” Pell said. “She is happy, playful and intelligent. She has a working mindset and great energy. She fits in wonderfully to both the Pell family and the White River

Township Fire Department family.”

Pell emphasized the growing need in Indiana for SAR dogs.

“We have people that have wandered away, like autistic children and dementia patients,” Pell explained. “And we also have a long list of missing persons. Rosie’s second chapter

in life is helping people. She’s going to have a job making other lives better.”

For more information about search and rescue, or to find out how to start your own search and rescue K-9 program, visit the [IDHS Search and Rescue Training page](#).





## LA NIÑA MAY BRING HOOSIERS A WET WINTER SEASON

The National Weather Service (NWS) predicts a particularly wet winter season for Indiana, and it is all thanks to the cooling of ocean surface temperatures created by La Niña.

La Niña, or “the little girl” in Spanish, is [described](#) by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as “periods of below-average sea surface temperatures across the east-central Equatorial Pacific.” The effects of La Niña last approximately nine to 12 months, and the colder-than-average ocean temperatures have the power to influence weather across the globe.

For the southern areas of the country this means warmer, drier winter weather conditions. For the northern areas of

the United States, including Indiana, cooler temperatures with wet precipitation are to be expected.

“The northern areas of Indiana can expect above-normal precipitation, but also an equal chance for either warmer or colder temperatures,” said Kyle Brown, meteorologist for the NWS Forecast Office of Northern Indiana. “One caveat regarding the precipitation, however, is that it doesn’t guarantee we will receive more snow.”

Northern Indiana has another geographical feature that will potentially increase snowfall: the lake effect.

“One of the main, unique challenges with the greater northwestern Indiana area is the lake effect,” Brown

explained. “It is tricky to forecast which communities lake effect snow will impact, but the ones located closer toward the Great Lakes tend to receive more yearly snowfall than those located further south.”

Jason Puma, senior meteorologist with the NWS Indianapolis, said central Indiana is going to see similar La Niña winter weather conditions.

“As of right now, central Indiana is trending for higher chances of wetter precipitation along with equal chances for above, below or normal temperatures,” Puma said. “When it comes to snow, central Indiana has experienced below-average snowfall for the last five years, and the forecast currently isn’t showing any indication of that changing this year.”

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Southern Indiana has a slightly different outlook.

“Southern Indiana will also experience above-normal wet winter conditions,” Puma said. “But as you get closer to areas near the Ohio River, the wet precipitation begins to turn near normal.”

Although this year’s winter season will be wetter than usual, both Brown and Puma said Hoosier EMAs should remain vigilant with winter weather preparedness.

“We have a plethora of resources available on the National Weather Service website that EMAs can use to help keep their counties safe this winter,” Brown said. “We are always happy to share EMA weather information on our social media channels too.”



“Be prepared and have a plan in place for potential winter storm watch and warnings issued by the NWS,” Puma said. “We view Indiana EMAs as our partners in helping keep Hoosiers safe from severe weather, so they are

always welcome to contact the NWS with any winter weather preparedness questions.”

For a complete list of NWS winter weather resources, visit [www.weather.gov/safety/winter](http://www.weather.gov/safety/winter).

## GOOD IDEA



## BAD IDEA



# COUNTY TRAVEL ADVISORY MAP

All year long, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) maintains a [map](#) showing travel advisories for every county in the state. As winter weather sets in, the map becomes even more useful.

“We get a lot of questions from people: ‘Am I allowed to go to work today?’ We don’t know, and we aren’t in charge of that, so we share the map and refer to it often,” said Jason Puma, a senior meteorologist for the National Weather Service’s Indianapolis office. The Indiana branches of the National Weather Service promote the map during [Winter Weather Preparedness Week](#) and on social media to let people know where to turn for travel information when government officials have issued travel alerts.

The IDHS [State Emergency Operations Center \(SEOC\)](#) hosts the travel advisory map within its WebEOC software, and every county is responsible for updating its travel status. The state and other agencies rely on counties’ timely reporting to accurately inform important travel decisions.

“We in the SEOC and at the Watch Desk rely on the map religiously. We heavily depend on its accuracy at any given moment,” said SEOC Manager

Mark Olson. “We use it for situational awareness across the state with our local partners. We also produce advanced weather summaries and assessments from the Watch Desk to inform county EMA directors, who are the ones who advise their county commissioners in making their county’s decision to change their status.”

Dozens of state agencies, private sector partners and non-governmental organizations use the map, Olson said. These include, but are not limited to, the Indiana Department of Transportation’s Traffic Management Center, the Indiana State Police Operations Center, Indiana Department of Education, Indiana volunteer organizations active in disaster (VOADs) and county organizations active in disaster (COADs), like county CERT teams. Olson said local companies may base their staffing decisions in part on the map to protect their employees from hazardous conditions.

The Indiana National Guard (INNG) checks the map during flooding and snowstorms to plan its routes before using the road closure board in WebEOC, and it was especially handy during the 2008 flooding, according to INNG/IDHS Liaison Mark Michael.



IDHS Director of Emergency Management Erin Rowe explains the travel advisory map offers counties the opportunity to spread awareness of potentially unsafe conditions, even beyond roadways.

“This doesn’t have to be just roads being impacted. Most recently, the map was used by county EMAs to bring awareness to citizens of the influx of COVID-19 cases in their county,” Rowe said. “This is another tool to use to better prepare for unsafe conditions and bring awareness to citizens who can then make safe decisions.”

# FEMA PUBLIC ASSISTANCE: AFTER THE APPLICATION

Communities across Indiana are still working to recover from the effects of COVID-19. This has led many governments and organizations to submit their eligible expenses to FEMA for possible reimbursement under the Public Assistance (PA) program in the form of a project application.



FEMA begins the review process and works to determine what expenses will be deemed eligible for reimbursement. The time it takes for these reviews varies from applicant to applicant and project to project.

So, what are the next steps?

# FEMA

Following the submission of a project application in the [Grants Portal](#),

While waiting for FEMA to review a submitted project, IDHS PA staff recommends the applicant continue logging into the FEMA Grants Portal regularly to make sure no requests are being overlooked.

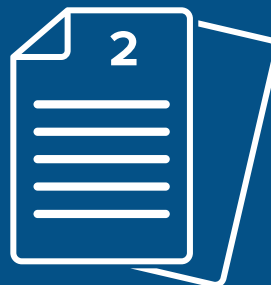
## ADDING MORE DOCUMENTS

Applicants have multiple options when working with extra documentation. Below are the two main examples:



**Option 1:** Send missing documentation to the IDHS PA staff at [pa@dhs.in.gov](mailto:pa@dhs.in.gov). Attach a cover letter to the documentation stating what needs to be done and include the project

number. From here, IDHS PA staff will make sure this documentation is forwarded to the appropriate FEMA staff.



**Option 2:** Create a new project application in the Grants Portal with the unclaimed expenses. Be aware, for a project application to be considered for review, it must meet the minimum threshold of

\$3,300. If this second project (the unclaimed expenses) falls under the minimum threshold of \$3,300, FEMA will deem it as ineligible.

For questions about the public assistance program, visit the [IDHS Public Assistance webpage](#) or contact IDHS PA staff at [pa@dhs.in.gov](mailto:pa@dhs.in.gov).



## RETIRED AMBULANCES FIND NEW LIVES IN MEXICO

Emergency medical services look quite a bit different in Tijuana, Mexico, just a stone's throw across the border from California.

The city of nearly 2 million (sixth largest in Mexico) relies on Cruz Roja — the Red Cross — or a network of volunteer medics who donate their time to respond to emergency medical situations in a country where there is little government support for EMS. Residents also face the risk of untrained, unlicensed opportunists more than willing to swoop in and transport someone to a hospital for a hefty price.

Regardless, Tijuana residents still face a response time that is nearly double what even residents in the most rural areas of Indiana can expect.

“It was astonishing and eye-opening to me how differently the system operates, even just a few miles from the U.S. border,” said Jerry Shultz, a Fort Wayne, Ind., firefighter and medic who has volunteered as a medic in Tijuana. “The level of care is so much different, and it just screamed out that there was a huge opportunity to make an impact.”

Bryan Peterson, also a Fort Wayne firefighter and medic, first visited Tijuana in the 1980s as an EMT student living in San Diego. While there with friends, an explosion occurred, and he responded alongside Rescate Halcones, the local volunteer EMS service. His experience led to many volunteer shifts across the border over the next several years, even after he moved from California to Indiana.

Peterson and Shultz were together on a volunteer trip in 2019 when they saw a clear sign of the struggle for Tijuana to get quality emergency services. Rescate Halcones had a single ambulance in service that day, that is, until the transmission fell out. That incident led Peterson and Shultz to a realization: they had to do something to help these volunteer medics, who were so dedicated they worked for no salary and even put their own fuel in the tank so an ambulance could be in service.

Around the same time, a Fort Wayne ambulance was coming out of service. The two began refurbishing the ambulance to donate to Rescate Halcones, a small gesture for the dedicated servants and friends they had come to know over time.

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“Initially we thought we were going to get this one ambulance and donate it to the one organization that we knew had a need,” said Peterson.

But then another ambulance became available. Two quickly became four, and more leads were received. And with that, [One World Medics](#) was formed. In just more than a year, nine ambulances from the region have been delivered to Mexican communities.



“Even though these vehicles have reached the end of their useful life in the U.S., they are far better than what is currently in service in these communities,” said Shultz, who does much of the mechanical repair. “I kept thinking about how this ambulance would have a whole new life and touch far more people than I ever could on my own.”

If you are aware of an ambulance or other emergency vehicle to help the program, contact Bryan Peterson at [bryan@oneworldmedics.com](mailto:bryan@oneworldmedics.com).

Follow the [One World Medic group on Facebook](#) or visit its [website](#) to learn more about how to participate.

The firefighters have worked closely with Fernando Zapari, the publisher of Fort Wayne’s Spanish-language publication “El Mexicano,” which has followed the progress and growth of One World Medics.

“This is what we do on a regular basis,” Zapari said. “We’re always trying to inform and educate our community. And I was shocked, looking at these two guys out here in Fort Wayne, purchasing an ambulance with their own money, trying to help heroes across the border.”

The Fort Wayne community has rallied behind the project, with residents, churches, supermercados, businesses and other organizations donating funds, materials or labor to the project. This assistance allows One World Medics to donate the vehicles fully stocked with needed supplies, creating an even longer-lasting impression in these underserved communities.

“The last few ambulances have had 300,000 miles on them, but you would think we had just invented Christmas, the recipients have been so happy,” Peterson added.

## FINAL FOUR FRONTLINE HEROES



### NOMINATE TODAY!

From nurses to your mail carriers, firefighters to your local grocery clerk, we all know someone who has put serving our community first.

Nominate an individual or organization to be a Final Four Frontline Hero, and the NCAA and Indianapolis Local Organizing Committee will recognize their work with a surprise visit from the Final Four Fan Jam and with official 2021 Final Four swag to show support and appreciation.

Learn more at [NCAA.com/FinalFour](https://www.ncaa.com/finalfour).



# PROTECTING YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION IS KEY TO SAFE, SECURE HOLIDAY SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

With the holiday shopping season in full swing, consumers are reminded that data privacy and protecting their personal information from cyber criminals is an important step before beginning to shop online or visiting a retail store.

[According to new data from Qubit](#), half of consumers now do more than 75 percent of their shopping online, a trend that is expected to continue. Highlighting the importance of data privacy comes at a challenging time. According to data from the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC), credit card fraud was most prevalent in these cases, with more than 167,000 people who reported a fraudulent credit card account was opened with their information.

The frequency of these types of crimes continues to rise, even though a recent holiday shopping report from KPMG indicates that U.S. consumers are planning to spend 18 percent less on holiday gifts and buy less this year.

As defined by the [U.S. Office of Privacy and Open Government](#), personally identifiable information (PII) is the “information which can

be used to distinguish or trace an individual’s identity, such as their name, social security number, biometric records, etc., alone or when combined with other personal or identifying information which is linked to a specific individual, such as date and place of birth, mother’s maiden name, etc.” It is data, such as this, that enables a business to instantly identify and target someone as an ideal customer and provide that person with a positive online experience.

A recent article on network security recently highlighted a list of [10 online privacy facts](#). The FTC also offers a series of helpful tips for [keeping your personal data protected](#).

On Jan. 28, people are invited to celebrate [Data Privacy Day](#), an international effort created

to help empower individuals and encourage businesses to respect each other’s privacy, safeguard one’s data and enable trust.

Beginning in 2007, Data Privacy Day was created by the Council of Europe. In 2009, the U.S. House of Representatives proclaimed it National Data Privacy Day. Since that time, a variety of consumer, business and cybersecurity groups and organizations annually celebrate Data Privacy Day.

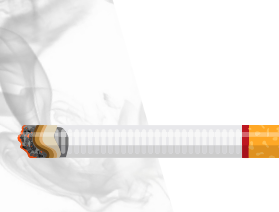
For more information about how to keep your personal information secure, Hoosiers can visit the [Indiana Cybersecurity Hub](#) for the latest tips and other helpful links and resources.

*Written by Chetrice Mosley-Romero, the Cybersecurity Program director for the State of Indiana*





# SMOKING ON OXYGEN: A DEADLY COMBINATION



Fire deaths of any kind are tragedies. However, one fire scenario that often stands out in the minds of first responders are fires caused by a person smoking cigarettes while on oxygen.

In **2018**, Indiana fire departments responded to **25 incidents** started by smoking on oxygen. Another **21** occurred in **2019**, and a total of **26 incidents** already have been reported for **2020**.

“To someone who doesn’t smoke, it may seem inconceivable that smokers would light up a cigarette while attached to an oxygen generator,” said Indiana



State Fire Marshal Joel Thacker. “Unfortunately, quitting can be very challenging, even with such important health benefits. It’s an awful fire death to come across as a first responder and an awful fire situation for a victim to endure.”

Thacker said most often the fire fatality is the person who was smoking while on oxygen. However, there have been cases where a person smoking on oxygen has caused the death of another person living in the home.

Departments should consider leveraging partnerships within their district healthcare coalitions to help educate Hoosiers on this fire-safety hazard.

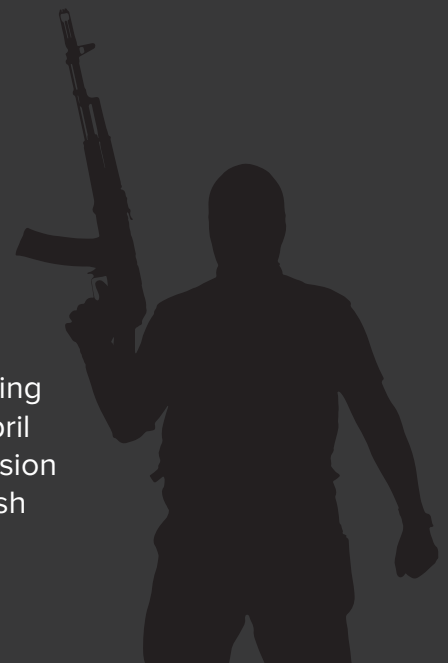
## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Merely turning off the oxygen flow before lighting a cigarette is not enough. Oxygen can linger on a person’s hair, clothing or body and ignite immediately.
- Individuals must be vigilant in keeping the oxygen system away from cigarettes, candle flames, oil-based lotions, aerosol sprays and alternative heat sources.
- Family members of people on an oxygen regimen must stop purchasing or bringing cigarettes to the patients.

## CCTA EXERCISE SCHEDULED FOR APRIL

Complex Coordinated Terrorist Attacks continue to be one of the many hazards faced by communities across the country. In 2017, Indiana and Kentucky were jointly awarded more than \$2 million to help improve their ability to prepare for, prevent and respond to complex coordinated terrorist attacks in collaboration with the whole community.

Operation Thunderstruck is the culmination of this grant program, a joint exercise between the two states focused on responding to an incident during Thunder Over Louisville. The full-scale exercise, currently scheduled for April 2021, is expected to include hundreds of first responders, exercise the mission areas of response and recovery, implement incident command and establish family assistance and reunification centers.





# PROUD FIREFIGHTING HISTORY FUELS INDIANA MUSEUM

The Vintage Fire Museum and Education Center in Jeffersonville, Ind., may be looking for a new home while also pursuing an expansion plan that would create an interactive fire safety center and memorial.

For the past six years, the museum has enjoyed incredible support from Jeffersonville and the surrounding community, setting attendance records in 2019 and serving visitors from across the country. The Spring Street location, in the heart of the local arts community, is home to dozens of early firefighting vehicles, trailers and equipment culled from a variety of local collections acquired through the years. Included are

hand pumpers from the 1700s, chemical engines and other horse drawn equipment as well as motorized vehicles dating back to the 1920s.

“We’ve always had the idea to not just invite people to come around and look at the displays but to give informative tours, do fire safety education and have special events and remembrances in the firefighting community,” said Curt Peters, chairman of the museum board.

A former auto dealership directly across the street became available recently, and the board saw the opportunity to bring their vision to reality. The location would allow for

the expansion for additional displays but also include a memorial garden and an interactive education center, similar to the [Survive Alive](#) museum in Indianapolis. The board launched a capital campaign to support the project and closed on the building on Sept. 1.

The “Ring the Bell Campaign” has raised nearly half of the \$600,000 expansion costs, and the board has scheduled future events to support the campaign, despite the ongoing pandemic.

“The idea would be the original building would focus on fire apparatus and memorabilia at the start of the American fire service and through the early years of the motorized era,” said C.J. Haunz, a firefighter and volunteer board member. “The new building would be a multi-use facility, with one part dedicated toward educating the



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public to keep them fire safe and the rest for other displays, including detailing what station life is like in a department.”

Through the years, the collection of vintage fire equipment has greatly outgrown the current location. Many pieces are cycled through regularly but still a large portion of the collection cannot be displayed in the current building. The second building, albeit smaller, was a critical element to the future of the museum.

“We also want to build a meditation garden as a place for people to read and learn about the sacrifices, dedication and courage of firefighters,” Peters said. “Part of our goal is to encourage the appreciation of firefighters for all they have done and also inspire people to be committed to their communities.”

To donate to the “Ring the Bell Campaign,” please visit [vintagefiremuseum.org](http://vintagefiremuseum.org).



## FUTURE LOCATION UNCERTAIN

Shortly after closing on a second building across the street, the museum board learned they would have to leave their current location.

In mid-November, the Jeffersonville Redevelopment Commission voted to end the lease on the museum’s current building to allow for economic development in the area.

“Despite this development, we’re going to continue to fulfill our obligation to this community and continue to serve,” Peters said.

“Ring the Bell” carries on as the board works with the city on a solution. City leaders indicated they supported the museum mission and hope to secure grant funds to help keep the museum local.

# SMOKE DIVERS

In March 2020, 19 firefighters from across Indiana and from out-of-state graduated from the Indiana Smoke Divers course, making it more than 60 Indiana Smoke Diver graduates since the course’s inception in 2013. Class seven of the course is scheduled for March 8-12, 2021.



The Indiana Smoke Diver course is a six-day, 60-hour program designed for the experienced firefighter who desires realistic training in self-survival, firefighter rescue, advanced search and rescue, thermal imaging, situational awareness, decision-making and teamwork. The program condenses and replicates the extreme demands that may be placed on firefighters at any incident. Emphasis is placed on maintaining a survival mindset and overcoming the challenges of a high-risk/low-frequency event.

Individuals interested in applying for the 2021 course can learn more at [indianasmokediver.com](http://indianasmokediver.com).

Photo credit: Eight31 Photography



# IMPROVEMENTS SOUGHT IN IMAGETREND REPORTING

Every run a fire department or EMS provider makes that gets reported to the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) helps put all Indiana public safety agencies in a better position to save lives.

Agencies throughout the state submit their run information through [ImageTrend](#), a data collection and analysis system that captures fire and EMS data. This data is compiled into reports by national entities, IDHS and others to spot trends that can drive changes in efforts from the national and state levels to the local level.

The IDHS Division of Fire and Building Safety focuses heavily on improving this data reporting throughout the state. The data is important in grant funding for Indiana but also has a multitude of other uses, including providing information on the severity and reach of the state's fire protection resources, developing state public education campaigns and making recommendations for state codes and standards. The data also helps to support legislation, according to IDHS fire/EMS data risk coordinator Randall Eimerman.

“One example is the [kitchen fire data flyer](#) we created. The data gives us an idea of what problems Indiana is having,” said Indiana State Fire Marshal Joel Thacker. “There was more than \$9.5 million in house fire damage in 2019. How can we reduce the number of fires to reduce the amount of losses? It would help us to know the top three fire issues over the past few years, so we can then package that information and turn fire departments’ attention to those issues.”

The data also is useful for individual entities as they look for efficiencies and improvements.

The Gary Fire Department reports all its runs to IDHS by entering its data directly into ImageTrend through a computer-aided dispatch interface from Lake County's system. This method has saved the department money by not having to host a server and pay for security software, according to Garry Kotvasz, Gary's chief of technical services. He said the department analyzes its data at regular intervals to judge response times, see which unit or apparatus is used most often

and find the days and times that are usually busy or slow, among other uses.

Looking forward, the hope is more consistent reporting, Thacker said.

Specific improvements needed include local administrators understanding the data being requested, and departments should focus on entering all relevant information in every data field, because data analysis at the state and national levels only uses what is input into the data fields. In other words, agencies should not skip filling out data fields.

## EMS DATA REPORTING

More than 300 EMS organizations report run data to IDHS regularly. In fact, the response rate for EMS data is consistently 90 percent, exceeding the national average.

State EMS Director Kraig Kinney said compliance with data submissions is excellent, and the next step forward is to improve the quality of that data. Important areas of improvement include making sure all NEMIS fields are completed and that

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correct selections are made in the Chief Complaint and Patient Symptoms fields.

Kinney said the primary reason EMS data is collected is that it allows Indiana to be compliant with NEMSIS, the national EMS data collection initiative. The data also is used for initiatives such as the [Naloxone Administration Heatmap](#), which allows EMS personnel and the public to see hot spots in order to better mitigate opioid abuse. State EMS Medical Director Dr. Michael Kaufmann also relies on the data to create the annual EMS System Quality Improvement Report and the [Pediatric Incidents Annual Report](#). Indiana's EMS data is routinely requested by researchers nationwide, and the Indiana Department of Health also has been using the data for COVID-19 information gathering on patient symptoms statewide.

“A key way EMS data has been used since early in the COVID-19 pandemic is that it can be searched for combinations of key symptoms to see increases in suspected cases for any area while waiting on the formal COVID-19 testing to catch up,” Kinney said. “Then, IDHS and often the EMS providers in that area can be mindful of a possible outbreak.”

EMS providers can find areas of improvement explained more in the [EMS System Quality Improvement Report](#) on the IDHS website.

# IDHS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: NEWS YOU CAN USE

IDHS staff member Graham Jessiman, developer and backup administrator for WebEOC, was recognized by the WebEOC community at the recent Juvare Exchange20 virtual conference for his work in leading a focus and support group for WebEOC staff, both in the United States and internationally. The group runs an online support forum, monthly webinars, a “board swap” area and a website, all of which promote mutual aid in the WebEOC community. Jessiman is also the current chairperson of the WebEOC User Advisory Board (UAB), which works with Juvare to help steer new developments of the product.

## PUBLIC SAFETY PORTAL

The boiler and pressure vessel permits process, along with state licensing of inspectors, is now live in the Public Safety Portal (PSP). State inspectors now utilize a tablet for inspections, allowing results to be available in a more timely manner. Work is commencing on development for the new hazardous material transportation permits system, and process discovery is well underway for building plan review and building variances. IDHS appreciates the patience of its customers during this transition in technology.

## INTRA-STATE MUTUAL AID

IDHS continues to work with representatives from the fire and EMS communities to develop a mutual aid request process between departments within Indiana. This initiative is being spearheaded by Chief Brian Lott with the Indiana Fire Chiefs Association.

## COUNTY READINESS ASSESSMENTS

A new online tool has been developed to allow each jurisdiction's EMA to self-report their readiness prior to county readiness assessment visits by the IDHS Regional Liaison staff. All county EMAs are expected to use this tool for their assessments.

## SCHEDULED EVENTS AND SEAR

**PLEASE REMEMBER:** the WebEOC scheduled events board will remain available year-round, not just for major incidents. The staff is working with the National Weather Service Indianapolis office to provide a more streamlined request process for weather support. Filters on the board allow users to see events happening locally within seven, 30 and 90 days. Users also can generate a PDF with all details for each event.



# RECOGNIZING FIRST RESPONDERS IN NEW WAYS

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) has recognized members of the fire and EMS services for their dedication to their communities for years, and now it will do so in a few new ways.

## EMS RECOGNITIONS

The EMS Commission has always awarded honorary recognitions, but earlier this year it created recognition policies, including establishment of a retired status for EMS license holders, who prefer that designation over a status that simply states that their certification has expired. The [new guidelines](#) define categories and qualifications for recognition.

“This permits consistency for the recognitions, but the categories are broad enough that we have flexibility to honor EMS excellence in several ways,” said State EMS Director Kraig Kinney. “Secondly, recognition may be

granted by agreement of the State EMS director and the EMS Commission chairperson jointly, on behalf the EMS Commission, which speeds up processing times for requests.”

Kinney said all recognitions receive a certificate, though the higher the recognition, the more formal the certificate becomes. Also, requests for recognition to be presented in-person by an IDHS representative are permitted. The presenter will usually be the EMS district manager, but it could also include the State EMS director if desired.

## STATE FIRE MARSHAL RECOGNITIONS

The Indiana State Fire Marshal has added a new award, the Heroic Life Saving Award, in addition to the existing Meritorious Service and Valor Service awards. Those awards recognize public safety workers for years of service or

acts beyond the call of duty, respectively. State Fire Marshal Joel Thacker instituted the Heroic Life Saving Award to fill a gap where extraordinary acts were going unrecognized when individuals had been called upon to risk their own lives.

“The men and women of Indiana fire and EMS service respond on hundreds or thousands of runs every day. As public safety workers, we mostly just say, 'It's all in the line of duty,' but in certain circumstances the work performed is above and beyond,” Thacker said. “Those circumstances and situations, where the quick actions of first responders literally made a difference between life and death, those should be recognized and rewarded.”

The first recipients of the Heroic Life Saving Award were individuals who resuscitated fellow first responders suffering cardiac arrests on-scene.

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## NEW NOMINATION METHOD

How EMS and fire personnel are nominated for recognitions also has changed. Although anyone may still reach out to the IDHS Division of Fire and Building Safety to request recognition, IDHS offers a new webpage that describes all recognitions and provides nomination forms that can be submitted online.

The [IDHS Special Recognition page](#) is divided into two parts. The form for nominations for recognition by the state fire marshal are open for public safety personnel, including, but not limited to, firefighters, administrators and dispatchers. The form for nominations for recognition by the EMS Section are for EMS personnel.

State Fire Marshal award requests should not recommend a person for a specific award, as an award committee will determine which award would be most appropriate. Nominations for State Fire Marshal recognition can be made by public safety or elected officials. EMS nominations may be made by individuals who want to self-nominate, as in the case of requesting an EMS license retirement, or by others in the EMS field or general public. All eligibility requirements and nominating criteria may be found on the [new page](#).

## AWARD SPOTLIGHT

One of the most recent public safety workers to be recognized by State Fire Marshal Joel Thacker is Lt. Steve Dillman, a board member for White River Township Fire Protection District in Johnson County. Dillman received the Meritorious Service Award in November for 50 years of fire service.

Dillman began his career as a volunteer firefighter for Greenwood Fire Department in 1966, found he loved it and in 1968 started working for the Indianapolis Fire Department (IFD). He worked for IFD for 38 years, retiring in 2005 from one of the busiest stations (Station 27). He missed the job so much he signed on with Greenwood again for several years and continues to serve, now with White River Township.

Dillman has battled cancer on and off for the past 20 years and is currently undergoing chemotherapy. White River Township Chief Jeremy Pell nominated Dillman for recognition, and at a recent fire board meeting, Marshal Thacker was on hand, along with many of Dillman's family, to give him the service award.

"It was a shock. I had no idea," said Dillman, who didn't know about the forthcoming recognition until Marshal Thacker began to speak and Dillman realized he was talking about him. "It really is an honor for firefighters to receive this. It certainly has made my career here at the end."

Dillman was noted for being a tremendous mentor over the years, and he previously had been named IFD's Firefighter of the Year in 1981 and 2002.





## HELP SPREAD THE WORD: *CYBERSTART AMERICA* RETURNS

*CyberStart America* returns to Indiana for the 2021 school year, and IDHS is asking for help encouraging high school students to participate.

The *CyberStart America* challenge is a cybersecurity skills-based game competition designed to help students understand the many learning and career opportunities in cyber fields. The challenge centers on a fun and thought-provoking game to inspire girls and boys to test their aptitude in cyber skills.

In a pilot test of *CyberStart America* last school year, 373 young women from Indiana

high schools participated, with 49 reaching the national finals. With *CyberStart America* now open to boys as well as girls, Indiana hopes to increase the number of students participating and reaching the scholarship round.



As an added initiative, the National Cyber Scholarship Foundation anticipates awarding scholarships worth

a total of \$2 million for use at any accredited college to 600 high-scoring students across the nation who participate in the 2021 competition.

High school students in grades 9-12 are eligible to participate for free. **Registration is open through Feb. 28, 2021.**

Participating students and their teachers do not need knowledge or experience in information technology or cybersecurity to take part. Everything they need can be learned in the game.

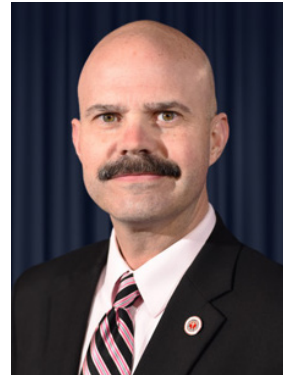
Students can register at [cyberstartamerica.org](https://www.cyberstartamerica.org).



# MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE MARSHAL

As we near the end of 2020, it is safe to say this has been one of the most challenging times for us all.

Support systems are critical to weather these trying periods, because, without a support network, it is too easy for us to feel hopeless at every turn. We need people to pick us up when we are down. Each of us has our own sources of inspiration and optimism to show us the light around the corner is not that far away.



For me, that is my family. My wife and children put their faith in me and provide unconditional support, just as I try to do for them. Sometimes they share some hard truths, but I always know we have each other when many other things in the world do not make sense. As public safety personnel, we also grow to rely on our teams and friends in the firehouse or EMS station for similar support. When we cannot explain the difficulties and stress of the job to our family, we know that man or woman on the scene next to us likely understands what we are feeling.

I was reminded of that strong bond recently with the untimely passing of Matt Bennett, an IFD firefighter, and Scott Gordon, a Columbus paramedic. I had the privilege to work with both men earlier in my career. I was proud of the outpouring of support by their communities (and the entire state) to pay their respects to their families, and it was impressive to witness their public safety brothers and sisters step up to honor their service. These are sad but proud moments for first responders, because you get to see that support network on full display. However, you also are reminded of the inherent dangers and health risks that face them every day.

Matt and Scott can be confident they served their duty well. Their families, friends and communities always had their back and will remember their selfless commitments.

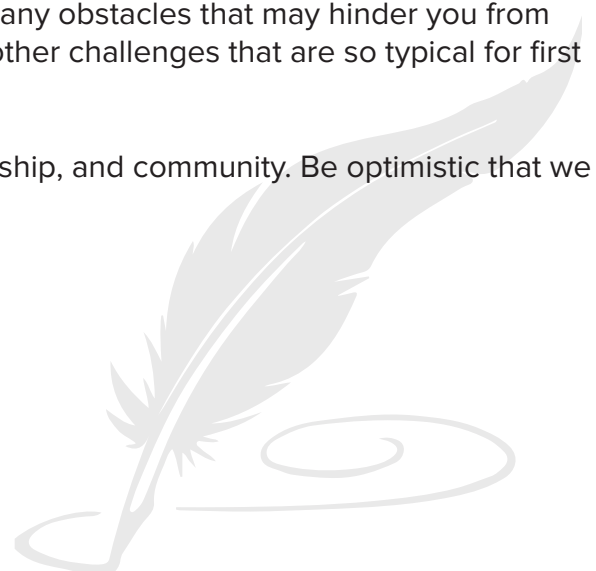
With the holiday season upon us—and even though we may not be able to gather our entire families this year—please take a moment to look at your support network and do your duty, for them, to take good care of yourself. Get regular health checkups and move past any obstacles that may hinder you from asking for help with your mental or physical health, stress or other challenges that are so typical for first responders.

Be proud of the job you are doing. Be thankful for love, friendship, and community. Be optimistic that we are rounding the corner with brighter days ahead for us all.

Stay safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Thacker'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Joel Thacker  
Indiana State Fire Marshal



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## HOLIDAY SAFETY

**OBSERVED: ALL HOLIDAY SEASON**

The holiday season is packed with fun festivities; however, it also is filled with potential safety hazards. Whether Hoosiers are cooking in the kitchen, decorating their homes or traveling to see loved ones, it's important to encourage everyone to review safety tips before the celebrations begin.

For holiday safety tips, visit [GetPrepared.in.gov](https://www.getprepared.in.gov). For COVID-19 safety tips, visit the [CDC's website](https://www.cdc.gov).

## SAFE TOYS AND GIFTS MONTH

**OBSERVED: DECEMBER 2020**

Every year Prevent Blindness America sponsors the Safe Toys and Gifts Month campaign to raise awareness of age-appropriate gifts. In 2018, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission [reported](#) more than 260,000 children were injured from a toy. Before the shopping begins, share toy safety tips to help ensure everyone has a fun and safe holiday.

For more toy safety information, visit [preventblindness.org](https://www.preventblindness.org).

## NATIONAL IMPAIRED DRIVING PREVENTION MONTH

**OBSERVED: DECEMBER 2020**

Dashing through the snow can already be dangerous before someone adds drinking and driving into the mix. The National Highway Traffic Safety Association [reports](#) more than 10,000 individuals lost their lives during an accident involving drunk driving in 2018, [285 of which](#) occurred during the Christmas and New Year periods. To help keep this statistic low this season, remind individuals to celebrate responsibly before the season's festivities begin.

For more information on impaired driving during the holidays, visit [www.nhtsa.gov](https://www.nhtsa.gov).

## FIREWORKS SAFETY

**OBSERVED: DECEMBER 31–JANUARY 1, 2021**

Many Hoosiers ring in the new year with fireworks. These demonstrations brighten the night sky but also can be a safety hazard for everyone involved. Sharing safety tips and local ordinances regarding proper fireworks use will help ensure individuals do not begin 2021 in the emergency room.

Visit [GetPrepared.in.gov](https://www.getprepared.in.gov) for more information on fireworks safety.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## DAY OF SERVICE

**OBSERVED: JANUARY 21, 2021**

Each year on the third Monday in January, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) encourages individuals to have a “day on, not a day off.” In honor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s dream of strengthening communities, Hoosiers are asked to spend the day volunteering at an organization of their choice.

For information on how to register an event or participate, visit <https://www.nationalservice.gov/serve-your-community/mlk-day-service>. Volunteering safety tips can be found at [GetPrepared.in.gov](http://GetPrepared.in.gov).

## DATA PRIVACY DAY

**OBSERVED: JANUARY 28, 2021**

Millions of people are unaware and uninformed about how their personal information is being used, collected or shared in our digital society. Data Privacy Day aims to inspire dialogue and empower individuals and companies to take action.

Visit [staysafeonline.org](http://staysafeonline.org) for more information on how to protect personal and organization data.

## WINTER WEATHER SAFETY

**OBSERVED: ALL WINTER SEASON**

The National Weather Service (NWS) predicts Indiana’s winter this year will be wet with cooler temperatures. Although Hoosiers are used to the snow, ice and chilly temperatures, it is still important to share winter weather safety tips. Regularly sharing winter weather preparedness information will help ensure individuals across Indiana are prepared for any potential severe winter weather.

Visit [GetPrepared.in.gov](http://GetPrepared.in.gov) for more winter weather safety information.

## ALTERNATIVE-HEATING SAFETY

**OBSERVED: ALL WINTER SEASON**

According to the National Fire Protection Association, alternative-heating equipment is one of the leading causes of house fires in the United States. Alternative-heating sources should always be used as a last option to warm up a residence. For situations where they are necessary, however, it is important for individuals to be knowledgeable of proper alternative-heating safety usage.

For a list of alternative-heating safety tips, visit [GetPrepared.in.gov](http://GetPrepared.in.gov).

*The Indiana Department of Homeland Security works 24/7  
to protect the people, property and prosperity of Indiana.*



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