

An easy drill to help prepare for disaster

BY STATE SEN. CONSTANCE JOHNSON

Published: September 24, 2011

Natural disasters like tornadoes, floods, earthquakes and hurricanes, and man-made calamities like the recent wildfires that we've witnessed in our communities or seen on the news in recent months, prove that we all need to do our part to be prepared and act as our own first responders.

September marks "National Preparedness Month" and I am collaborating with the [National Foundation for Women Legislators](#) and the [Safe America Foundation](#) to make grassroots resiliency real.

NFWL's disaster relief and preparedness task force has joined forces with Safe America Foundation's "Be prepared, not scared" initiative to get 1 million Americans to practice what they would do and rehearse how they would communicate during or after an emergency.

This year, the focus is on getting Americans to conduct a "texting drill." It's easy and involves two steps. The first is determining who you would contact in any emergency and loading their cell numbers into your phone. The second step is conducting a text drill using a safety shorthand developed by Safe America. For example, parents can initiate the drill by sending all their children the message "R U OK?" The person receiving the text message replies with the short "IM OK."

For millions of Americans, the idea that they can rely on texting in an emergency is a new concept. But it's a practical consideration since, during 9/11 as well as the recent earthquake on the East Coast, wireless networks that were unable to transmit cell voice calls could still send and receive text messages.

The first responders who serve in our community are our heroes, but they can't get the job done on their own. Let's ease their burden by taking common-sense steps such as this to prepare our family, friends, employees and neighbors. Visit the Safe America website (safeamericaprepared.org) and "pledge to drill." Taking five minutes to "drill" today could save you hours of distress as you try to reach loved ones during a disaster.

Johnson, D-[Oklahoma City](#), represents District 48 in the [Oklahoma Senate](#).

Read more: <http://newsok.com/an-easy-drill-to-help-prepare-for-disaster/article/3606882#ixzz1Z4Chhd8F>