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Will DC Earthquake rattle Americans out of Preparedness Complacency?

*DC Earthquake Underscores Importance of the Safe America Foundation's national preparedness campaign **Be Safe America***

Atlanta – Since 2001, the [Safe America Foundation](http://www.safeamerica.org), a metro-Atlanta based safety and preparedness non-profit, has collaborated with business, civic, governmental and non-profit leaders to encourage Americans to plan and practice preparedness drills at home, work and school. The 5.9 magnitude earthquake that struck the Washington, DC and the mid-Atlantic states boldly underscores the relevance of the Foundation's current preparedness initiative, the **Be Safe America** campaign.

At the heart of Safe America's current preparedness efforts is the concept of teaching Americans to *Be Prepared, Not Scared*[™]. The Foundation's principal efforts at achieving this goal under the **Be Safe America** campaign include the "*March to 1 Million*" and "*Text First. Talk Second.*" *March to 1 Million* seeks to encourage over a million Americans to pledge their commitment in planning and practicing how they, their family and/or business would cope with a natural or man-made emergency in 2011.

"The earthquake in the mid-Atlantic states vividly illustrates the importance of having an emergency plan and practicing that plan," said President and CEO of the Safe America Foundation, Len Pagano. "Tens of thousands of people work in DC and live in Virginia. Beyond wondering how long their commute will be tonight, they might be asking themselves if the bridges are even safe, and if not, what then?" "For parents, the safety calculus is even more difficult," added Pagano, "what are they going to do if their child's school has closed early and they are stuck on the wrong side of the Potomac River? It is unexpected situations like these that our Foundation is encouraging people to think about, plan for, and practice."

Another highly relevant aspect of the Foundation's **Be Safe America** efforts is the *Text First. Talk Second.* public information campaign. In an emergency, phone communication can quickly be overloaded when hundreds of thousands of people try to find out if friends and family are okay. Additionally, even when text message services go down, the messages are often cached in the phone and sent when service resumes.

"University of Missouri research shows that a single one minute phone call consumes the same bandwidth as 800 short text messages," noted Pagano. "This is why the Foundation has been encouraging the utilization of a new text 'safety shorthand' – 7865 "RUOK"/4665 "IMOK" as part of our preparedness programming since 2009."

[cont.]

About the Be Safe America campaign

The **Be Safe America** campaign was established in 2011 as a five year initiative by the Safe America Foundation to increase public grassroots readiness. The components of the program include ‘*March to 1 Million/Pledge to Drill*,’ ‘*Text First. Talk Second.*’ and the ‘*Safest Kid in America*’ contest, which are designed to:

1. **Inform** public of how new technology affects disaster communications
2. **Teach** them to use the new ‘tools’ (texting – and a ‘safety shorthand’ for emergencies)
3. **Practice** the use of this technology (via drills)
4. **Involve** youth (via school curriculum and other programming)

The program includes a multi-city educational tour with upcoming briefings in Dallas 8/25, New York 8/30, Washington DC 8/31, Seattle 9/15, San Francisco 9/16 and Atlanta 10/12.

About the Safe America Foundation

Safe America Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, headquartered in suburban Atlanta, created the “March to 1 Million” program as a centerpiece of a multi-year national mobilization campaign. Its goal is to use the 10th anniversary of 9/11 to encourage people to learn what they should do after an emergency – and what can be done in advance to rehearse reconnecting with family members.

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