

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Severe Weather Preparedness Week

What would you do if you were informed that there would be severe storms, flooding or tornadoes in our area? Would you ignore it? Would you consider the possibility of damage to your home or business? What about injuries or even the death of a family member or friend? I guess the biggest question is "Are you prepared?" Do we know how to prepare for and survive severe weather events? These are questions that we should ask ourselves.

The National Weather Service (NWS), Georgia Emergency Management Agency - Homeland Security, and Union County Emergency Management are recognizing this week as Severe Weather Preparedness Week. This is the time of the year that we need to ask these difficult questions and prepare ourselves, our homes, business, and family for severe weather events. Each day of the week has a theme that brings a severe weather subject to mind.

Monday is Family Preparedness. Discuss with your family the different types of severe weather and how to deal with each type. It's best to have a plan before severe weather strikes. Plans should include how you would communicate or locate family members if separated or no phone service. Families should have an emergency kit with supplies that can sustain the family for three days. You should also have an evacuation kit in the event that you must leave your home on short notice.

Tuesday is Thunderstorm Safety. Thunderstorms can develop quickly and cause major damage from large hail or damaging wind. Know how to prepare for and take shelter during these types of storms. Wednesday is Tornado Safety. The devastating outbreak of tornadoes in South Georgia this January is a reminder of the power and destruction of a tornado. Families should be alert and keep informed when there is a possibility of tornadoes. There will be a state wide Tornado Drill on Wednesday morning.

Thursday is Lightning Safety and Friday is Flash Flooding Safety. Both can be devastating and often occur along with other severe weather such as thunderstorms and tornadoes. Lightning can be unpredictable. The NWS recommends that if you hear thunder that lightning is possible. People should go indoors. Flash floods

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The Good, Bad and Unknown about Marijuana's Health Effects

Twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana for a variety of medical uses, and eight of those states plus the district have also

legalized it for recreational use. These laws will have a huge impact for quite some time, and yet were based on limited research.

Marijuana can almost certainly ease chronic pain and might help some people sleep, but it may also raise the risk of getting schizophrenia and trigger heart attacks. Those are among the conclusions about marijuana reached by a federal advisory panel in a report released in 2016.

The experts also called for a national effort to learn more about marijuana and its chemical cousins, including similarly acting compounds called cannabinoids. The current lack of scientific information "poses a public health risk," said the report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. Patients, health care professionals and policy makers need more evidence to make sound decisions, it said.

For marijuana users or those considering it, "there's very little to guide them" on amounts and health risks, said Dr. Marie McCormick of the Harvard School of Public Health, who headed the committee.

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What's in a Name?

Have you ever wondered about the reputation of a family name? What were the personalities of your ancestors? What were their likes and dislikes? How did they interact with other people? My grandmother, Delphia Adams' maiden name was Baker.

Her father was Charlie Newton Baker. Everyone called him Dad, even those who were unrelated to the Baker family. Dad and Mommy Baker were pillars of the community and two of the most loved people anywhere.

He farmed and logged for a living. His hobbies included fox and coon hunting with a large pack of dogs. Charlie's grandfather was Hiram Baker. Hiram migrated to Alabama from Georgia. Hiram left North Carolina and according to the 1850 census lived in Union County, GA for a short period of time.

Hiram's ancestors came out of Pennsylvania. Hiram's 4th great grandfather was Robert Baker Sr. who came from a line of at least three generations of gunsmiths. Sometime early in the 1700s Robert was called to England by Queen Anne to manufacture arms for the Queen's Army. Robert came back to America and sometime around 1719 acquired 200 acres of land at the confluence of Pequea Creek and the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. He built a gunsmith shop and began making rifles for the people of that area of Pennsylvania.

Robert and his son Caleb were some of the first gunsmiths in America. The rifles which were being made at this mill were called Baker Rifles. These rifles were in the style of what we now call a Kentucky Long Rifle. We don't know the name of the inventor of the Kentucky/Pennsylvania Rifles. However, we know that Robert Baker was one of the first to make these types of rifles in the Lancaster area of Pennsylvania.

Robert died in 1728 and his sons took over the family business. When the Revolutionary War began the English came to the area and forced Caleb and his brothers to make bullets for the British Army. The British didn't know that Caleb's sons were fighting in the Continental Army

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Be Gentle

Forcing a point of view with violence is, well, pointless. Last week, fire destroyed a mosque in Texas. Authorities haven't cited arson yet, but the site had been a target of vandalism in the past. During the presidential campaign, a Mississippi arsonist burned his own church's building as a protest. Isn't there a better way to disagree?

Our country is in a season of protests. In our nation's capital, anarchists try to disrupt the inauguration, women march to protest the new president, and pro-lifers plead for compassion in response to Roe v. Wade. At times our national conversation is more coarse than discourse.

Lately, I have seen two exchanges among my Facebook friends that acknowledge the need to tone down the rhetoric. In one, "Jack" stated he is an atheist, then recited his positions on issues. In response, "Jill" stated that she is a Christian, and offered a counterpoint. Other friends liked the cordial tone.

It was a good idea to let that chat conclude, but let's unpack the logic. If Jack is right that no transcendent authority exists, then each person's perspective is just a choice so he must respect Jill's right to choose. If Jill is right, she respects Jack's point of view since God created us in His image with free will. But both cannot be right on the existence of God or the morality of the issues, despite the post-modern view that opposite claims can both be true.

Oliver Wendell Holmes introduced the metaphor "marketplace of ideas" into our jurisprudence of free speech and religion. It conveys the idea that eventually truth will prevail if given air to breathe. Shouting down or burning down the opposition cannot stifle what is true and right forever. Christians use this principal by continuing to offer God's revealed truth and by defending ourselves and religious freedom, but no one need defend Him, His character, or the created order. A god that exists only by human argument is more terrestrial than transcendent.

Consider this charge from a man that walked with Jesus: "Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Why doesn't the county have a noise ordinance? My neighbor has barking dogs and nearby someone thinks they need to shoot their gun every other day, for hours on end.

Q. We live in a subdivision and my neighbor set up a target and started shooting in his back yard, which is very close to my home, and proceeded to shoot for two solid hours. Then in about a week, he did the same thing again. When I asked him if he could do it in some other area, he was not nice at all.

Q. During the summer, we hear loud music coming from a restaurant, business or home and why do I have to be disturbed on my private property while enjoying the peace and quiet of the mountains.

Q. I have a nearby neighbor that is shooting Tannerite, a very explosive product, not intended for recreation use, but are scaring my horses and rattling the neighborhood windows when using the explosive material. We feel the ground shake.

Q. From the Sheriff's Dept. We have been receiving so many calls related to guns being shot, music being played, dogs barking, and think it is time to consider a noise ordinance because often we do not have any legal grounds to force the people to cease the problem.

A. I could go on and on about the complaints received this past year just on noise. It is the single largest complaint I receive, but at the same time, it is the toughest issue to regulate. What is too loud? What is too often? Who is going to make the decision on how loud is too loud? How much of the freedoms granted by the laws of the State of Georgia do we want to try and take away?

Noise is a very touchy subject. One guy will say, "I can shoot my gun when I want because I own the property and you cannot take my property rights away from me." Then the neighbor will say, "You are taking my property rights away from me because you are unnecessarily disturbing and scaring me and my family while disturbing my right to utilize my property peacefully."

Recently one guy told me that people were shooting guns on the mountain behind his house all the time and he just got used to it. Some have suggested that if music is played outside and can be heard by neighbors, make them turn off the music at 10 p.m. no matter how loud.

Others say, why should we have to hear the music at all if we are outside or in our home. Very often we find that a dispute between neighbors is not the first time, and once they are upset at each other, the least little thing causes complaints between them. This is especially true when related to barking dogs.

Some people say that dogs barking all night long keeps them up, while an adjacent home will not even complain as it does not bother them. Some sleep with the windows open and hear everything, while some have a loud A/C or heating system and hardly hear the same noise. Some complain about

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor...

Electoral College

Dear Editor,

Many people do not understand why so many Americans have such an objection to the electoral college system. Those of us who think the electoral college outdated and wrong have valid reasons to think so. Our republic is based on the premise of one man, one vote and all votes are supposed to be equal. That would be the fair method; however, 10 people living in Columbus, OH vote for candidate X while 1 person living in Fargo, ND votes for candidate Y. The 10 people voting for X have just had all their votes crossed out by the 1 vote for Y. I do not see the fairness here. All our states have the fairness of 2 senators each, why not have all votes cast be equal in value?

Edith SchAAF

A Social Studies Lesson

Dear Editor,

The Founding Fathers created the Electoral College to ensure that States were fairly represented. Why should a few densely populated areas speak for the whole of the Nation?

There are 3,141 counties in the U.S. Trump won 3,084 of them; Clinton won 57. There are 62 counties in NY State. Trump won 46 of them; Clinton won 16.

Clinton won the popular vote by about 1.5 million votes. In the five counties that comprise NYC (Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Richmond), Clinton received over 2 million more votes than Trump. (She only won 4 of these counties; Trump won Richmond).

Therefore, these 5 counties alone more than accounted for Clinton winning the popular vote of the entire country. These 5 counties comprise 319 sq. mi; the U.S. is comprised of 3,797,000 sq mi.

In a country that has almost 4 million square miles of territory, it would be ludicrous to suggest that the vote of those who inhabit a mere 319 miles should dictate the outcome of a national election. Large densely populated Democrat cities (NYC, Chicago, LA, etc) don't and should not speak for the rest of our country. And that is why the Electoral College was instituted, an impressive and untried form of government, which distributed the power fairly throughout the Country.

The country [and I, too] was stunned to see how the map of the U.S. turned bright red on election night, except for the two coastlines — and for those who are so upset, they need to learn hard-working Americans want their Country back, and they are sick and tired of "career politicians" whose only interest is themselves!

Loud-mouthed Hollywood "stars" need evidence that they are not being supported for their nasty calls for an ongoing uprising! The place to make that evidence loud and clear would be to stop supporting movies, CDs, videos, and sports

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The Bank That Service Built

Dear Editor,

Our family is dismayed by the pending closing of the UCB branch at Ingles. This branch is a wonderful convenience for a goodly portion of our community.

By closing this branch you are requiring folks to re-configure their lives and schedules to suit the bank's needs and not your customer's needs.

Driving to work this morning I read the sign outside the main branch proclaiming how thankful you are for your loyal customers. Really?

The bank's motto is "The bank that service built." I'd like to hear from those "in charge" just where that sense of service has disappeared to. I guess the same place as your thankfulness.

Catherine Velasco

Thanks, Obama

Dear Editor,

A Letter to President Obama,

I want to thank you for your 8 years of service to our Country.

As a retired Military Officer I can only speak for myself but I take comfort in knowing that the majority of Americans share my belief that by any measure all of us are far better off than when you began as President. Congratulations for a job well done!

Thanks to you and your team for saving the economy from the brink of disaster and not only saving but also creating millions of jobs.

Thank you and some courageous congress members for the Affordable Care Act that now benefits 20 + million Americans and covers wellness care for those of us covered by Medicare. I pray the Republicans will use it as a guide and make it better.

I especially thank you for your insight in forming military strategy that refuses to commit our ground troops to untenable civil disputes and provides significant air power and military advisors to defeat terrorists.

Thank you for your inclusive policies that are in keeping with our American values.

Thank you for the Wall Street reform, the Paris agreement on climate change, the nuclear deal with Iran and so many other actions that moved our Country forward.

You and Michelle brought "Class" to the White House. You restored respect and dignity for this Country among our allies and world leaders. Never for a moment did we have to doubt your resolve and dedication to make lives better for all Americans.

Your successor is fortunate to be taking the reins of a Country far better off than the one you inherited when you began your term as President.

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Blairsville - Union County Chamber
Regina Allison



From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee



UGA extension

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Melissa Mattee



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