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Post receives 'StormReady' certification

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Fort Leonard Wood is now among 25 Army installations to receive StormReady certification through the National Weather Service.

Col. Andy Herbst, Fort Leonard Wood Garrison commander, accepted the official StormReady certification from Steve Runnels, National Weather Service, warning coordination meteorologist, Springfield, Missouri, during the Safety and Health Fair Friday at Nutter Field House -- signifying the installation's ability to maximize safety and minimize damage during severe weather.

"StormReady certification means Fort Leonard Wood met very high standards of preparedness," Herbst, a Sunrise, Florida native, said. "With this certification, members of this community can have the peace of mind knowing that they have the best possible chance of being warned before a weather disaster strikes and aided following an event."

Fort Leonard Wood partnered with the National Weather Service and the State Emergency Management Agency Region I to ensure that response is integrated with organizations capable of supporting Fort Leonard Wood and its neighboring communities, Herbst added.

Through the StormReady program, the National Weather Service provides emergency managers with clear-cut guidelines on how to improve their hazardous weather operations along with providing recommended local procedures designed to reduce the potential for disastrous, weather-related consequences.

According to Troy Carney, a Fort Leonard Wood emergency management specialist and

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Waynesville native, the installation met several requirements to qualify for the StormReady certification, which include:

- Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center;
- Have more than one way to receive and alert the public about severe weather warnings and forecasts;
- Create a system that monitors weather conditions locally;
- Promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars;
- Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

StormReady is a nationwide program to help communities, universities and installations better protect their citizens, students, Soldiers, families and workforce during severe weather incidents.

"The StormReady program is designed to recognize the hard work done by various agencies such as public safety here at Fort Leonard Wood," said Runnels, whose office is responsible for 37 Missouri counties. "It has a criteria of being able to receive warnings from the National Weather Service and relay that information to decision makers throughout the post and throughout the community. Ultimately, can we get people to shelter? Can we get people aware that storms are coming and save lives?"

"We can never get rid of the storms but we can mitigate against the impact of those storms," he added. "We've done a lot of work with Fort Leonard Wood to make sure they are aware of all of the NWS watches and warnings. They've worked hard to be able to distribute that information out the community."

Runnels said that individual citizens still have their responsibility of responding to those warnings.

"One of the things that we learned from the Joplin, Missouri, tornado disaster is that people often look for additional information before deciding to take shelter," Runnels said. "From a StormReady perspective -- as soon as you are in a warning -- take shelter immediately."

According to the National Weather Service, Americans live in the most severe-weather-prone country on Earth.

Weather disasters in the United States account for around 500 deaths and nearly \$14 billion in damage each year. Americans can expect to face an average of 100,000 thunderstorms, 5,000 floods, 1,000 tornadoes and two deadly hurricanes making landfall in the same time period. And this doesn't even include intense summer heat or winter cold, high winds, wild fires or other deadly weather impacts.

For more information contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

Encl Photo

Photo outline:

Troy Carney, emergency management specialist, reviews National Weather Service warnings and forecasts in the Fort Leonard Wood operations center.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only four reception stations in the Army, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.
