

THE EMERGENCY CONNECTION

FEBRUARY 2026

In Central Illinois, residents are familiar with hazards such as severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, riverine flooding, winter storms, and periods of extreme heat and cold. These events are part of living in the Midwest and cannot be eliminated. However, it is important to understand that the presence of a hazard does not automatically mean a community is at high risk. Risk is created by the interaction between hazards, exposure, and the decisions we make as a community.

A tornado passing through open farmland may cause little to no damage, while the same tornado striking a populated town can result in devastating losses. The hazard, the tornado, has not changed. What changes is exposure: homes, schools, businesses, hospitals, transportation routes, and utilities that lie in its path. Flooding provides another clear example. Rivers and streams throughout Peoria County have flooded for centuries. Flooding becomes a serious risk when development occurs within floodplains or when drainage systems are overwhelmed by heavy rainfall. Decisions about where to build and how to manage stormwater directly affect the level of damage caused by flood events. The water is the hazard; the consequences are driven by exposure and planning choices.

Social and economic factors further influence how hazards affect Peoria communities. Older housing stock, limited access to transportation, fixed incomes, and health conditions can increase vulnerability during emergencies. Rural residents may face longer response times, while urban residents may experience higher impacts due to population density. Two neighborhoods can experience the same storm, yet have very different recovery timelines depending on resources, preparedness, and social support systems.

Understanding that risk is shaped by human decisions empowers individuals, businesses, and local governments to take meaningful action rather than viewing disasters as unavoidable acts of nature. Natural hazards such as floods, tornadoes, and extreme heat cannot be prevented, but the damage they cause is heavily influenced by where and how communities choose to build, invest, and prepare. Risk reduction does not require eliminating hazards altogether; instead, it requires making informed, proactive choices that reduce exposure and vulnerability. Promoting hardened infrastructure protects lives during severe weather events, and encouraging household preparedness strengthens resilience at the individual level. Together, these actions create layers of protection that lower overall community risk and reduce long-term recovery costs.

Ultimately, risk is not inevitable. While Central Illinois will continue to experience severe weather and natural hazards, including tornadoes, flooding, winter storms, and heat waves, the scale and severity of future disasters depend largely on the decisions made today. Choices about land use, infrastructure investment, emergency planning, and public awareness directly shape how communities experience these hazards. By recognizing that risk is the result of exposure and decision-making not just the presence of a hazard communities can move from a reactive approach to a proactive one. Building resilience means anticipating threats, reducing vulnerabilities, and strengthening the capacity to respond and recover. Through informed decision-making and sustained commitment, Peoria County can face future challenges with greater confidence and resilience.

Preparedness is Everyone's Responsibility!

FEMA Core Capabilities

Emergency management is built on a foundation of shared goals and coordinated action, and FEMA's Core Capabilities provide the roadmap for achieving that vision. These 32 capabilities, organized across the five mission areas of Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery, define the essential elements needed to prepare for and manage the nation's most pressing threats and hazards. They serve as a common language for agencies, partners, and communities, ensuring that everyone is working toward the same outcomes whether it's saving lives, protecting infrastructure, or helping neighborhoods bounce back after disaster.

In each issue of our newsletter we highlight the capabilities exploring what it means, why it matters, and how it connects to our local efforts. By breaking down these capabilities into focused discussions, we hope to show how each one strengthens resilience and contributes to a safer, stronger community. Together, they form the building blocks of preparedness, and by understanding them, we can all play a role in shaping a more secure future.

Public Information and Warning

Clear, timely, and accurate communication is one of the most powerful tools in emergency management. The Public Information and Warning Core Capability focuses on delivering trusted messages to the whole community before, during, and after incidents. Its purpose is to ensure that people receive the information they need to make informed decisions that protect their lives, property, and well-being. This capability includes not only alert and warning systems, but also the coordination of public messaging across agencies, partners, and media outlets.



At the local level, Public Information and Warning means engaging with residents through multiple channels such as social media, press releases, community meetings, and emergency alert systems to reach diverse audiences quickly and effectively. It also emphasizes building credibility and trust, so that when warnings are issued, the public knows they can rely on them. By strengthening this capability, our community can reduce confusion, counter misinformation, and empower individuals to take the right actions when it matters most.

Beyond alerts and warnings, this capability also emphasizes proactive communication that builds trust long before a crisis occurs. Public Information and Warning is about educating the community on risks, preparedness steps, and available resources so that when emergencies arise, people already know where to turn for reliable guidance. By fostering transparency and consistency in messaging, local emergency management agencies can create a culture of awareness and readiness, ensuring that information is not only heard but acted upon.

Intelligence and Information Sharing

The Intelligence and Information Sharing Core Capability is about ensuring that critical information flows quickly and securely among the right partners before, during, and after an incident. It focuses on gathering, analyzing, and distributing threat data, situational updates, and operational details so that decision-makers at all levels can act with clarity and confidence. This capability also emphasizes building trusted networks across government agencies, the private sector, and community stakeholders, recognizing that no single organization can manage risks alone.

At the local level, Intelligence and Information Sharing means maintaining strong relationships. It also involves using established systems and protocols to ensure information is accurate, accessible, and safeguarded against misuse. By strengthening this capability, communities can detect emerging threats earlier, coordinate responses more effectively, and keep the public informed with reliable guidance. Ultimately, it is about turning information into action!

Sticking Our Heads in the Sand: The Persistent Risk in Disaster Preparedness

I'm often asked what concerns me most about preparedness and readiness. The answer is simple and frustratingly familiar. It's the same persistent itch I've never been able to scratch: our collective resistance to being proactive rather than reactive. Some call it the head-in-the-sand phenomenon. Too often, organizations, communities, and even entire sectors operate under the quiet hope that if we don't talk about catastrophe, it won't happen. It's the unspoken strategy of crossing our fingers and assuming a major event will spare us simply because we prefer not to imagine it. But "maybe it won't happen here" has never been an effective preparedness plan. In fact, it's the very mindset that leaves communities most vulnerable.



This doesn't mean we need to become Chicken Little, running around declaring the sky is falling every time a scenario changes or a new threat emerges. Not every hazard warrants panic and in emergency management, panic is just as dangerous as denial. But some events are so consequential, so disruptive, and so capable of reshaping lives and landscapes that pretending they are too unlikely to take seriously borders on negligence. And history has shown us exactly what happens when the sky does fall. We saw it on 9/11. We've seen it in hurricanes, pandemics, blackouts, and active shooter incidents. We see it every time a community says, "We never thought it could happen here."

Preparedness requires courage not fear. It asks us to confront uncomfortable realities long before they materialize. It demands that we train when we'd rather postpone, plan when we'd rather assume, and invest when the return isn't obvious... yet. It asks leaders to choose responsibility over convenience and communities to build resilience before the first warning siren ever sounds.

The head-in-the-sand approach may feel safe in the moment, but it leaves us dangerously unready for the moments that matter most. Readiness is not about pessimism; it's about stewardship. It's about learning from history rather than repeating it. And it's about ensuring that when the next crisis comes whether large or small our community does more than react. It responds with confidence, coordination, and the calm that only comes from preparation.

Preparedness is not paranoia. Preparedness is responsibility. The sky may not fall today or tomorrow but the work we do now determines whether we stand strong when it does. Let's keep our eyes up, not our heads in the sand.

Notable Quotables

"Be your best when you're at your worst. Your character shows most when everything goes wrong."

"Sing when you're up to your neck in mud. A little humour when things suck makes it easier to keep going."

"The easy day was yesterday. Don't expect things to get easier. Get used to doing hard things."

"Calm is contagious. When you stay calm, other people feel safe. That's leadership."

A Brief History with a Lasting Impact: The Earliest Foundations - Emergency Management in Ancient Civilizations

Long before emergency management emerged as a formal profession, ancient civilizations were actively developing structured ways to reduce disaster impacts and safeguard their populations. Survival depended on anticipating environmental hazards particularly floods, droughts, fires, and famine while organizing collective responses through centralized authority. Kings, priests, and early bureaucracies played key roles in coordinating labor, enforcing regulations, and distributing resources, laying the groundwork for organized disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.



Some of the earliest and most detailed examples come from Mesopotamia, where seasonal flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers posed constant threats to agriculture and urban settlements. To manage this risk, city-states such as Ur and Babylon constructed extensive systems of levees, irrigation canals, spillways, and reservoirs. Cuneiform records describe laws regulating canal maintenance and penalties for negligence that caused flooding, demonstrating an early understanding of accountability in hazard mitigation. These engineered systems not only reduced flood damage but also supported food security, directly linking disaster risk reduction to economic stability.

In ancient Egypt, disaster management was closely tied to the predictable yet potentially destructive flooding of the Nile River. During years of insufficient flooding and resulting drought, centralized grain storage facilities allowed the state to redistribute food to prevent famine. Officials were tasked with managing surplus, organizing labor for infrastructure repairs, and overseeing relief efforts and functions that closely resemble modern preparedness planning and recovery operations. These systems reinforced state authority while increasing societal resilience.

Ancient China provides another highly developed example of state-led disaster management. Frequent and catastrophic flooding along the Yellow River prompted large-scale flood control projects, including dams, dikes, and canals, some of which required hundreds of thousands of laborers. Historical records from dynasties such as the Zhou and Han describe government-organized disaster relief efforts, including emergency grain distribution, temporary tax exemptions, and population relocation. Confucian philosophy further reinforced the belief that rulers had a moral duty to protect their people from suffering, framing disaster response as a measure of political legitimacy.

Taken together, these early systems reveal that disaster management was not an isolated function but a core responsibility of governance. Infrastructure maintenance, food storage, labor mobilization, and legal oversight were embedded into everyday administrative life rather than treated as extraordinary measures. By institutionalizing preparedness through standing canal laws in Mesopotamia, permanent granaries in Egypt, and bureaucratic relief mechanisms in China these societies reduced the social shock of recurring hazards. This integration meant that disaster risk reduction supported broader goals such as political stability, population growth, and territorial control, illustrating that resilience was both a survival strategy and a tool of statecraft.

These examples also underscore the importance of knowledge accumulation and intergenerational learning in managing risk. Hydrological observations, flood cycles, and engineering techniques were recorded, refined, and transmitted over centuries, allowing later rulers to build upon earlier successes and failures. While modern emergency management relies on advanced science and technology, its foundational principles of risk assessment, mitigation through infrastructure, preparedness through resource stockpiling, and recovery through coordinated governance are strikingly consistent with ancient practices. The continuity suggests that effective disaster management is less about technological sophistication alone and more about sustained institutional commitment, social cooperation, and the political will to prioritize long-term safety over short-term gain.

Wargaming

Across the country, emergency management agencies, public safety partners, and community organizations are increasingly turning to wargaming as a practical, low-cost, and highly effective way to strengthen preparedness. Once associated primarily with military planning, wargaming has evolved into a valuable tool for local emergency management agencies (EMAs) to test plans, improve coordination, and build resilience before a real disaster strikes.

Wargaming is a structured, scenario-based exercise that allows participants to simulate disaster conditions and decision-making in a controlled environment. Unlike traditional tabletop exercises, wargaming places participants in dynamic situations where conditions change, resources are limited, and decisions have real consequences within the scenario. Local governments are operating in an environment of tighter budgets, and complex interdependencies. Wargaming addresses these challenges by providing meaningful training without requiring large-scale deployments or expensive equipment.



Key Benefits of Wargaming

- **Reveals Gaps in Plans and Assumptions:** Wargaming quickly exposes gaps that may not appear on paper such as unclear authorities, unrealistic timelines, or conflicting priorities between agencies. Identifying these issues early allows EMAs to revise plans before an actual emergency tests them.
- **Improves Decision-Making Under Pressure:** Participants must make real-time choices with incomplete information, mirroring the stress of an actual incident. This strengthens leadership skills, situational awareness, and confidence among elected officials and senior staff.
- **Enhances Interagency Coordination:** Wargaming brings together emergency management, law enforcement, fire, EMS, public health, public works, utilities, and community partners. These exercises clarify roles, improve communication pathways, and build trust all critical factors during real disasters.
- **Tests Resource Allocation and Logistics:** By simulating shortages of personnel, fuel, shelter space, or medical supplies, wargaming helps agencies evaluate how resources would actually be prioritized and distributed under stress.
- **Incorporates Community Vulnerabilities:** Modern wargames increasingly integrate social vulnerability, infrastructure fragility, and equity considerations, helping agencies understand how disasters affect different populations and how response decisions can reduce or unintentionally worsen impacts.
- **Cost-Effective and Flexible:** Unlike full-scale exercises, wargaming requires minimal equipment and can be conducted in a few hours. Scenarios can be rapidly modified to reflect local hazards, seasonal risks, or emerging threats.

Wargaming supports a shift from reactive response to proactive preparedness. Communities that regularly wargame are better prepared not just to respond, but to adapt, recover, and learn from each event. As hazards grow more complex and interconnected, wargaming will continue to play an important role in emergency management. By embracing this tool, local EMAs can enhance readiness, strengthen partnerships, and ensure that when disaster strikes, decisions are informed, coordinated, and resilient.

Preparedness is not just about plans it's about practice. Wargaming provides that practice when it matters most.

Resilience Reading Room: When Emergency Management Failures Aren't Surprises

Victoria Kluge argues that most emergency management response failures are not rare or unavoidable events, they are predictable outcomes of patterns that existed long before an incident began. What makes these failures feel surprising is not their novelty, but our tendency to overlook or normalize warning signs as “acceptable” operational conditions. According to Kluge, failure develops gradually. It starts with information systems that require manual fixes under pressure, authority structures that only work when alignment is easy, and exercises that reward coordination rather than clear decision-making. These issues rarely trigger alarms because they feel familiar and manageable until a real incident exposes them all at once.

She identifies several predictable failure modes:

- Readiness without measurement: Many agencies track activity (trainings, plans, meetings) but fail to measure whether those activities actually improve performance under stress. Effort is mistaken for readiness, and the gap only becomes visible during real incidents.
- Consensus replacing decision-making: Coordination can quietly substitute for decisive action. In the name of collaboration, authority diffuses, decisions are delayed, and risk is pushed into later operational periods where options are more limited.
- Exercises that avoid consequence: Exercises frequently protect participants from failure—resources appear on demand, scenarios stay linear, and facilitators intervene to keep things on track. As a result, systems are never truly stress-tested, and rehearsed weaknesses show up during real responses.

Kluge emphasizes that calling failures “predictable” is not about assigning blame it is diagnostic. Repeated patterns reveal system maturity: where authority breaks down, where data loses usefulness, where plans stop being actionable, and where improvement efforts fail to translate into real capability. She concludes that asking “what went wrong?” after an incident is too vague. A better question is: Which failure modes were already visible, and why were they still present when this incident occurred? Until emergency management treats predictability as a signal to act rather than an embarrassment to avoid response failures will continue to feel surprising, even though the warning signs were there all along.

Prudent Preparedness is Very Different than “Panic Shopping”

As winter storm forecasts make the rounds, it's common to see a surge of last-minute shopping that leaves store shelves bare and nerves frayed. Panic buying often comes from uncertainty: how bad will the storm be, how long will it last, and will help be available if needed? While preparing for winter weather is smart, rushing out at the final moment can strain local supply chains, increase stress for families, and make it harder for vulnerable neighbors to access essential items.



Prudent preparedness looks very different from panic shopping. It starts well before a storm appears in the forecast and focuses on planning rather than fear-driven decisions. Keeping a modest reserve of everyday necessities such as food, prescription medications, pet supplies, and household essentials helps ensure you're ready without overbuying. Pre-planning also means thinking beyond groceries. Winter storms can bring power outages, dangerous travel conditions, and limited access to services. Take time now to review your family emergency plan, check that flashlights and batteries work, test generators safely, and ensure you have a way to stay informed if power or internet service is disrupted.

As a community, preparedness is strongest when it's shared. By planning early and preparing wisely, we can reduce anxiety, support one another, and weather winter storms together more effectively.

Known Knowns, Known Unknowns, and Unknown Unknowns

In emergency management, we are constantly making decisions under pressure, with incomplete information, evolving conditions, and competing priorities. One of the most useful ways to think about uncertainty comes from former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. In a 2002 Department of Defense briefing, Rumsfeld described four categories of knowledge that have since become a widely used framework for understanding risk and uncertainty: “There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns the ones we don’t know we don’t know.” While often quoted humorously, this framework has real and lasting value for emergency management and disaster response.

1. Known Knowns: What we know for certain. These are the risks and conditions we understand.

- Historical hazard patterns (flood zones, wildfire corridors)
- Infrastructure vulnerabilities already identified
- Available resources (staffing, equipment, shelters)

EMA Application: Known knowns are the foundation of preparedness. They inform hazard mitigation plans, training exercises, and public education campaigns. When we say, “This area floods every five years,” or “We know this substation is vulnerable,” we are operating in known-known territory.

“If something is a known known and we fail to plan for it, the failure is not due to uncertainty it is due to inaction.”

2. Known Unknowns: What we know we don’t know. These are uncertainties we are aware of but cannot fully predict.

- How much rain will fall in a specific storm
- How many residents will comply with evacuation orders
- How long power restoration will take after a major event

EMA Application: This is where scenario planning, modeling, and flexibility matter. Emergency managers routinely plan around known unknowns by building contingency plans, establishing decision triggers, pre-positioning resources and using forecasts and situational awareness tools.

“Known unknowns should not paralyze decision-making. Instead, they should drive adaptable plans and layered responses.”

3. Unknown Knowns: What we know but don’t realize we know. Often overlooked, unknown knowns refer to information that exists but is not recognized, shared, or integrated.

- Institutional knowledge held by long-time staff
- Lessons learned from previous incidents that were never documented
- Data collected but not analyzed
- Community insights that haven’t reached decision-makers

EMA Application: After-action reports, coordination, and knowledge transfer are critical to reducing unknown knowns. When experienced personnel move on, valuable insights can be lost.

“A strong EMA culture encourages documentation, information sharing, and learning so what we already know actually informs future decisions.”

4. Unknown Unknowns: The unforeseen threats. Unknown unknowns are the most challenging as we cannot anticipate them because they fall outside existing experience or assumptions.

- Cascading failures across systems (power + communications + healthcare)
- Novel hazards or unprecedented combinations of events
- Behavioral responses that differ sharply from expectations

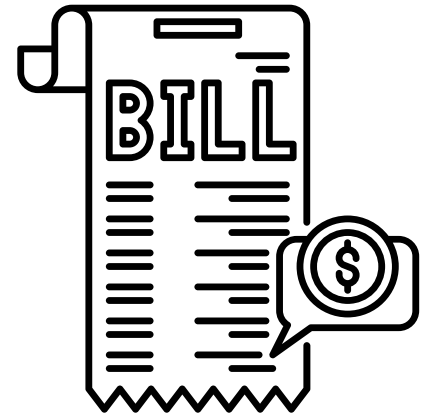
EMA Application: While unknown unknowns cannot be predicted, their impacts can be mitigated by building resilient systems, training for decision-making under uncertainty and focusing on core capabilities rather than single-hazard plans

“Resilience, not prediction, is the best defense against unknown unknowns.”

Recent Happenings

Peoria City/County Legislative Breakfast

The 2026 Peoria City/County Legislative Breakfast continued the long-standing tradition of a joint gathering where local leaders from the City of Peoria, Peoria County Board, and Peoria City/County Health Department meet with Illinois state legislators to present and explain their annual legislative priorities and policy requests ahead of the upcoming legislative session. At the breakfast, city and county officials shared joint priorities addressing middle-income housing solutions, public safety pension reform, and infrastructure capital funding, aiming to secure state support for these initiatives. These breakfasts typically focus on building collaborative dialogue between municipal leaders and the state delegation, aligning on key capital projects, community safety, economic development, housing, and public health funding requests that will shape advocacy efforts in the Illinois General Assembly during the coming year.



Railroad Investigation and Safety Course

Rail safety training is not just theoretical it is informed by real-world incidents. In 2014, a motor grader was struck by a train at a railroad crossing in Hallock Township, Peoria County. While incidents like this are relatively rare, they serve as a powerful reminder of the dangers present at rail crossings and the importance of proper training, situational awareness, and coordination. Heavy equipment, emergency vehicles, and everyday motorists all face serious risks when operating near active rail lines.



Rail safety continues to be an important focus for emergency management and first responder agencies across Illinois. On January 29, 2026, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) issued a Rail Safety Notice highlighting the ongoing need for awareness, coordination, and preparedness related to rail operations and rail-related incidents. With active rail lines running through many Peoria County communities, these reminders are especially relevant at the local level.

To support preparedness efforts, the Peoria Co. EMA hosted Operation Lifesaver railroad safety training on January 21, 2026. Operation Lifesaver is a nationally recognized program that provides education on rail safety. The training offered practical guidance for first responders and partner agencies who may be called upon to manage incidents involving trains, rail crossings, or hazardous materials transported by rail.

Looking ahead, we are working to develop local capacity by supporting a first responder in becoming a certified Operation Lifesaver trainer. Establishing a locally based trainer will allow railroad safety education to be offered more frequently and customized to the specific rail infrastructure, crossings, and risks present in Peoria County.

By sharing information from the ICC, participating in Operation Lifesaver training, and building local training capacity, Peoria County EMA and its partners are working to reduce risk and enhance safety for responders and the public alike. Community partners are encouraged to stay engaged, review rail safety guidance, and participate in future training opportunities as they become available. Rail safety is a shared responsibility, and continued collaboration is essential to protecting lives and infrastructure throughout Peoria County.

Recent Happenings (continued)

Operation Critter Control

Operation Critter Control, an animal preparedness exercise, recently brought responders and partners together for a hands-on learning experience using the interactive game Animal Rescue Team. Participants worked through simulated disaster scenarios that required coordinated decision-making to safely evacuate, shelter, and reunite animals while supporting overall community response efforts. The exercise emphasized the importance of animal considerations in emergency management, including responder safety, resource coordination, and public messaging. By engaging in a game-based format, participants were able to reinforce best practices for animal rescue and care during emergencies while strengthening collaboration across agencies and organizations.



Long-term Care Preparedness Workshop



A recent disaster preparedness workshop for long-term care facilities focused on strengthening emergency planning and response, with particular attention given to the risks posed by waterborne illnesses during and after disasters. The session highlighted how disruptions to water systems, flooding, or contamination events can quickly impact vulnerable populations, emphasizing the importance of safe water practices, infection prevention, and continuity of care. Participants reviewed preparedness strategies such as water supply planning, resident monitoring, coordination with public health agencies, and clear communication protocols to reduce illness risk. The workshop reinforced the critical role long-term care facilities play in protecting residents' health during emergencies and the need for proactive planning to address water-related hazards.

Paradigm Pipeline Safety Training

Peoria Co. EMA recently participated in PARADIGM Pipeline Training held in East Peoria, Illinois. The PARADIGM training program is designed to enhance coordination, situational awareness, and operational effectiveness during hazardous materials and pipeline emergencies.

Pipeline infrastructure plays a vital role in delivering energy resources safely and efficiently. While pipeline incidents are rare, their potential impact on communities requires proactive planning and coordinated response. Through this training, participants reviewed:

- Emergency response protocols for pipeline ruptures and hazardous material releases
- Unified command structure and incident management best practices
- Evacuation and shelter-in-place decision-making processes
- Public information and risk communication strategies
- Coordination between local, state, federal, and private-sector partners

By participating in the East Peoria PARADIGM session, Peoria Co. EMA continues to enhance its readiness to respond to infrastructure-related incidents and safeguard the community.

Calm Your Body to Clear Your Mind

Emergencies challenge more than our resources, they challenge our ability to think clearly when it matters most. In moments of uncertainty, fear, and time pressure, even well-prepared people can struggle to make safe decisions. That's why this newsletter series focuses on how to think clearly under pressure, a critical but often overlooked part of emergency preparedness. Over the coming months, we'll introduce practical, evidence-based methods used by first responders, military professionals, and crisis managers to stay calm, focused, and decisive during high-stress situations. These tools are simple, effective, and designed for real-world emergencies helping individuals, families, and communities make better decisions when every second counts.

Box Breathing for High-Stress Moments

When stress spikes, your body goes into fight-or-flight mode. Heart rate increases, breathing becomes shallow, and clear thinking gets harder. One of the fastest ways to regain control is Box Breathing.

Box Breathing is a simple breathing technique used by first responders, pilots, and tactical teams:

1. Inhale for 4 seconds
2. Hold for 4 seconds
3. Exhale for 4 seconds
4. Hold for 4 seconds

Repeat for 4–6 cycles.

Why It Works

Slow, controlled breathing:

- Lowers heart rate
- Reduces cortisol (stress hormone)
- Improves focus and decision-making

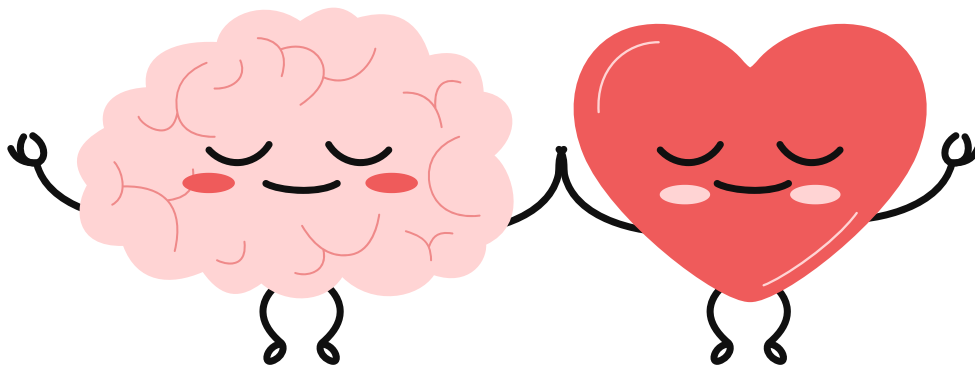
It tells your nervous system: You are safe enough to think.

When to Use It

- While waiting for emergency instructions
- Before making a critical decision
- When panic starts to rise
- While sheltering in place

Practice Box Breathing when calm at stoplights, before meetings, or at bedtime. That way, your body recognizes it during real stress. Clear thinking under pressure is not a personality trait—it's a skill. Like any skill, it improves with awareness and practice. Emergencies test us, but preparation—mental as well as physical—makes all the difference.

Key takeaway: You can't always control the situation, but you can control your breath.



Double Puzzle

Answers to the puzzle found on page 6

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America 250, Month by Month a Look Back to 1776

In 2026, our nation will mark 250 years since its founding, a milestone that invites not only celebration, but reflection. The story of America is often told through major dates and decisive moments. Yet the reality of 1776, like today, was lived week by week: through uncertainty, limited resources, imperfect information, and difficult decisions made under pressure. To recognize this anniversary, we've added a 13th page to our newsletter (honoring the 13 original colonies) where we will be sharing a recurring feature that looks back exactly 250 years to what was happening during each corresponding month in 1776. These snapshots will highlight the events, debates, challenges, and conditions facing communities and leaders as the colonies moved toward independence.

This series is not just about history it is about continuity. As we move through 2026, these monthly reflections offer an opportunity to connect the past to the present and to reaffirm that preparedness is not just a modern responsibility, but a foundational American one.

In February 1776, key events of the American Revolution focused heavily on logistical preparation for a major assault on British-occupied Boston and bolstering political resolve for independence. These events mirrored modern disaster preparedness concepts, specifically resource management, logistics, intelligence, and strategic planning through the lens of 18th-century warfare. The American Revolution saw crucial shifts towards independence, marked by:

- Council of War (Feb. 16) - General George Washington convened a council of war and decided that a "Cannonade & Bombardment" was advisable once a proper supply of powder was secured, focusing on Dorchester Hill.
- Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge (Feb. 27) - In North Carolina, a patriot force decisively defeated a larger contingent of Loyalists. This victory was critical because it largely silenced Loyalist activity in the Carolinas for the next three years, securing the region for the American cause and preventing a planned British invasion of the south.
- The "Noble Train of Artillery" - Following a daring winter trip, Colonel Henry Knox completed the transport of 60 tons of heavy artillery captured at Fort Ticonderoga to Cambridge, MA. This provided the critical, and previously absent firepower needed to break the stalemate at Boston.
- Discussion of Foreign Alliances - In the Continental Congress, leaders began actively discussing and drafting a "Model Treaty" to form alliances with foreign power, especially France and Spain. This demonstrated a critical shift in thinking, as formal alliances required the colonies to act as a sovereign nation, pushing the idea of full independence closer to a vote.

The events of February 1776 show that success depended on anticipatory action (gathering artillery before the battle) rather than reactive measures. In 2026, disaster preparedness similarly relies on building infrastructure, logistics, and supply lines before a "storm" (environmental or societal) hits, ensuring the ability to endure a crisis.

