UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

Minnesota 4-H Statewide Service Theme

Year: 2025-2026
Theme: Disaster Relief and Emergency Response

Each year, the Minnesota 4-H State Ambassadors select a service theme to engage all Minnesota 4-H youth in learning about a community issue and taking steps to make a positive, collective impact. The theme is determined by input collected from youth at leadership conferences, 4-H staff across the state and the state ambassadors.

Disaster Relief and Emergency Response



Disaster relief and emergency response is a critical area of community support that calls for awareness, preparedness and compassion. From natural disasters to public health emergencies to humanitarian aid efforts, there are urgent needs at every level: local, state, national and global.

The 4-H State Ambassadors' goal is to educate people about disaster relief and emergency response and empower youth to make an impact within 4-H and beyond.

Read on for seasonal and real-time topics that are educational and action-oriented that allow youth to:

- Learn about emergency response efforts in the real world
- Teach others about the importance of being prepared and how to respond in an emergency.
- Lead in community action and response efforts

We invite you to be part of this important work by learning, leading and serving alongside youth across the state. Your involvement can help create safer, more resilient communities where everyone is empowered to respond in times of need.

State Ambassador Service Committee:

Sydney, Anoka County- Chair

Abigaile, Anoka County | **Greta**, Traverse County | **Jordan**, Blue Earth County
Makenzie, Hubbard County | **Seno,** Anoka County | **Sofia**, Ramsey County



TOPIC: Winter Weather Preparedness

Cold temperatures, snow and ice can cause accidents and emergencies. Did you know you can get frostbite in 30 minutes or less when the wind chill is 15 below zero? Being prepared helps keep everyone safe during Minnesota's winter months.

Winter weather can make travel difficult and create challenges for people who don't have warm clothing, safe heating or basic supplies. These small obstacles can add up quickly during storms or extreme cold.

By planning ahead and learning simple winter safety skills, we can help our community stay safe, supported and prepared throughout the season.

Join the effort to keep yourself and others safe this winter!

At-home ideas for your club or family to prepare for winter

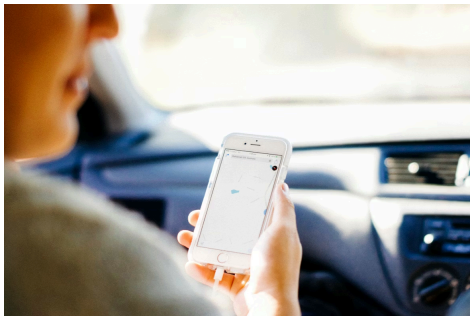
Here are some ways to prepare for winter weather before it arrives:

- **Stock Up on Essentials.** Keep your car and home ready with items like:
    - Blanket, gloves, hat & warm layers
    - Water & snacks
    - Jumper cables & an ice scraper
    - Flashlights & extra batteries



Photo: Lincoln County, WI Emergency Mgmt

- **Make a communication plan.**
    - Know who you will contact in an emergency and how you'll reach them.
    - Decide on a safe meeting spot if cell service goes down.
    - Make sure every family member knows the plan.


Photo: Jackie Alexander from Unsplash

- **Check your home for winter readiness.**
    - Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
    - Review safe heater use to prevent accidents and fires.
    - Keep supplies on hand like batteries, flashlights, and non-perishable food on hand, in case of power outages.

- **Dress for the weather even if it's "not cool."**
    - Frostbite and hypothermia can happen faster than you think.
    - Wearing a coat, gloves, hat, and boots helps prevent cold-related injuries.

Winter preparedness service project ideas for your community

Winter is a time when communities need a little extra warmth and support. Here are three simple ways you can make a meaningful difference this season!

Host a Winter Clothing Drive

Providing warm clothing helps community members stay safe and protected during cold weather.

Sample Phone / Email Script & Planning Notes

Organization name:

Contact person:

Phone/email:

Script to Use (Phone or Email):

Hello! My name is ___ and I'm part of Minnesota 4-H. This winter, I'm collecting warm clothing to support community members who may not have what they need to stay safe in the cold.

Would your organization be interested in accepting donated coats, hats, or gloves, or helping us spread the word?
Yes / No / Notes:

Do you accept both new and gently used items?

Answer:

Is there an item you need more of?

Item(s):

What date and time would you like these items dropped off?

Date/Time:

Additional notes:

Thank you for helping keep our community warm this winter!

Volunteer to shovel a neighbor's walkway.

Clearing snow supports neighbors who may struggle with mobility and helps prevent slips, falls, and isolation.

Sample Flyer & Planning Notes

Neighbor's name:

Address:

Phone/email:

Flyer template to distribute (print or email):

Hello Neighbor,

Winter weather can be tough. If you need a helping hand this season, I would be happy to volunteer my time to shovel your walkway and a path to your front door — free of charge.

I live in the neighborhood and believe in community kindness. I'm here to help you stay safe and comfortable this winter.

Services Offered:

- A path from your front door to the main sidewalk
- Clearing steps and ramps.
- Ice melt if provided

Rates: FREE!

Availability: I will do my best to clear the snow within a reasonable timeframe (e.g., 24-36 hours) after a snowfall of 2 inches or more, often after work or other obligations.

Additional notes:

Contact Information:

My Name: [Your Name or "A Helpful Neighbor]

Call or Text: [Your Phone Number]

Email: [Your Email Address]

Create & Distribute Winter Essentials Care Kits

Supplying essential winter items gives families practical tools to stay warm, healthy, and prepared throughout the season.

Sample Phone / Email Script & Planning Notes

Organization name:

Contact person:

Phone/email:

Script to Use (Phone or Email):

Hello! My name is *[your name]* and I'm part of **Minnesota 4-H**.
This winter, I'm collecting various winter care items to support community members who may not have what they need to stay safe in the cold.

Would your organization be interested in accepting donated **winter prep kits** that contain **hand warmers, socks, granola bars, lip balm, tissues, basic first-aid items, and winter safety tips**?
Yes / No / Notes:

Are there items your clients need more of?
Item(s):

What is the number of kits needed?
Quantity:

What date and time would you like these items dropped off?
Date/Time:

Location:

Thank you for helping keep our community warm this winter!

TOPIC: Response Readiness

If youth are empowered with knowledge on what to do in dangerous situations, they are better able to keep themselves and their community safe. Read on to learn about basic information on what to do in a crisis situation, such as who to call and what to say, as well as community alert systems and how to report an emergency.

Ways you can plan ahead

Stay informed

Be sure to know how to receive emergency alerts and messages before you need them. One way to stay informed in your community is to join various alert systems that share information related to current situations or warnings about potential dangers.

Here are some ideas on how to stay informed:

- Stay in the know of emergencies in your local area with Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs). These alerts come from alerting authorities who send verified public safety messages to mobile devices to alert residents of important information, including updates about natural disasters, AMBER alerts and other public safety notifications. The ability to turn this feature on and off is usually in your notifications settings.
- When the weather turns, be sure to have updated information on any potentially dangerous weather conditions. One example is the NOAA Weather Radio App, which shares information from the nearest National Weather Service office.

Stay steady

If you are ever in a dangerous situation, you may not know how to react. You might feel like you are going to freeze up. The good news is, there are things you can do to help in these situations. You don't have to be a professional to help in a time of crisis.

Some basic information to apply in dangerous situations includes:

Try to stay calm

It's okay to be nervous, but you can help the most when you are prepared ahead of time to think clearly.

Know when to call 911

Talk to a parent or guardian to confirm when they believe you should call 911.

Here are some possible reasons to call 911, though there are others not listed:

- Fires
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Any life threatening situation
- Injuries requiring medical attention
- Dangerous chemical spills
- If the carbon monoxide alarm is going off

How to care for someone who is hurt

If someone you're with has fallen or been badly injured, don't try to lift them up or move them — you could make the injury worse. Instead, wait for a first responder or a trained professional, like an EMT, to evaluate them. They will move them when they know it is safe to do so.

Practice responding to an emergency

One of the best ways to make a difference during an emergency is being prepared to respond, including knowing what to say and do when making a 911 call.

Use the Calling for Help: 911 Practice Guide and review the following information to ensure you, your friends and your family are prepared to make a 911 call if needed.

Supporting your community

Serving your community through response readiness is about taking small, meaningful actions that have the potential to help anyone stay safer and be more confident when unexpected situations arise.

Whether you're sharing safety information, creating educational tools or showing appreciation to those who protect your community, every effort strengthens local awareness and preparedness.

Here are ideas to serve your community this season within the theme of response readiness.

Write a thank-you letter to your local first responders

Show appreciation for the people who keep your community safe by writing heartfelt thank you letters to firefighters, EMTs, police officers or 911 dispatchers.

You can make it a group project with friends or classmates, decorate the cards and drop them off at a local station. A simple message of gratitude can really brighten their day and remind them that their hard work matters.

Design a response readiness poster for your community

Use your creativity and inquiry skills to educate others on a response topic:

- How and when to call 911
- What to do during a tornado warning
- Home safety checks
- Pet emergency preparedness
- Any other response/readiness topic you are interested in

This is a great showcase project opportunity! Check out your local premium book's entry information in 4-H project areas like civic engagement, health and wellness, safety or self-determined to find the best fit for your project.

Build your own first aid kit

Put together a basic first-aid kit you can keep in your backpack, locker or at home.



Having supplies ready helps you respond quickly to minor injuries and support friends or family until an adult or professional can step in.

In your first-aid kit, include items like:

- Bandages
- Antiseptic wipes
- Gauze pads
- Adhesive tape
- Tweezers
- Hand sanitizer

Personalize it with things you know you might need — like blister pads for sports or allergy-safe items. Once your kit is ready, label it clearly and store it somewhere easy to grab.

You can even make extra kits to donate to community centers, youth groups or neighbors who might benefit from having one on hand.

TOPIC: Disaster Recovery and Community Healing

Everyone who experiences a disaster is impacted in a different way. While it can be hard to accept help, doing so can be healthy and beneficial to the recovery process. Support from your community and organizations can help provide much needed relief and healing.

Disaster recovery happens in three main phases

1. **Immediate relief –** This is the first response. It includes ensuring safety and providing food, water, shelter and emergency medical care.
2. **Short-term recovery –** Communities begin to stabilize. This may include cleaning up debris, restoring basic services and helping families return to daily routines.
3. **Long-term rebuilding –** This phase can take months or even years. It focuses on rebuilding homes, restoring infrastructure and supporting emotional recovery.

Even small acts of kindness, such as checking in on a neighbor or helping someone clean up their yard, can make a huge difference. After a disaster, people don't just need supplies; they need connection, encouragement and hope.

Reflective questions to help with service planning

Questions to think about on your own or as a club

- What is a need happening in my community, and how can I address or advocate for it?
- What organizations in my area help with disaster relief and rebuilding?
- What does a strong community look like after a disaster?
- How can 4-H clubs help people feel connected, not just helped?
- How can small acts of kindness impact long-term recovery?
- What skills from 4-H could you use to support others?

Service project ideas

We encourage you to come up with your own service project related to this theme, but here are some ideas to get you started.

Community cleanup day

Organize or participate in a roadside cleanup, park cleanup or simply help a neighbor clean their yard.

Care package project

Create care packages, such as hygiene kits, to donate.

Food or supply drive

Partner with a food bank or shelter to run a drive for needed items.

Rebuild and repair projects

Help with painting, yard work or small repairs.

Take a first aid class

Build skills that could help in an emergency.

Educate your community

Teach your club or community about emergency preparedness and safety.

Create your own idea

Find a need in your community and take action.

Together, we can make a difference by showing up for our communities when it matters most. Be looking for more ways to get involved with this theme throughout the month!

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Calling for Help:

9-1-1 Practice Guide for Youth

This guide is intended to help youth practice what to say if ever needed to call 9-1-1. You do **not** need to memorize it—dispatchers will guide you.

When to Call 9-1-1

Call if someone's **life or safety is at risk**, such as:

- Trouble breathing or unconsciousness
- Serious injury or heavy bleeding
- Fire or strong smell of smoke
- A bad crash
- Someone needs help *right now*
- If you're not sure but someone could be seriously hurt, it's okay to call.

While You're on the Call

- Stay calm and speak clearly.
- Move away from danger.
- Answer questions in the order asked.
- Follow instructions.
- **Do not hang up** until the dispatcher says it's okay.

What to Say First

- **Your name:**
- **The phone number I'm calling from is:**
- **What is happening:**
- **Location of emergency (address or landmark):**
  - Address:
  - Cross street / landmark (store, park, school):
  - Direction (if moving/in transit):
- **How many people need help:**

For Medical Emergencies

- Age (or approx.):
- Are they awake?
- Are they breathing?

For Fire Emergencies

- What is burning or smoking?
- Flames or smoke only?
- Is anyone inside?

Do not hang up until the dispatcher says it's okay.

Next, wait for help to arrive:

- Get an adult if one is nearby.
- Unlock doors / turn on lights.
- Be ready to point responders to the right place.

Important Reminders

- If you can't call, you can **text 9-1-1 in Minnesota**!
- You can call 9-1-1 from a cell phone even without a service plan.
- Give the **best location you can**—help can't be sent if they can't find you.
- Practicing now helps you stay calm later

Every situation & call is different. You may not be asked every question—and that's okay.

Calling for Help:

9-1-1 Practice Guide for Youth

Practice what a real 9-1-1 call sounds like so you feel more confident if you ever need to make one.

Directions

- Find a friend or family member to role play!
- Choose roles: **Caller** & **Dispatcher**
- Select a scenario from the list & act out.
- Switch roles & try again!

Caller selects one scenario:

- Someone faints and won't wake up right away
- Smoke is coming from a room in the house
- A person is having trouble breathing
- A car crash happened nearby and someone is hurt
- Choose your own (appropriately)

Dispatch Script

Ask the questions in this order.

- ☐ What is your name?
- ☐ What phone number are you calling from?
- ☐ What's the emergency?
- ☐ Where are you right now?
- ☐ What is the address or nearest landmark?"
- ☐ Are you safe where you are?
- ☐ How many people need help?
- ☐ Is anyone hurt or feeling very unwell?
- ☐ Is the person awake
- ☐ Is the person breathing?

Optional prompts:

- ☐ How old is the person who needs help?
- ☐ What exactly do you see right now?
- ☐ Is there anything nearby that could be dangerous?
- ☐ Can you unlock the door or have someone meet responders?

Things a Dispatcher might say...

- "You're doing the right thing by calling."
- "Take a slow breath with me."
- "You're not in trouble."
- "I know this is stressful—you're doing a great job."
- "I'm going to ask you a few questions to get help to you."
- "Stay on the line with me."
  "I need you to keep talking to me."
- "Let's take this one step at a time."
- "Answer as best you can—it's okay if you're not sure."
- "Just tell me what you see right now."
- "You don't have to guess—say 'I don't know' if you're unsure."
- "I hear that you're scared, and that's okay."
- "Try to speak slowly so I can understand you."