FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 1st, 2023

**Forest County Health Department Updates:**

**September is National Preparedness Month:**

The Forest County Health Department would like to take this time to give our community members pointers in being prepared for emergencies that could happen.

We all like to think that we will never have to be faced with a weather-related emergency such as storm related power outages, floods, tornados or a public health threat such as disease outbreaks or have to deal with the after effects of a hazardous material spill or a forest fire. But what if we do? The best things we as a community can do is be aware and be prepared.

Here is a list of things to do:

* Create an emergency plan for your family, include a checklist of what needs to be done and assign tasks to each member.
* Keep an emergency phone list that includes numbers for a doctor, the emergency department, fire and police.
* Note local TV channels and radio stations with frequent news broadcasts.
* Have a Buddy system in place. A Buddy system can be set up with neighbors, friends or family. Plan ahead for how you will help each other in an emergency. Give your buddy a key to your home.
* Download the FEMA mobile app at <https://www.ready.gov/fema-app> to plan, protect, and recover from disasters. This app can help you create a family emergency communication plan and guide you in what to pack in your emergency kit. You can also receive real time weather and emergency alerts from the National Weather Service.

Emergencies can happen at any time. Having the tools and plans in place before an emergency occurs could save your life. Please call the Forest County Health Department at 715-478-3371 if you have any questions.

**Northwoods Tobacco Free Coalition:**

As part of the ongoing struggle against vaping/underage smoking in Forest County, a number of businesses were recently visited by “underage” youth trying to buy tobacco. All of the businesses have trained their staff well…..nothing was sold to minors!

Congratulations to the following:

-Gudowicz Service Store: Armstrong Creek

-The Corner Store: Armstrong Creek

-Family Dollar: Laona

-Schaefer’s: Crandon

-Whisky Nick’s: Crandon

-The Gas Depot: Crandon

-Dollar General: Crandon

-Lotters: Crandon

-Lake Forest Trading Post: Hiles

**Community Health Assessment:**

The Forest County Health Department Community Health Assessment 2023 has been completed. We would like to thank our community members, health care providers, elected officials, business owners, tribal health, schools, local coalition members, and partner counties for their assistance and cooperation in this process.

Our Top 3 Health Priority Areas are: Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Chronic Disease.

The final prioritization process considered multiple criteria, including scope of the issue, community momentum, and organizational capacity. We know the drivers of health; income, education, housing, access to care, access to food and physical activity, play an important part of overall health.   As the five-year health improvement plan is written and evidence-based strategies are selected, we will strive to address the top social determinant of health that was identified, access to health care.

The Forest County Health Department will be sharing the final health assessment report with the public, elected officials, agency partners, local coalitions and other interested community members. The Forest County Health Department Community Health Assessment Team has developed primary goals for each of the three health priority areas, identified a team lead and a local coalition that is engaged in the issues. Other community assets and partnerships have also been identified, such as, schools, social service, aging and disability, human service, libraries, pharmacies, tribal agencies, clinics, local law enforcement, UW Extension, and others. We will invite others to engage in the work of creating the five-year plan knowing that this is truly a community effort and one organization cannot complete the work alone.

Once the Community Health Improvement Plan is written, we will have a system in place to monitor and evaluate progress, adjust strategies if necessary, and report the progress on a routine basis. Please refer to the Forest County Health Department website for more information on the Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan at: [www.forestcountypublichealth.org](http://www.forestcountypublichealth.org)

We look forward to any discussion regarding the health priories that have been identified.

We will update our Facebook page and local newspapers monthly as capacity allows. **Please call 715-478-3371 with any questions or concerns.**