

With Spring Warm-up Expected To Jump-Start Tornado Season, Operation Blessing International Offers Free *7-Day Family Disaster Planning Guide*

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (April 8, 2013) – The U.S. Disaster Relief team of the global humanitarian organization, Operation Blessing International (OBI), has published a free *7-Day Family Disaster Planning Guide* to help families prepare for the onset of peak tornado season and other disasters.

Historically, March marks the beginning of the peak tornado season in the USA. However, due to much colder temperatures than normal this winter, there were only 17 tornadoes in the month of March, the lowest in 35 years. In 2012, for example, there were 154 tornadoes in March.

But with the return of warm temperatures now in place, forecasters are calling for an increase in the likelihood of tornado activity in the coming weeks.

Operation Blessing International's free *7-Day Family Disaster Planning Guide* is available for downloading at www.ob.org. Originally created for OBI's "Prepared Kids" instructional program for school children, the guide will help families "Plan, Prepare and Protect" against the threat posed by tornadoes, hurricanes or other disasters.

The guide is divided into seven daily steps, including gathering critical documents (insurance info, medication list, birth certificates, contact info, etc), preparing and organizing a "family emergency go-kit" (non-perishable foods, water, flashlight, first aid kit, toiletries, etc), preparing shopping lists, practicing the plan, and even suggesting fun activities to keep young family members occupied during or after a storm (board games, books, crafts, etc).

OBI's U.S. Disaster Relief team responds to dozens of disasters each year, including recent tornadoes in Joplin, Illinois, Alabama and Dallas, hurricanes' Isaac, Irene, Katrina, and most recently, OBI spent four months helping thousands of residents recover from the devastation of Hurricane Sandy in Breezy Point, NY, the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Coney Island, Staten Island and coastal New Jersey. Normally arriving on site within 24-hours of a disaster, the OBI team provides thousands of hot meals, delivers tens of thousands of pounds of supplies with its fleet of semi trucks, coordinates hundreds of volunteers, provides specialized heavy equipment for debris removal.

"In our experience responding to dozens of disasters each year, we see firsthand that most families are just not prepared," says Jody Herrington-Gettys, director of U.S. Disaster Relief. "The result is frequently stress and grief, trying to cope with the situation at hand. However, if your family would commit to investing just two hours a day for one week, you can help to prepare them for most any disaster and to create a family tradition of preparedness that can be passed down for generations to come."

Download Operation Blessing International's *7-Day Family Disaster Planning Guide* at www.ob.org.

ABOUT OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL:

Operation Blessing International (OBI) is one of the largest charities in America, providing strategic disaster relief, medical aid, hunger relief, clean water and community development in 23 countries around the world on a daily basis. Currently, Forbes ranks OBI as one of its "100 Largest Charities" with an efficiency rating of 99%, and Consumers Digest also named OBI as one of "America's Top Charities" in 2012. Founded in 1978, Operation Blessing International has touched the lives of more than 255 million people in more than 105 countries and 50 states, providing goods and services valued at over \$3.3 billion to date.

To see an electronic press kit of OBI's work please visit:

<https://vimeo.com/57154374>

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Operation Blessing International's Top 5 Tornado Safety Tips

From Jody Herrington-Gettys, Director, US Disaster Relief

1. Heed tornado warnings – when a warning is posted, that should trigger your family to take cover
2. Designate a "safe room" in your home or nearby location – go there if a tornado warning is issued
3. Prepare a "family emergency go-kit" -- with enough food, water and supplies to sustain your family for at least 3-5 days.
4. Make sure all of your important documents are kept in one place in a waterproof container or bag (birth and marriage certificates, home and vehicle insurance policies, prescriptions, medical cards, and photo IDs/Passports)
5. Keep your medications close -- have duplicate copies of your prescriptions in your go-kit.

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For more information or to schedule an interview with Jody Herrington-Gettys, please contact:

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