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Governor Crist Urges Children, Students to Get a Plan

~ Visits Miami Elementary school to discuss disaster preparedness ~

www.KidsGetAPlan.com

MIAMI – Governor Charlie Crist today visited Toussaint L’ouverture Elementary School in Miami to encourage students to continue to remain informed about hurricane preparedness as the historic peak of Atlantic Hurricane Season has begun. Governor Crist also applauded Florida’s Emergency Management Program for receiving a full re-accreditation by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP), while joined by Florida Emergency Management Interim Director Ruben D. Almaguer, Education Commissioner Dr. Eric Smith and Miami-Dade County School Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho.

“When we educate young Floridians on how to be prepared during a disaster, they can help safety efforts,” said Governor Crist. “As tropical activity is likely to increase during this peak month of hurricane season, there is no better time to review and update disaster plans. We must remind Floridians that storms do not have to be hurricanes to be deadly or destructive.”

Last month, Governor Crist invited students to visit www.KidsGetAPlan.com to learn how to be prepared like their parents and teachers. The Web site includes free downloads of stories, coloring books and important disaster preparedness tips for kids. During today’s visit, the Governor, Interim Director Almaguer, Commissioner Smith and Superintendent Carvalho joined students as they participated in an online activity that allowed them to assemble virtual supply kits. The Web site’s kid friendly format educates children on how to stay safe during a thunderstorm, how to prepare their home for severe weather and how to protect themselves from hazards like tornados. Governor Crist noted that fostering a culture of preparedness, through initiatives like interactive online activities, will keep Florida safe for generations to come.

“As a result of developing this fun and educational Web site, we are educating and preparing a generation of prepared Floridians, who will one day teach their children what they learned while they were in grade school,” Interim Director Almaguer said. “Just like teaching our children to dial 9-11 during an emergency, we should be teaching them what to do in the case of a natural or man-made disaster.”

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(Get a Plan pg. 2 cont.)

Commissioner Smith added, "It's important that our young people understand the benefit of being prepared for a disaster and that we provide them with innovative ways to learn and absorb that information. I am confident that Florida's culture of preparedness will only grow as more students take this critical knowledge home to their families."

In September 2003, Florida became the first state to receive full accreditation through EMAP. Earlier this year, Florida and Arizona achieved full re-accreditation status, joining 19 other states and four jurisdictions (including Jacksonville/Duval County and most recently Orange County, Florida) that are currently accredited by the EMAP program. The EMAP accreditation process evaluated and found the Florida emergency management program compliant in all 63 national standards. The EMAP accreditation process is voluntary for local and state emergency management programs. Programs are accredited for five year terms and are required to annually prove ongoing compliance with national standards.

Earlier this month, Governor Crist declared September 2009 'Florida Preparedness Month.' The Florida Division of Emergency Management will be partnering with more than 3,260 organizations across the U.S. to help educate the public about the importance of emergency preparedness throughout the month. In addition to participating in Florida's Preparedness Month, the Division is participating in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Ad Council's sixth annual National Preparedness *Ready* Campaign, which will focus on changing perceptions about emergency preparedness and helping Americans understand what it truly means to be "Ready."

The 2009 Hurricane Season began on June 1, 2009, and ends on November 30, 2009. Please visit www.FloridaDisaster.org for other Web-based tools to assist in natural disaster planning, more information on preparedness and how you can GET A PLAN! To learn more about the Emergency Management Accreditation Program go to: www.emaponline.org.

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