

# STRENGTHENING OKLAHOMA FAMILIES



**GARFIELD COUNTY  
EXTENSION**

## Tips to prepare for storm season

If there is one thing Oklahomans know about, it is the importance of being prepared for storm season. While we can experience storms throughout the year, springtime is when things start to ramp up.

We all are familiar with the sounds that emit from the television when the local weather persons break in with emergency notifications. They may talk about a storm watch or a storm warning, but what is the difference?

Gina Peek, Oklahoma State University Extension housing and consumer specialist, said the National Weather Service will issue tornado alerts when weather conditions occur that make tornadoes more likely.

“A tornado watch is when the weather conditions in an area indicate an increased risk for severe weather that may be capable of producing a tornado,” Peek said. “The NWS will issue a tornado warning when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. On average, tornado warnings are issued 13 minutes prior to the event, but the warning times can vary greatly and could be much less.”

It is important to be informed regarding storms in your area. Receiving timely information about weather conditions via television news broadcasts, radio or updates through



a smart phone can have a direct impact on knowing when to take action. Many communities have text or email alerting systems for emergency notifications. To find out what alerts are available in your area, do an Internet search with your town, city or county name and the word alerts.

Peek also said it is a good idea to have a weather radio in your home. This type of radio receives broadcast alerts directly from the National Weather Service.

“Something else to keep in mind is how you’ll receive information in the event of a power outage. Have extra batteries available for the radio,” she said. “Keep your cell phone charged and if possible, have a portable phone charger available.”

Having a safe place to go should be top priority for you and your family. When a storm hits is not the time to try to figure out the safest place to go. Peek said your level of protection from tornadoes depends on where you are when the

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Garfield County OSU Extension

#### Address

316 E. Oxford  
Enid, OK 73701

#### Phone

580-237-1228

#### Email

Joy Rhodes  
joy.rhodes@okstate.edu

#### Website

<http://oces.okstate.edu/garfield/>

#### Social Media

Facebook: Garfield County OSU  
Extension Family & Consumer Sciences

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the tornado strikes. Other considerations are the size, strength and duration of the tornado. Also, know how you will get to your safety location. Do you have a storm shelter at your home? Does your community have a public shelter? If not, locate the nearest safe place. This is the type of thing you must know in advance.

“Develop a safety plan for everyone in the house. Each person has different needs, so plan accordingly,” she said. “Young children, elderly family members or those with disabilities all need to be included in the plan. Practice the plan to ensure everyone knows what will happen in the event of a storm.”

Peek said every household should have an emergency kit ready for storm season. It is a good idea to keep an emergency kit in your vehicle and your place of work. It should include things you would need most when you come out of your shelter following the storm. Remember, your home could be damaged, the electricity is probably out and there is a possibility of no water.

Extra batteries, bottled water, a first aid kit for minor injuries, a change of clothing, leather gloves, sturdy shoes, nonperishable foods, medications and pet food. A whistle or air horn can be useful in the event you are trapped in your shelter. This will help rescue crews find you. A full list of supplies is available at [www.ready.gov/build-a-kit](http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit).

“In addition to these supplies, make sure you have copies handy of your homeowner’s or renter’s insurance policy. Before storm season hits, consider scanning important documents and storing them on a flash drive that can be kept with your emergency supplies,” Peek said. “For those with children, keep in the kit a special item such as a stuffed animal, a book or a game that can help provide comfort while you’re in the shelter and afterward.”

Put your supplies in a backpack, a small tote or some other container that’s easy to grab and carry. It is in the interest of your safety and the safety of your family to be prepared for storm season.



## GARFIELD COUNTY EXTENSION

*Due to the current situation, the Garfield County OSU Extension Office **will not** be holding face to face meetings/programs etc. through the month of April. We will be looking at re-scheduling the County OHCE Board Meeting as well as the Spring Association meeting. All of the scheduling will be reevaluated as time and circumstances change. This is unavoidable and we will abide with the current situation and reevaluate as time goes on. The front office door is currently locked and we are here working on projects and upcoming events. The April Leader lessons has been prepared and mailed to the local Presidents. It is up to each individual group as to meeting each month or to cancel for the time being. Keep in mind the “no more than 10” and the general health of your group. Our OHCE District meeting for 2020 has been cancelled. It was decided that the 3 host counties for 2020 will host the meeting in 2021 and retain many of the same plans, etc. The awards will be sent to each county and those will be given at our upcoming rescheduled Spring Association meeting that will be announced in the near future.*

## Leader Lesson for April

I have prepared the lesson for April “Managing Stress” It is a very timely topic. Keep these 10 tips in mind when the news, cancellations and current affairs may agitate or stress you.

### 1. Exercise

Working out regularly is one of the best ways to relax your body and mind. Plus, exercise will improve your mood.

### 2. Relax Your Muscles

When you’re stressed, your muscles get tense. You can help loosen them up on your own and refresh your body by: Stretching, taking a hot bath or shower, or getting a good night’s sleep

### 3. Deep Breathing

Stopping and taking a few deep breaths can take the pressure off you right away. You’ll be surprised how much better you feel once you get good at it.

### 4. Eat Well

Eating a regular, well-balanced diet will help you feel better in general. It may also help control your moods.

### 5. Slow Down

Modern life is so busy, and sometimes we just need to slow down and chill out. Look at your life and find small ways you can do that.

### 6. Take a Break

You need to plan on some real downtime to give your mind time off from stress. Restful things you can do include: Meditation, Yoga, Tai chi. Prayer, listening to your favorite music or spending time in nature

### 7. Make Time for Hobbies

You need to set aside time for things you enjoy. Try to do something every day that makes you feel good, and it will help relieve your stress. It doesn’t have to be a ton of time -- even 15 to 20 minutes will do. Relaxing hobbies include things like: Reading, knitting, doing an art project, puzzles, a movie or playing cards and board games.

### 8. Talk About Your Problems

If things are bothering you, talking about them can help lower your stress. You can talk to family members, friends, a trusted clergyman, your doctor, or a therapist.

And you can also talk to yourself. It’s called self-talk and we all do it. But in order for self-talk to help reduce stress you need to make sure it’s positive and not negative.

### 9. Go Easy On Yourself

Accept that you can’t do things perfectly no matter how hard you try. You also can’t control everything in your life. So do yourself a favor and stop thinking you can do so much. And don’t forget to keep up your sense of humor. Laughter goes a long way towards making you feel relaxed.



## Relieve Stress Now

### 10. Eliminate Your Triggers

Figure out what are the biggest causes of stress in your life. Is it your job, your commute, your schoolwork? If you’re able to identify what they are, see if you’re able to eliminate them from your life, or at least reduce them.

**One more suggestion that I was going to share at the meeting-download the free app “Calm”. It has some very effective mindfulness activities for you. Listening to these once a day will help to calm and steady your mind. Don’t knock it till you try it.**



## What to Do About Your Retirement Account During a Financial Emergency

by *Cindy Clampet, Assistant Family Resource Management Specialist, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension*

If you have a retirement account either provided by your employer or funded by yourself (or both), you may be aware of a certain amount of loss in your account you have probably incurred recently because of market volatility due to the CoVID19 virus. Most retirement funds which have a lot of investment in the stock market are being affected by the CoVID19 virus causing an economic slow-down. There are several other reasons for the market volatility at this time, however.

It is important to know that the stock market volatility is actually a normal thing. There is usually a 10% market correction every year and a 15% correction every 3 years. In the past 10 years we have seen more “up” years in the stock market than “down”. These market corrections can cause a lot of anxiety and stress for people who watch the value of their accounts go down, but it is important to know this is normal. It is also important to not act emotionally. Rely on the advice of your financial advisor, not your friends or relatives.

Here are some general recommendations:

- 1) Stay invested. Pulling your money out will lead to loss.
- 2) Stay calm, don't panic. Remember that stock values go up and down.
- 3) Don't try to “time” the market. Regular and steady deposits give better returns.
- 4) Visit with your investment advisor if you have questions or concerns.

Some folks may be tempted to transfer their accounts into a cash fund or even to close out their account. This is not the recommended course of action for several reasons. 1) The stock market goes up and down—always. But the general trajectory is up. It may take several months for the trend to turn and stocks to return to their previous high, but they will, in time. 2) Cashing out a tax-deferred retirement account before the age of 59 ½ will incur penalties of 10% of the amount withdrawn, unless you qualify for one of the six hardship reasons which are listed on the [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) website. 3) Any funds withdrawn will be counted as income for tax purposes, so cashing out will cost a lot. 4) Also, cashing out or even transferring the funds to a money fund when the market is down will cause a loss since the money invested was

used to purchase shares at a higher price.

It is recommended that you have an emergency savings account equal to three to six months of your expenses. This is the time to use that account, if you have it, and to make a goal to start that account as soon as you can if you don't have one.

Continuing to invest in your retirement fund when the market is down can actually be to your benefit when the stock prices go back up because you've “bought low” and can later on take advantage of the growth. Being well diversified is always a good strategy, but even more so when there is a lot of market volatility.

If you have lost your income or it is greatly reduced you may not be able to continue to add to your account. You can ask your Human Resources department at your place of work what your options are to reduce or stop your contributions for a time. When the stock market stabilizes, or work hours increase or you go back to work, you can resume your contributions.

This is a fluid situation and the US government is working on increasing the availability of credit and changing some of the IRS rules, so be aware that some changes may take place. Continue to make loan and credit payments. If you are struggling to make loan or debt payments, contact the lender. There may be long telephone hold times or even a day or two for a call back but they can do more to help you if there is communication from you up front. The most important thing to remember is that investing for retirement is a long-term endeavor. Jumping in and out of a retirement plan will cost you a lot in the short and long term and should be avoided.



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# SIMPLE DISINFECTING SOLUTION

STILLWATER, Okla. – In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many people are rethinking how they disinfect the surfaces in their homes and workspaces.

Based on what currently is known about the novel coronavirus, it could remain viable on surfaces for hours or days, said Gina Peek, Oklahoma State University Extension housing and consumer specialist.

“Understandably, there has been a large demand for cleaning supplies and some shoppers are coming up empty handed at local stores,” Peek said. “It’s easy to make a simple disinfecting solution at home with just bleach and water. The diluted bleach solution can be used if appropriate for the surface for disinfecting purposes. Getting your home clean and disinfected doesn’t require commercially prepared or name-brand disinfecting products.”

To prepare a large amount of bleach solution, mix one-third cup of bleach per 1 gallon of water. To prepare a smaller amount, mix four teaspoons of bleach per quart of water. Do not use scented bleach, it will not disinfect. Peek warns consumers never to mix bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. For easy application of a bleach/water disinfecting solution, put the mixture in a spray bottle. If the bleach has been sitting on the shelf in the laundry room for longer than a year, buy a new bottle. Bleach naturally breaks down over time.

Peek said there is a difference in cleaning and disinfecting. Cleaning refers to the removal of germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces. It does not kill germs, but instead removes them, which lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfecting, on the other hand, refers to using chemicals on surfaces to kill germs. Peek said this process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove the germs, but kills the germs on a surface after cleaning in. This also helps to further lower the risk of spreading infection.

“Tables, doorknobs, countertops, light switches, handles, desks, faucets, sinks, toilet handles and toilet seats are high-touch surfaces in the home and office,” she said. “When cleaning and disinfecting, wear disposable gloves to protect your skin and discard after each cleaning. If surfaces are dirty, clean them first and then disinfect. Be sure to allow for proper ventilation.”

In addition, Peek reinforces the importance of people keeping their hands clean. She said to wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If that is not an option, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol, can be used.

Peek offers more information about making a bleach disinfecting solution in a video that can be viewed at <https://okla.st/2J9wMM5>. She also demonstrates the proper way to use hand sanitizer in this video that can be found online at <https://okla.st/3dic6h>.



# Shopping for food safely during coronavirus pandemic

By Trisha Gedon



STILLWATER, Okla. — Stocking up on essential groceries and other supplies as the COVID-19 virus threat spreads across the country will require consumers to

rely on their storm season preparedness skills, but for a longer period of time.

Undoubtedly, many Oklahomans have made the trek to the grocery store to get supplies, which is a good idea, said Barbara Brown, Oklahoma State University Extension food specialist.

“While most folks are stocked up for a several days, or even a couple of weeks, they will eventually have to go back to the store for more supplies,” Brown said. “Be sure to keep safety precautions in mind before venturing out of the house.”

Brown advises people to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before leaving the house. Obviously, people will come into contact with a lot of different surfaces while they shop, including shopping carts, credit card keypads and products others have touched. Shoppers may ask themselves if the fresh produce and other food items are safe.

“No washing method completely removes or kills all microbes which may be present on produce. However, studies have shown that thoroughly rinsing fresh produce under running water is an effective way to reduce the number of microorganisms,” she said. “Washing fruits and vegetables not only helps remove dirt, bacteria and stubborn garden pests, but also helps remove residual pesticides.”

Brown suggests waiting to wash produce until it is ready to be used. Washing produce before use may promote bacterial growth and speed up spoilage, so it is recommended to wait and wash fruits and vegetables right before using.

For those who may want to go ahead and wash the produce before storing, Brown said to be sure and dry thoroughly with clean paper towels.

Try to maintain social distancing as much as possi-

ble. Move away from people who are coughing, especially those who fall into a higher risk category. Wearing gloves while shopping is an extra layer of protection, too.

Once the groceries are bagged and people are ready to leave the store, take advantage of hand sanitizers or disinfecting wipes at the door if they are available. And, try not to touch your face. Once back at home, consumers should give their hands another thorough washing.

Brown said at this point there is no scientific evidence consumers need to wipe down all of the groceries when putting them away.

“This really is a matter of preference, and an extra measure of caution certainly won’t hurt anything,” she said. “But if items are going to be stored for a week or more before being used, there isn’t a need to wipe them down before storing.”

Another option for consumers in some areas is home delivery. There are several companies that offer this service, and it could be a very handy alternative, especially for those consumers who are at higher risk of becoming infected. Brown said the same safety precautions apply in that consumers should wash their hands thoroughly after accepting the home delivery.

Being vigilant about cleaning does not apply just to groceries. Be sure to regularly wipe down counter tops, faucets, doorknobs, cabinet pulls, refrigerator handles and toilet handles with sanitizing wipes, soap and water or a spray bleach solution.

“This whole scenario is new to us and information is changing every day,” Brown said. “Don’t be afraid to go to the store, but be sure to take all of these precautions to help ensure your health and safety.”



← Curbside

→ Delivery



# OHCE News & Notes

L. E. A. D.	<p><b>LEAD / Diabetic Class</b></p> <p><b>Class 2 will resume (tentatively) on May 15th. More information will be shared as received.</b></p>
Live well	
Eat well	
be Active	
with Diabetes	

**Garfield County OHCE High School Scholarship**

The deadline for the Scholarship has been moved to April 10. Please be sure that qualifying children and grandchildren of Garfield County OHCE members have to opportunity to apply. With schools closing transcripts and other documents may take a bit longer to get hold of. Each Group OHCE President has a copy of the application.



**Garfield County OHCE Board Meeting**  
On April 6th has been cancelled



Thanks for understanding

This is not anything that we anticipated would be happening. Hopefully this is just a small bump in the road as we move forward.



Thank You, Thank You,

**Leader Lesson for April Meeting**



I have prepared the lesson for April "Managing Stress" It is a very timely topic. Keep these 10 tips in mind when the news, cancellations and current affairs may agitate or stress you.

**Leader Lesson for May Meetings**



No lesson will be held in April for your May meetings. You have the choice of two topics "What is Normal Aging?" or "Active Listening for Effective Communication". Let us know which one you wish for your membership. Again if you choose not to meet that will be an individual group's choice.

The OHCE Spring Meeting has been cancelled. We will be looking at rescheduling.



**Barn Quilt**

The Barn Quilt workshop will be rescheduled. All of the registrations will move forward to the rescheduled dates which have not been set at this present time.



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**Joy Rhodes**  
Extension Educator, FCS/4-H Youth Dev.

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Garfield County Cooperative Extension Service  
 Oklahoma State University  
 316 E. Oxford  
 Enid, OK 73701

**GARFIELD COUNTY  
 EXTENSION**

## Dates to Remember



**GARFIELD COUNTY  
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### Events and Activities Originating from the OSU Extension Office Cancelled through April 30

The Garfield County OSU Extension office is closed to face to face traffic. In accordance with federal and state health department guidance, we are practicing social distancing. We are online, available by phone and responsive to Garfield County needs. We have set up a station in the foyer to transfer soil/water/hay samples and if you need materials, just call and we will be happy to leave them at this station.

