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A GANNETT COMPANY
Central Wisconsin Sunday

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ARE WE READY?

GOVERNMENT-MANDATED PLANS COULD SAVE LIVES
IN A DISASTER, BUT PUBLIC RARELY SEES DETAILS

SUNSHINE WEEK

By Doug Schneider | Gannett Wisconsin Media Investigative Team

A

fter a tornado devastated a small central Wisconsin city in 2011, it wasn't a government agency that built the online bridge connecting victims of the devastation with neighbors who could help.

It was a Facebook page launched by an ordinary citizen that helped bring crews of people to clean up the yards and replace the clothing of neighbors who had been blasted by the 130 mph twister that leveled at least 22 homes and damaged dozens of others in Merrill, north of Wausau.

"People had lost everything, and it wasn't like you could just ask public works to move some stuff—the government has too many hoops to jump through, too many requirements that say you have to have a board meeting before you can act," said Mike Grunenwald, a longtime Merrill businessman. "We needed dozens, maybe hundreds, of people just to do some of the cleanup."

COMING TOMORROW

Much of your local emergency plan is supposed to be public, but some counties needed weeks or longer to make their plans available. See how your county responded.

Police, fire and public works crews focused on the most acute needs and local nonprofits did their part, Grunenwald said, but local agencies didn't seem equipped to deal with the aftermath.

Citizens, meanwhile, had little idea what government agencies planned for cleanup and recovery. That's because few Wisconsin counties put their emergency response plans online or in places where the public can see them, even though governments spend thousands of hours and thousands of tax dollars preparing the plans.

A Gannett Wisconsin Media audit of emergency preparedness and response plans for the state found that officials generally meet the legal minimum to notify the public that the plans exist, but many do little else to educate the public about the plans. And the bar is set low: The requirement states simply that



The aftermath of the Oakfield tornado in 1996. GANNETT WISCONSIN MEDIA FILE PHOTO



Highway W, leading out of Brokaw to the west, was closed to traffic outside of emergency vehicles during a chlorine gas leak at the Wausau Paper mill in Brokaw in June 2008. GANNETT CENTRAL WISCONSIN MEDIA FILE PHOTO

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Stratford native could be pope

Burke considered a long-shot candidate as cardinals convene

By Liz Welter

Central Wisconsin Sunday

With the conclave to elect a new pope beginning Tuesday, Catholics around the world are speculating who might be chosen by the church's cardinals to succeed Pope Benedict XVI.

Of the 11 voting cardinals from the United States, six are from the Midwest, with two hailing from Wisconsin.

Stratford native Cardinal Raymond Burke is among the 115 cardinals preparing to cast ballots in the Sistine Chapel and remain in the Vatican until a

new pope is elected.

Among pope-watchers, Burke has been mentioned as a candidate. He might be a dark horse, but Burke is the best choice for pope, according to an Internet website maintained by a professor and dean at a Catholic college in Texas.

Taylor Marshall, a philosophy professor and dean of the College of Philosophy at the College of Saints John Fisher and

Thomas More, writes that Burke is the cardinal who as pope would be able to reform and restore the church to overcome deep divisions and deal with issues including pedophilia.

"The Cardinals will rally to a holy man who will prayerfully clean house and face down the evils, scandals and rumors," Marshall wrote, while

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Obituaries/2A

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Harlan Witt

Weather/8B

Today:
Dreary,
a bit of snow

High: 38 Low: 15



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