



Scene in Rice County

The many area lakes in Rice County are popular spots for ice fishing, attracting numerous ice houses and snowmobiles every winter.

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CodeRED System Launched October 1 Enables Targeted Emergency Calls to Homes, Businesses, Cell Phones, as Well as E-mail Alerts

On October 1, Rice and Steele counties, along with the cities of Northfield, Faribault and Owatonna, launched a “reverse 9-1-1” notification system for use during emergencies. Called CodeRED, the system gives officials the ability to deliver recorded emergency telephone messages to a city block, a city, a township, or an entire county at a rate of up to 1,000 calls per minute.

The high-speed telephone emergency notification service will be used in situations that can affect people’s safety or health, from relaying information about hazardous materials spills that require evacuations to coordinating efforts to find missing persons. It will also be utilized to call out volunteer and government response groups such as Skywarn volunteers, the Dive Team, and SWAT.

Law enforcement agencies have authority to activate the system, as do county and local emergency management directors and public health officials. “Rice County expects to use CodeRED sparingly,” noted Sheriff Richard Cook. “We respect people’s privacy, and we

are allotted only a certain number of minutes of usage each year. When we do use the system, though, the results promise to be significant. We’ll be able to do things like give evacuation instructions to everyone in the area of a flood or chemical spill or alert a specific neighborhood when someone with Alzheimer’s goes missing.”

CodeRED could be beneficial in fighting crime as well, he said, enabling police to notify neighborhoods about a string of burglaries or other criminal activity in their vicinity, for instance, or advising people to be on the alert for an escaped prisoner.

Each of the entities involved will pay \$3,000 a year for the service. Funds are already designated for this purpose, said Cook, so the switch isn’t costing the county additional money. The CodeRED system replaces CityWatch, a program Rice and Steele counties used for five years at a cost of \$5,000 a year. The CityWatch program was

[See CodeRED, page 3](#)

“Take It to the Box” Medication Disposal Program Receives More Than 300 Pounds of Drugs in First Months of Operation

The coordinators of “Take It to the Box,” the Rice County medication safety program launched on September 22, 2009, to promote the safe use, storage and disposal of medication, have been surprised – pleasantly so – with its results so far. According to Rice County’s Chemical Health Coalition, in the first three months, people have deposited more than 300 pounds of drugs, both non-hazardous and those controlled by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), into secure drop-off boxes at the Faribault and Northfield Police Departments.

The disposal program keeps unused and expired medications from polluting local

water systems and keeps them out of the hands of those who may abuse them. Judging from the initial response, it is clear that people have been waiting for a program like this. Among the medications that have been deposited are opiates like vicodin, hydrocodone and oxycodone, as well as warfarin, xanax and steroids.

“This program has been a huge success,” said Chief Deputy Bob Sletten. “I would encourage everyone to check their medicine cabinets and dispose of medications they are no longer using or that are outdated.”

[See Medication Disposal Program, page 2](#)

On the Web

A Matter of Record

Are you curious about what Rice County commissioners consider at their bi-weekly Board meetings? Find out about upcoming discussions by reading the latest agenda, available online at www.co.rice.mn.us/board/agenda.php. Or review the minutes of past meetings at www.co.rice.mn.us/board/minutes.php.

Items the commissioners have acted on in the last six months include:

- Approving contract renewals with area foster care facilities.
- Approving malt liquor license renewals, temporary 3.2% malt liquor license applications, tobacco license applications, and lawful gambling application for exempt permits.
- Approving agreements with various parties to provide Somali, Nur and Spanish language interpreting.
- Approving an agreement with Minnesota Real Estate Publishing Group to assist with the development of a comprehensive marketing plan and brochure for Rice County.
- Approving the resolution awarding the sale of \$15,000,000 in general obligation capital improvement bonds, series 2009; fixing their form and specifications; directing their execution and delivery; and providing for their payment.
- Approving 2010 outside agency funding totaling \$662,414 to several agencies.
- Adopting speed zone study requests on CSAH 1 between TH 246 and TH 3 and between Prairie Street and Jefferson Parkway in Northfield.
- Approving the payment of county bills.

Rice County Public Health Director Receives Statewide Leadership Award

In November, the Local Public Health Association of Minnesota (LPHA) honored Rice County Public Health Director Mary Ho for leadership in public health nursing at the state and local levels by presenting her with the 2009 Barbara O'Grady Excellence in Public Health Nursing Leadership Award.

Ho was nominated for the award by the Rice County Board of Commissioners, Rice County department heads, her staff and community partners. Commissioner Galen Malecha, chair of the Board of Commissioners, called her "a great leader and resource person for Rice County citizens and organizations. Mary is a dedicated public servant who deserves this recognition."

"Mary is known throughout the state as a collaborative leader who is committed to the health of her local community and people throughout Minnesota," said Julie Ring, LPHA director.

"Mary's many years of public health service are framed by a highly analytical perspective, a deep caring for the people of her community, and the ability to track and inform good public health policy," added Olmsted County Public Health Director Mary Wellik. "Minnesota has benefited greatly by Mary's commitment to her productive and successful public health career."

The Barbara O'Grady Excellence in Public Health Nursing Leadership Award was estab-



The 2009 Barbara O'Grady Excellence in Public Health Nursing Leadership Award was awarded to Mary Ho, Rice County public health director, on November 3, 2009. Mary is pictured here, on the right, with Barbara O'Grady, after whom the award was named. (Photo used with permission of the Local Public Health Association.)

lished in 1991 to recognize and honor public health nurses working in management or education settings in Minnesota for outstanding leadership and contributions to public health. It honors the retired director of the Ramsey County Public Health Nursing Service. The final selection committee includes representatives from state and local public health departments and the University of Minnesota.

Medication Disposal Program is Working

Continued from page 1

"Initially, we thought people would drop off just a few medications at a time," said Mary F. Nelson, Rice County coordinator for Take It to the Box. "But many are bringing in a bag or more. Rice County residents really get it! Proper medication disposal is critically important for the health and safety of us all."

Prescription and over-the-counter medications and other drugs may be dropped off, no questions asked, in the boxes in the lobbies of the Faribault Police Department, 25 Fourth Street NW, and the Northfield Safety Center, 300 Fifth Street. Both are open 24 hours a day.

The drop boxes are emptied regularly by police officers, and their contents placed under lock and key. Several times a year the



medicines are sorted. Non-hazardous medications are sent to a facility in Port Arthur, Texas, for incineration, and DEA-controlled medications are taken to a toxic waste incinerator in Sauget, Ill.

For more information about the program and guidelines on what may be deposited and how it should be packaged, see the July 2009 issue of the Rice County newsletter (available online at www.co.rice.mn.us/newsletter/index.php) or go to the Take It to the Box web site (<http://ricecountyhc.com/take-it-to-the-box-medication-disposal/>). Information is also available in the lobby area of the Rice County Law Enforcement Center and at many area pharmacies.

The CodeRED System: Targeted Emergency Calls and E-mail Alerts

Continued from page 1

rarely used, said Cook, because it was “technically cumbersome.” CodeRED, on the other hand, “[has] been tried and true in places throughout Minnesota,” including St. Paul, Edina and Winona County.

“This is a Test”

One of the reasons the CodeRED system was selected is that it gives individuals and businesses the ability to add their own phone numbers and e-mail addresses directly into the system’s database.

In a countywide test planned for early January, CodeRED will phone the numbers in its database. (At this point, these are primarily the landline numbers contained in public “white pages” directories, though county residents are beginning to add alternative phone numbers.) The exercise is designed to introduce residents to the way the CodeRED system operates and help users determine the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information it currently contains.

If you are not home when the notification goes out, the system will deliver messages to voicemail and answering machines. Caller ID will provide a phone number (866-419-5000) that you can call to have the message repeated.

What if you have an unlisted number? Or if you use a cell phone as your primary phone or receive your phone service over the Internet? What if you run a business and want to be able to alert your employees about emergencies?

“Systems like CodeRED are only as good as the database supporting them,” cautioned Rice County Emergency Management Director Jennifer Hauer-Schmitz. “If your contact information is not in the database, you will not be notified.”

To make sure you receive alerts, Hauer-Schmitz said, you should log onto the Rice County web site and click on the CodeRED logo. (The link there will take you to this URL: <https://login.coderedweb.com/codereddataentry/Default.aspx?groupid=NvzkMKitwYGcgKJs1pS%2fZw%3d%3d>.) “When you get to the Rice and Steele 911 Center, Minn., Community Notification Enrollment page, click on Residential Data Collection or Switch to Business Data and fill in the basic information that is requested – first and last name, street address (we need to have an associated street address in order to



provide relevant messages), city, state and zip code – and then indicate the ways you’d like to be notified.”

Customizing Your Contact Information

Individuals can be registered at only one address (home or work, for instance), but multiple individuals and multiple phone numbers and e-mail addresses can be connected to a single address, enabling CodeRED to contact every member of a household who wants to be notified. You can get calls on your cell phone as well as your landline, if you prefer, and ask to receive e-mail alerts or text messages (enter your phone number + your carrier’s text messaging portion of the address, e.g., 5073325555@sprintmessaging.com). The system can also be set to send text alerts to the TDY/TDD equipment used by the hard of hearing.

While the system works well for most phones, the use of special downloaded ringtones on cell phones may prevent an emergency call from reaching that phone, as well as automated telephone systems that require callers to press a key, e.g., “For account information, press 1.” Businesses should have CodeRED notifications sent to a direct dial number.

No one should automatically assume

his or her phone number is included in the database, said Hauer-Schmitz. All businesses should register, she said, as well as the following:

- individuals with an unlisted phone number
- people who have changed their phone number or address within the last year
- people who have recently moved, but kept the same listed or unlisted phone number
- those who use a cellular phone as their primary phone.

If you do not have access to a computer with Internet capability, you can go to a public library to access the government web site, or ask a friend or family member with Internet access to add your information to the system for you.

For more information, visit the Rice County web site or call your local law enforcement agency or emergency management director.

What CodeRED Will Not Be Used For: Severe Weather Situations

While CodeRED can notify neighborhoods and communities quickly, it will **not** replace the tornado sirens and the Emergency Alert System currently used in Rice and Steele counties. Citizens should continue to stay tuned to local television and radio stations for the most up-to-date information to keep safe during severe weather.



In the event of another incident like this March 2008 train derailment in Northfield, CodeRED could be used to quickly notify neighborhood residents about evacuation needs and details.

Did You Know?

Prescription Card Continues to Save Money for Uninsured/Underinsured Rice County Residents

\$100,666.26. That is how much county residents have saved on prescriptions since 2005 when Rice County began participating in a prescription drug card program offered by the National Association of Counties.

The Rice County RX Card is available at the Rice County Government Services Building in Faribault and the Northfield Office in City Hall. Everyone is eligible, regardless of age or income status. The card is free. And it is easy to use: simply present it at a participating pharmacy. There is no enrollment form, no membership fee, and no limit on how often the card can be used. Cardholders and their family members may use the card any time their prescriptions are not covered by insurance.

Every pharmacy in Rice County honors the NACo prescription discount card. The discount doesn't apply to most over-the-counter products and non-prescription drugs, but it is available for many diabetic supplies.

The program is not a form of insurance, and it cannot be used in conjunction with insurance programs. It can, however, be used when a prescription is not covered by insurance. It therefore can be of great assistance to those who are uninsured and underinsured – more than 15 percent of the county's 60,000 residents, according to Rice County Administrator Gary Weiers – and it costs the county nothing, thanks to the agreement struck by NACo with Caremark, a leading pharmaceutical services company.

Arrive Alive: Drive in Accordance With Road and Weather Conditions

The Highway Department dispatches plows to maintain county roadways when it is safe to do so and resources allow and when one or more of the following conditions occur:

- There is a snow accumulation of two inches or more (less in the case of heavy, wet snow).
- Drifting snow interferes with travel.
- Icy conditions seriously affect travel.

The county engineer, the maintenance director or their designee make the decision to plow or sand county roads (or portions) – and with halting operations when conditions are deemed too hazardous to continue. Unlike MN-DOT which has the capacity to plow 24 hours a day, the Rice County Highway Department runs just one shift a day, usually during daylight hours.

While the department strives to provide

Rice County travelers with the safest winter driving possible, motorists are reminded that the law requires them to drive **according to conditions**, which often means driving at speeds much lower than posted speed limits – the speed at which it is legal to drive in optimum conditions.

Snow and ice removal is a difficult, often dangerous and time-consuming job. Help us help you by removing vehicles from streets when it snows, staying off roads until they have been plowed, keeping a healthy distance from maintenance equipment when driving, and not plowing snow from private drives onto county roads.

For more on county snow and ice control policies, visit www.co.rice.mn.us/highway/snow.php.

Rice County Public Health Providing Mini-Grants for Health-Related Projects

Rice County Public Health is making mini-grants available for projects and initiatives related to nutrition, physical activity and tobacco cessation. Funding is made possible by a Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) grant from the Minnesota Department of Health. Proposed projects must occur in one of four areas: schools, worksites, health care or the community.

Proposals must incorporate new policies, systems or environmental changes that support safe and healthy lifestyles. People with projects related to worksite wellness, community gardening, safe routes to school or non-motorized

transportation (i.e. walking and biking) are strongly encouraged to apply. Funding is not available for capital improvement projects or one-time educational programs.

For a Rice County Public Health SHIP mini-grant application or to discuss your project idea, please contact Natalie Ginter, Rice County SHIP coordinator, at 507-332-5921 or by e-mail at nginter@co.rice.mn.us.

For more information about the Statewide Health Improvement Program, please visit the Minnesota Department of Health web site at www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/ship/.

For Smooth Traveling, Apply for/Renew Passport Now

Reminder: There are now **two** places for Rice County residents to submit passport applications. The Recorder's Office in the Government Services Building in Faribault (320 NW Third Street) is open 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m. A satellite office at Northfield City Hall (801 Washington Street) is open on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, 8–10:30 a.m. and 7–8 a.m. by appointment (call 645-9576 and ask for the Recorder's Office to schedule).

Passports issued to those 16 or older are good for ten years and to those 15 and under

for five years. If possible, you should renew your passport approximately nine months before it expires. Some countries require that your passport be valid at least six months beyond the dates of your trip.

For complete information on applying for, renewing or replacing a passport or correcting information on one, see www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

Never destroy or mutilate a federal passport – it is federal proof that you are a citizen of the United States.

County Profile



Laurie Markman
Financial Worker,
Rice County Social Services

As a financial worker for Rice County Social Services, Laurie Markman is responsible for administering public assistance programs to elderly and disabled households. The work she does helps people receive home care services. This allows them to remain in their homes rather than being placed in more expensive facilities, thereby conserving tax dollars that are scarce in this economy.

The technology has changed since 1981, when she came to work for the county, but the reward she feels in being able to help people who are experiencing tough times hasn't.

"When I first started working for Rice County," says Markman, "food stamps were still issued in coupon form. The coupons were stored in a vault at a local bank. I transported them to the county office and issued them by hand to each household who received benefits. Benefits are now issued electronically."

Born and raised in Faribault, Markman earned an associate's degree from Mankato State University after graduating from Faribault High School. She and husband Scott have two children, Alex, 20, a junior at Bemidji State University, and Samantha, 15, a sophomore at Faribault High School. Her interests include walking, shopping, and socializing with other parents at sporting events.

Single-Stream Recycling Program Contributing to Significant Decrease in Landfill Usage

They noticed a change at the county landfill almost as soon as Rice County introduced its single-stream recycling program in August 2008. Compared with the same period in 2007, the volume of material brought to the facility by licensed haulers in September, October and November dropped by more than 661 tons. Waste dumped by the public decreased during the period, too, totaling 231 tons less than a year earlier.

While some of the change could be attributed to the economic crisis that spiked about the same time, Solid Waste Director Mike Cook said that in his experience, the effect of the economy on waste generally takes several months to appear. More proof, he knew, would be offered when they had a full year of data to analyze.

The figures are in, and they indicate that single-stream recycling is contributing to a significant decrease in landfill use:

- 43,300 tons of waste were hauled to the county by licensed haulers and the public from August 1, 2007, to July 31, 2008.
- 40,796 tons (2,504 tons less) were deposited by the same sources from August 1, 2008, to July 31, 2009.
- Even more significantly, during the same period, recycling tonnage increased by 315 percent – swelling from 1,866 tons to 5,880 tons, 4,000 tons more than was collected in the preceding 12-month period. "Rice County residents should all be proud," Cook said, "of the contribution they are making to reducing our dependence on landfilling waste."

Conservation Tree Seedlings and Shrubs for Sale

The Rice Soil and Water Conservation District, 1810 NW 30th Street in Faribault, is once again taking orders for its annual tree sale. The district sells a wide variety of tree seedlings and shrubs (in quantities of 25, 50, etc.) to be used for conservation purposes only, such as windbreaks and wildlife plantings. The selection includes conifers (Eastern red cedar and Norway pine, among many others), deciduous trees (including quaking aspen, river birch, sugar maple) and shrubs (cranberrybush, common purple lilac, hazelnut and others). Orders are taken on a first-come, first-served basis with trees

arriving in April. For an order form or free help with a tree planting, call the district office at 507-332-5408 or visit www.riceswcd.org.



New for 2010 – Princeton American elm! The Princeton elm is a true American elm, not a hybrid, and is resistant to Dutch elm disease. It has now been reproduced in large enough numbers to begin re-populating our forests and streets with this majestic tree. Order your bare-root seedling elms early to make sure you are able to get them!

Officials Developing Online Survey to Solicit Public Input on All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

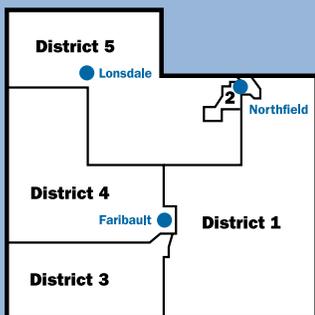
Rice County Emergency Management and Rice County Planning officials are in the process of developing a multi-jurisdictional All-Hazard Mitigation Plan to reduce or eliminate the loss of life and property damage resulting from natural hazards, such as floods and tornados, and human-caused hazards, such as infectious disease outbreaks.

As part of the process, they are developing an online survey to solicit public opinion about hazards facing the county. To provide

your feedback on the subject, go to www.co.rice.mn.us/planning and look for "All-Hazard Mitigation" under Hot Topics.

After officials identify potential risks, they will ascertain critical response facilities, establish countywide understanding of the issues, develop goals and objectives to address critical issues, encourage cooperation to tackle these issues, and seek funding to address the solutions identified.

Contacts



Rice County Board of Commissioners (as of January 1, 2009)

District 1

Jake Gillen
507-334-5746
jgillen@co.rice.mn.us

District 2

Galen Malecha
507-645-6041
gmalecha@co.rice.mn.us

District 3

Milt Plaisance
507-334-7612
mplaisance@co.rice.mn.us

District 4

Steve Bauer
507-334-9700
sbauer@co.rice.mn.us

District 5

Jeff Docken
952-652-2876
jdocken@co.rice.mn.us

Phone Numbers

General Information 507-332-6100
Toll-Free Numbers (*do not dial "1" or area code*)
 From Northfield 645-9576
 From Lonsdale 744-5185

Rice County Standing Meetings

Board of Commissioners

Meets the first and third Tuesdays of each month as a Committee of the Whole/Work Session, 8:30 a.m., Commissioners' Room, Rice County Government Services Building.

Meets the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month as a Regular Board, 8:30 a.m., Commissioners' Room, Rice County Government Services Building.

Planning Commission

Meets the first and third Thursdays of the month, 7:30 p.m., Commissioners' Room, Rice County Government Services Building.

Board of Adjustment

Meets the second and fourth Mondays of the month; 7:00 p.m., Commissioners' Room, Rice County Government Services Building.

Community Corrections Advisory Board

Meets the third Thursday of even-numbered months (February, April, June, August, October, December), 3:30 p.m., Rice County Government Services Building.

Community Health Services Citizens' Advisory Committee

Meets the fourth Wednesday every other month (January, March, May, July, September, November), 6:30–8:00 p.m.; call 507-332-6111 for location.

Emergency Medical Services Provider Council

Meets quarterly, 7:00–9:00 p.m.; call 507-332-6119 for meeting date and location.

Mental Health Advisory Council

Meets the fourth Wednesday of the month, 12:00 p.m. (noon), Friendship House, located at 212-B Central Avenue, Faribault.

Rice County Departments

Administrator	Gary Weiers 507-332-6101 gweiers@co.rice.mn.us
Assessor	Paul Knutson 507-332-6102 pknutson@co.rice.mn.us
Attorney	Paul Beaumaster 507-332-6103 pbeaumaster@co.rice.mn.us
Auditor/Treasurer	Fran Windschitl 507-332-6104 fwindschitl@co.rice.mn.us
Community Corrections Director	James Haas 507-332-6106 jhaas@co.rice.mn.us
Court Administrator	Robert Langer 507-332-6107 robert.langer@courts.state.mn.us
Economic Development Director	Deanna Kuennen 507-332-6126 dkuennen@co.rice.mn.us
Extension Educator	Brad Carlson 507-332-6109 bcarlson@umn.edu
Highway Engineer	Dennis Luebbe 507-332-6110 dluebbe@co.rice.mn.us
Human Resource Manager	Kerie Anderka 507-332-6123 kanderka@co.rice.mn.us
Information Technology Director	Sherry Hiller 507-332-5968 shiller@co.rice.mn.us
Parks/Facilities Director	Joe McGough 507-332-6105 jmccough@co.rice.mn.us
Planning & Zoning Director	Julie Runkel 507-332-6113 jrunkel@co.rice.mn.us
Public Health & CHS Director	Mary Ho 507-332-6111 mho@co.rice.mn.us
Recorder	Marsha DeGroot 507-332-6114 mdegroot@co.rice.mn.us
Sheriff	Richard Cook 507-332-6010 rescook@co.rice.mn.us
Social Services Director	Mark Shaw 507-332-6115 mshaw@co.rice.mn.us
Solid Waste Director	Michael Cook 507-332-6833 mcook@co.rice.mn.us
Veterans' Service Officer	Tracy McBroom 507-332-6176 trmcbbroom@co.rice.mn.us