

# OUR TOWNS Hartington

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## Emergency Preparedness Class To Ready Schools For Incidents

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HARTINGTON, Neb. — Emergency preparedness is important for every school, and part of that readiness is the ability to coordinate the efforts of the school with those of local authorities.

For this reason, the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium will host a free course entitled "AWR Crisis Management for School-Based Incidents: Partnering Rural Law Enforcement and the Local School Systems."

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS)-certified course will be held from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Wednesday, April 14, at the Hartington City Auditorium in Hartington, Neb. It will be open for all school administrators, rural law enforcement officers and other emergency responders.

"It's supposed to be an eight-hour course designed to educate rural law enforcement, as well as administrators and staff, on elements that would allow effective response to school-based emergencies," explained Hartington High School Principal Russell Flamig. "So, some of the things we do and some of the things we don't know. So, it's something to help us on our safety procedures."

The course will help prepare officials for "any crisis that might happen with the school," Flamig said.

Cedar County Emergency Manager Kevin Garvin said, "It covers the gambit from school terrorism to domestic violence to school security issues."

The instructor-led course was developed by the Ohio-based University of Findlay, and will guide law enforcement and school personnel through effective collaborative planning, preparedness, communication and coordination of resources.

The key elements of the course include an introduction to incident planning and preparedness, proactive threat mitigation, incident response, incident recovery, vulnerability assessments, threat assessment management, incident defusing and debriefing, and parent reunification.

Garvin — who has taken the

course once before — said it can help school districts to develop their emergency management programs, or simply refine them.

"It depends on the school," he said. "Some schools have stuff in place for (emergency management) and some don't. It kind of gets everybody on the same page, giving the schools an opportunity to work with law enforcement."

Hartington Public Schools has taken part in similar programs when they were offered, Flamig said.

"The school is usually involved in an area-based crisis program if we have a major crisis here in the country (that discusses) where do we ship the kids and what do we do with the kids (if the school

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KEVIN GARVIN

needs to be evacuated)," he said.

The school holds regular meetings covering general safety issues, as well.

"We host a monthly safety/crisis meeting with the school and talk about things in school, what's safe for the

school, what's going on, if we have a fire drill or tornado drill, those kinds of things. We need to talk about what's coming up so we can plan it," Flamig said.

Garvin said the majority of area law enforcement agencies and schools have already registered for the course, with only one Cedar County school unaccounted for as of Friday afternoon.

"We've got law enforcement from surrounding counties, too," he said.

Registration is open until the end of March. To see if space is still available for the course, visit [www.ruraltraining.org/view/upcoming-courses](http://www.ruraltraining.org/view/upcoming-courses).

Garvin said school districts and law enforcement agencies can both learn a lot by attending the course.

"When I went to it in South Sioux City when they first brought it into Nebraska earlier this year, it was good," he said. "The (course showed) things they need to be doing from a Department of Education standpoint, and law enforcement enlightened the schools as to ... procedural things we'd have to do. There was some good sharing."

According to its mission statement, the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium is "a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency Training and

Exercises Integration Division partnership of academic institutions with a vision of creating an environment wherein rural communities nationwide will have the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to enhance the safety, security and quality of life for their citizens."

Current members of the

Consortium include East Tennessee State University, Eastern Kentucky University, the University of Findlay, Iowa Central Community College, NorthWest Arkansas Community College and North Carolina Central University.

For further information, visit the Consortium Web site at [www.ruraltraining.org](http://www.ruraltraining.org).



TRAVIS GULBRANDSON/P&D

Hartington High School Principal Russell Flamig said a course to be held next month — and which will be sponsored by the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium — will help faculty and local safety officials to be ready for "any crisis that might happen with the school."

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