

Sorry, Zombies, We Are Ready

By Jenny Sokol For The Orange County Register

<http://www.ocregister.com/articles/ready-260061-ocprint-navy-kids.html>

I clicked through the Ready Navy Kids website with a sinking feeling. In one photo, a child in Navy camouflage held his "Bug Out" evacuation backpack. In another, Navy kids held maps of their homes identifying the location of fire extinguishers and exits. Family communication plans and contact cards were available to print and fill out for safekeeping.

Sweet fancy Moses. I pictured my Marine kids trying to operate a hand-crank radio and cringed. I imagined having to knock on the door of a Ready Navy Family to borrow Band-Aids and toilet paper in the event of an emergency.

Additionally, I felt queasy about the name of the October Ready Navy Kids contest: the Zombie Escape Plan. In an email to the program coordinator, I articulated that the public would appreciate a heads-up regarding an impending zombie apocalypse. I also suggested that the Ready Navy Kids should challenge Marine kids to see who could make the most comprehensive escape plan. I insinuated that it would be the zombies who would need to escape from the Marine kids. I have issues.

Jeff Sanford, whose title includes five capital letters and two numbers, and who hails from a cubicle identified by a seven-digit code, responded on behalf of the program. "Unfortunately," he wrote, "a zombie invasion is one of those hazards that may come with little to no advance notice. If families take steps to prepare now, they'll be ready if the time ever comes."

Sanford added that involving kids in disaster and emergency preparedness helps ease their worries and settles their worst-case-scenario imaginations.

Read between the lines people. The zombies are inbound. I will be ready.

I rallied my troops and repeated the phrase I learned online. "Be Ready Navy! I am. Are you?" I produced the worksheets and informed my family that we would be assembling a portable emergency kit as well as preparing for a possible flood, power outage, dirty bomb or zombie invasion. Hubby left the room immediately.

"Zombie invasion?" my son repeated.

"Yep. The Navy kids are ready for one." I reminded him that we've been through our fair share of emergencies - hiding in a sports store sales rack during a tornado in Kansas, evacuating before a hurricane in North Carolina, and listening to tsunami sirens from our concrete quarters in Japan.

"Stop stressing us out, Mom," my daughter said, also leaving the room. Only my worrier remained.

My son and I made a map of the house, discussing how to use a fire extinguisher and how he should lower himself out of his bedroom window in the event of a fire.

We elected to meet at Zach's house should ours be obliterated by a UFO laser blast.

Choosing Grammie's house as our non-neighborhood meeting place seemed reasonable, even though we might have to hitchhike with a trucker or borrow a tank or horse to get there. (Uber-prepared Grammie owns a hand-crank television. It requires 40 batteries.)

"When children are included in the planning process," Sanford wrote, "it empowers them and helps them to know where they should go, what they should do, and what they should take in an emergency." I agree.

We accepted the challenge, Navy friends, and we are (nearly) ready.