



Quotes, Notes & Anecdotes

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National Preparedness Month Encourages Involvement in Planning Ahead for Disasters

National Preparedness Month is observed every September to remind individuals, families, and communities to prepare for natural disasters. ReadyWV is an official emergency preparedness and disaster outreach program managed by Volunteer



West Virginia. The organization encourages citizens to be prepared this month and throughout the year.

This year's National Preparedness Month theme is "Get Involved in Disaster Preparedness and Relief."

The American Red Cross and ReadyWV encourage us to "be the neighbor who shows up when it matters most."

Neighbors helping neighbors is nothing new in West Virginia. That help was most recently seen following the flooding in Lewis and Upshur counties. No matter the scale of the disaster, West Virginians step up to help each other.

Getting involved means working with your neighbors, local nonprofits, and national organizations. Exchange contact information with your neighbors and create a phone tree for smoother and quicker communication. Be sure to support vulnerable neighbors (elderly or disabled) during storms and power outages.

Other ideas for getting involved include joining and helping organizations like the American Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, local food pantries, and community centers.

ReadyWV offers three basic steps everyone can take to be prepared for emergencies—be informed, make a plan, and build a kit.

Be Informed - It's important to become familiar with

the different types of hazards that are likely to impact your community or neighborhood. Follow local news and official alerts and warnings. Learn what to do before, during and after specific types of disasters by downloading *Hazard Specific Fact Sheets*.

Make a Plan - Before a disaster strikes, talk with your family about what you will do in case of an emergency. How will you contact each other? Do you have your family's important contact information (like work, school, medical) stored in your phone or in a document? How will you reconnect if separated during a disaster? Do you have a designated meeting place? Get started by filling out *ReadyWV's Family Emergency Plan*. When making your emergency plans, also consider your pets, those with special needs and a caregiver's considerations.

Build a Kit - When a natural or manmade disaster strikes, you may not have enough time to get prepared, find emergency contact information, and gather important documents or basic emergency supplies, like medicines, food and water, especially if you must evacuate quickly. To be ready for any type of emergency, it is important that you prepare ahead of time. Start by gathering and storing supplies that you might need. Copy important documents such as home and medical insurance policies, medical information, credit card, bank accounts, and other financial documents. Store hard copies in a water/fireproof safe and store a digital copy in the cloud. Learn more about *Safeguarding Critical Documents and Valuables*.

Learn more and download the Personal Prep Starter Kit at Ready.WV.gov or sign up to help at Ready.WV.gov/Volunteer.

**SNEAK
PEEK**

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New Sugar Maple Tree Planted to Honor George Washington, Woman's Club



Members of the West Virginia Woman's Club of Charleston were in attendance to witness the planting of the tree.

A sugar maple tree with special meaning was planted recently on the east side of the Capitol along California Avenue.

The tree replaces an oak tree that was planted there in 1932 by the West Virginia Woman's Club of Charleston in commemoration of the bicentennial of George Washington's birthday. The oak had to be removed in May because of structural defects and disease, according to the General Services Division (GSD). Its removal and replacement were approved by the Capitol Building Commission (CBC).

A few members of the Woman's Club were on hand to witness the planting of the sugar maple.

"As there were no backhoes in 1932, I wondered whether the original tree was planted using only shovels," said Trudy Oliver, first vice president of the Woman's Club. "I thought of the women who were present then, how they must have been dressed in hats, patterned dresses, and gloves, and whether the weather was sunny like it was when we watched the replacement tree being planted."

The CBC approved a plaque design that will be placed near the sugar maple. It pays tribute to the original tree and the Woman's Club.

The sugar maple was declared the state tree in 1949 and can be found in all 55 counties.

WVSASP Acquires Street Sweeper for Flood Cleanup

Following recent flooding that left debris and mud across local roads, the West Virginia State Agency for Surplus Property (WVSASP) has successfully acquired a street sweeper for the city of Weston through the Federal Surplus Property Program.

Sourced from the Department of Veterans Affairs in the state of Iowa, the donation was made possible through the Federal Surplus Personal Property Donation Program, which is administered nationally by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) and managed statewide by WVSASP. The program enables state agencies and eligible local public entities to obtain surplus federal property, providing critical equipment during emergency recoveries while saving taxpayers significant money.

"When natural disasters hit our communities, timing and resources are everything," said Jessica Burns-McDonnell, manager of the West Virginia State Agency for Surplus Property. "Our team worked quickly through the Federal Surplus Property Program

to locate and secure this street sweeper from Iowa. By leveraging federal surplus assets, we will be able to get heavy equipment directly into the hands of Weston's public works team quickly and at a fraction of the cost, helping accelerate their flood cleanup efforts."

The Federal Surplus Property Program allows public agencies, municipalities, and qualifying nonprofit organizations to acquire land, vehicles, heavy machinery, office equipment, and supplies retired by federal agencies. By repurposing these items, the program delivers substantial operational cost savings for state and local governments.

To learn more about how state agencies and public organizations can acquire surplus federal personal property, visit the U.S. General Services Administration website or contact the West Virginia State Agency for Surplus Property.



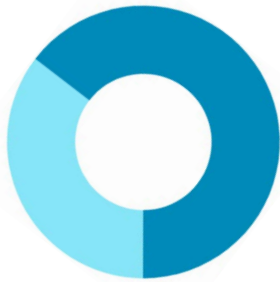
Top: Historic flooding in Weston, West Virginia, in July 2026.

Bottom: Street sweeper acquired from Department of Veterans Affairs in Iowa.

August Question of the Month Responses

Last month, we asked Department of Administration employees “Would You Rather? Ocean or Pool? Popsicle or Ice Cream? Mountains or Beach? Road Trip or Flight? BBQ or Picnic? Sunglasses or

Crocs?” Below are some of the answers we’ve received. [Click here](#) to see a complete list of responses.



● Pool 35% ● Ocean 64%



● Mountains 35% ● Beach 65%



● Picnic 43% ● BBQ 57%



● Popsicle 10% ● Ice Cream 90%



● Flight 30% ● Road Trip 70%



● Crocs 12% ● Sunglasses 88%

Fitness Made Simple with New Sworkit Health App

Whether you’re stepping into fitness for the first time or looking to elevate your routine, **Sworkit** makes staying active simple, flexible, and fun.

Why Use Sworkit?

- **1,000+ On-Demand Workouts:**
From quick 5-minute stretches to full-body sessions.
- **Guided Video Demos:**
Follow clear, expert-led demonstrations for every exercise.
- **Unlimited Customization:**
Tailor routines to match your schedule, equipment, and goals.

Ready to build healthy habits that last? **Download Sworkit** today to claim your employee access and start your personalized plan!



Scan the QR code to access the “Your Guide to Sworkit” video to learn more.



New Leadership, Location for Fleet Management Division



Jessica Burns-McDonnell,
Director of Fleet Management and Surplus Property

The Fleet Management Division (FMD) has both a new director and a new place to call home.

Jessica Burns-McDonnell assumed the responsibilities of director of FMD on Aug. 11, 2026. She will also continue to serve as manager of the West Virginia State Agency for Surplus Property.

FMD has also moved into Building 15 on the Capitol Campus, sharing space with the Purchasing Division.

Questions can be directed to 1-855-817-1910 or Fleet@wv.gov.

Enjoy Leaf Peeping Throughout Fall in Almost Heaven



One of the more unique features of West Virginia is its wide range of elevation. Depending on your destination, you could be either a few hundred feet or a few thousand feet above sea level. This provides visitors the opportunity to enjoy fall leaf peeping for nearly an entire month throughout the Mountain State. Outdoor recreation, family festivities, and unique stays are all filled with fall foliage. Plan your fall getaway around peak conditions for an Almost Heaven experience like no other.

Late September/Early October

Autumn air first finds its way to the higher elevations of West Virginia, bringing fall color to much of the Potomac Highlands in late September. Iconic destinations like Blackwater Falls State Park, Canaan Valley Resort State Park, Seneca Rocks, Dolly Sods Wilderness, Spruce Knob, and Snowshoe Mountain are all perfect for viewing vibrant hues as they spread through the trees of the West Virginia mountains.

Fall finds its way soon after to Mountaineer Country and to parts of the Greenbrier Valley. Coopers Rock State Forest, the West Virginia Botanic Garden, Stonewall Resort State Park, historic Lewisburg, and Greenbrier State Forest are perfect for leaf peeping in early October.

Mid-October

By the middle of October, the Northern Panhandle transforms into a fall oasis. Tomlinson Run State Park is a great choice for leaf peeping, and the park even features unique yurts and other camping accommodations for the family.

Just south in Wheeling, Oglebay Park Resort is a fantastic option for more leaf peeping and relaxing.

Fall foliage in Fayette County reaches its peak between mid and late October. Babcock State Park is one of the most photographed state parks in West Virginia—especially in the fall. Be sure to also explore the town of Fayetteville, which was recognized by Reader's Digest as one of the best places to spot fall foliage in America.

Late October

Southern West Virginia and the Eastern Panhandle make up the final act—putting on a dazzling display of vibrancy and jaw-dropping views throughout late October. Bridge Day is the perfect way to kick off leaf peeping at the New River Gorge, which was dubbed by AFAR as one of the best places in the United States to see fall foliage. Visitors can make the short drive from there to Hawks Nest State Park or Babcock State Park for a view of the picturesque Glade Creek Grist Mill—a staple of fall. Other great locations include Pipestem Resort State Park, Bluestone State Park, and Kanawha State Forest. The Eastern Panhandle is great for late October leaf peeping, too. Harpers Ferry, Berkeley Springs State Park, and Cacapon Resort State Park are all perfect choices for enjoying the closing scenes of fall.

Don't miss peak color in your favorite region by staying up to date with the West Virginia Department of Tourism's weekly foliage updates. **Sign up** to get these exclusive updates straight to your inbox each week!

AI Tips from the Office of Technology



Ready to work smarter, not harder? Head over to the State Learning Center to check out our latest AI Tip of the Week. It's quick, practical, and designed to save you time on your daily tasks. These tips are accessible by self-enrollment and available to view at any time.

Visit <https://www.onlinelearning.wv.gov/cm/home.html> to watch these videos at your convenience.

TITLE	COURSE ID
<i>Tips & Tricks:</i> Intro to Google Gemini	SADA1342
<i>Tips & Tricks:</i> Using the Gemini Website	SADA1343
<i>Tips & Tricks:</i> Gemini in Gmail	SADA1332
<i>Tips & Tricks:</i> Gemini in Slides	SADA1331
<i>Tips & Tricks:</i> Gemini Side Panel	SADA1330
<i>Tips & Tricks:</i> Gemini for Google Drive	SADA1334
<i>Tips & Tricks:</i> Gemini in Meet	SADA1337

TITLE	COURSE ID
<i>Tips & Tricks:</i> Gemini in Google Chat	SADA1336
Gemini 101: Your First Steps	SADA1304-R
Supercharge Your Productivity with Gemini for Workspace	SADA1305-R
<i>Tips & Tricks:</i> Gemini Gems	SADA1339
<i>Tips & Tricks:</i> Gemini Extensions	SADA1335
Transform Your Meetings with Gemini	SADA1306-R
Elevate Your Workflow with Gemini Gems	SADA1307-R

West Virginia State Privacy Office Monthly Tip

Back-to-School & EdTech Safety

When kids head back to school, they are often required to use various educational apps. These platforms can collect significant data on a student's behavior and habits. As a parent and a government worker, you should be aware of the "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act" (FERPA) and how it protects your child's data from being sold to advertisers.



**Note: Your agency/bureau/department/division may have specific requirements – always check your policies and procedures.
If you have questions, contact your Privacy Officer.*

Your Action:

- Read the privacy disclosures for the apps your child's school requires.
- If an app seems to ask for too much information (like access to your child's contacts or full location history), ask the school if there is an offline or more private alternative.
- Ensure your child uses a "Student" profile on devices rather than a shared family account.

SEPTEMBER FESTIVALS ACROSS WEST VIRGINIA

Several notable festivals take place across West Virginia throughout September 2026, featuring music, food, and cultural heritage.

EARLY SEPTEMBER

Ballhooter Festival: Sept. 4–5 at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. A weekend music event held in the mountains.

West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival: Sept. 4–6 in downtown Clarksburg. Celebrates Italian culture with traditional food, entertainment, and heritage events.

Jane Lew Fireman's Festival: Sept. 4–6 at the Jane Lew Fire Department. A family-friendly event featuring local crafts and food.

Zap Outdoorz: Sept. 4–5 at Camp Tall Timbers in High View. An intimate camping festival featuring electronic and punk music, pool parties, and wellness activities.

MID-SEPTEMBER

Pawpaw Festival WV: Sept. 12 at Paw Paw High School. Celebrates West Virginia's native pawpaw fruit with live music, food, and family activities.

WV Country Roads Festival: Sept. 18–19 at the Wetzel County 4-H Camp in New Martinsville. Highlights local agriculture, history, crafts, and regional entrepreneurs.

WV DAY: Food Truck Festival: Sept. 19 at Bicentennial Park in Parkersburg. A free event showcasing local food trucks and Appalachian live music.

WV Wine and Jazz Festival: Sept. 20 in Morgantown. Features live jazz performances and regional wine vendors.

LATE SEPTEMBER

Mountain Heritage Arts Festival: September 26 at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds in Kearneysville. The 50th annual event featuring live bluegrass music and local artisans.

Washington Pike Backyard Musi-Que Fest: September 26 at The Foundry Church in Wellsburg. A free community gathering with live music, a chili cook-off, and barbecue.

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

WELCOME! ... The Department of Administration is pleased to welcome **Wilbert Lively** and **Elizabeth Ochoa** (PEIA); and **John Greene** and **Adam Tolliver** (Technology). Also, **Brittany Cummings** has transferred from Technology to Grievance Board.

BEST WISHES ... to **Jamie Huff** (CPRB); **John Newman** (Finance); **Kenny Yoakum** (Fleet); **Sonia Copple** (Public Defender Services); **Angelina Villanueva** (Purchasing); **Timothy Maloney** (Real Estate); and **Nicholas Downs** (Surplus) who recently resigned from our department.

EMPLOYEE QUESTION OF THE MONTH ... This month, we want to know "If you had to root for a college team outside of West Virginia, which would you choose?" To answer this question, click [here](#).

GOT NEWS? ... Email detailed information to Samantha.S.Knapp@wv.gov so we may include it in the next issue of the newsletter.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY in SEPTEMBER

Below is a list of Department of Administration employees celebrating their birthdays during the month of September:

AVIATION	Michael Linkenauer	GEN.SRVS.	John Anderson	SEC. ADMIN.	Sara Jones
BRIM	Luke Mitchell		Aaron Armstrong	TECHNOLOGY	Thomas Allen
			Paul Boswell		Thomas Ball
CPRB	Jennifer Dills		Ada Kennedy		Franklin Buskirk
	Christine Fernandes		Gary Morris		Kenneth Casto
	Jamie Huff		Todd Mosteller		Dakota Cheatwood
	Kevin Kerns		Terry Parsons		Scott Combs
	Virginia May		Scotty Pauley		Derrick Day
	Adena Mays		Joseph Pratt		James Dixon
	Dan Morris		Joshua Fraenkel		John Foster
	Genna Saunders	GRIEVANCE			Shannon McGrew
	Kelli Shaver	PUB.DEF.SRVS.	Leeann Doyle		Michael Moore
	Paige Strickland		Dana Eddy		Jason Nichols
	Tammy White		Meliza Harpold		Robert Pack
	Melissa Williams	PEIA	Sherman Biniza		Allison Plants
	Cody Young		Makayla Dunbar		Deidre Rainwater
FINANCE	Diane Corker		Leticia Forrest		Colt Richardson
	Jennifer Curia	PERSONNEL	Madeline Fitzwater		Terri Sheets
	Sarah Long		Brandon Perdue		Mark Smith
	Cynthia Williams	PURCHASING	Krista Chadband		Stephen Windon
		REAL ESTATE	Gail Delmaar		
			Arlie Hubbard		

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