

## You“Are You Ok” (RUOK)

In April I attended a City Council meeting with my daughter as part of a school assignment. After council had completed every item on the agenda, it was the public’s turn to voice their opinions/concerns (unscheduled oral presentations). An elderly woman from the back of the room stood up and made her way slowly to the podium. By this time in the evening (shortly before 9:00 p.m.), there were only a handful of citizens in the audience. The woman took a few minutes to air a few of her concerns and then began telling her story of how an unexpected loss of phone service and health issues put her family through a frightening, helpless situation.

Having health issues, she has testing done on a weekly basis. Her son, who lives out of town checks on her by phone the day after every test. On this particular week, her son was not able to get a hold of her. After many attempts to call with no answer, he became very concerned. As she put it “He thought I was laying on the floor dead or something.” Frantic, he made his way to her home to check on her. When he walked in the house and saw that she was indeed ok, he picked her up and swung her around saying how happy he was that she was ok. It was shortly after that they discovered the phone lines were down, and made the appropriate phone calls to fix the situation.

The story went on to say that they were told that in an older neighborhood such as hers built in the '60's, there is bound to be wiring deterioration. After some discussion on phone line issues, **she then asked the council if our city had any program that checks on the elderly or those in need.** There was a pause. Knowing the answer myself, I mentioned, with a low voice while nodding, “Yes, the RUOK program within the Kings County Sheriff’s Department.” Then another member of the audience, who happened to be Captain Darrell Smith with the Hanford Police Department, acknowledged that yes, we did have such a program, and that he would speak with the woman outside of chambers and tell her about it.

### What is the RUOK Program?



The RUOK Program is designed to contact senior citizens and/or the disabled that live alone and may not have a family member living locally that can check on them every day. It is a service offered free of charge by the Kings County Sheriff’s Office. The system is available to all citizens of Kings County including all cities and unincorporated areas. It can be used for a short period of time or long term. To find out more, visit <http://www.countyofkings.com/sheriff/ruok.html>.

As I’ve mentioned in previous articles, **knowledge is power.** That evening I realized that had Captain Smith not been at the meeting, **I had the power to help someone in our community** by simply sharing preparedness information.

Put yourself in her son's shoes. The helplessness and worry that he went through could have been avoided if they had the knowledge of the RUOK program. What knowledge are you lacking?

When it comes to emergency preparedness, you don't have to be an employee of law enforcement or emergency management to be helpful to the world around you; just knowledgeable. **What will YOU do for knowledge?**

**Do your part for emergency preparedness and pass along the information!**

Article written by Elizabeth Hall

