MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 6, 2020

Contact: Ryan Shackelford, Director, Portage County Homeland Security and Emergency Management, 330-297-3706, rshackelford@portageco.com

PORTAGE EMA APP NOW TRACKS COVID DEVELOPMENTS
AT HOME AND NATIONALLY AS PART OF ITS CAPABILITIES

RAVENNA, OH – The multi-purpose, free emergency app from the Portage County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management has expanded its features with a new section dedicated to providing national and local up-to-date COVID-19 information.

"We know residents have multiple sources of information but the app can provide you with a base for so many aspects of being prepared for disaster events like COVID-19," explained Ryan Shackelford, EMA director.

The app is free and can be downloaded from the iPhone App Store or Google+ for Androids. The COVID-19 feature was just added to the home screen to assist users in having one place for emergency information.

The coronavirus screen menu allows users to look at the latest alerts from the Centers for Disease Control, as well as signing up for the CDC newsletter, accessing CDC social media and downloading the CDC's app. The app populates with the latest information from the CDC, including travel notices.

"Portage County is able to collect local news and resources at the feature to provide residents with a place to see important and useful information," Shackelford said.

The local tab has information from Portage County Commissioners, the Portage County Health District, agencies accepting food donations, Portage County Jobs and Family Services sharing unemployment filing information, the Ohio Department of Health resources and the Portage Area RTA schedule links.

When the coronavirus pandemic ends, the app remains a valuable tool for residents. The user can set weather alerts to go straight to residents' phones, a helpful feature especially when Portage County is under weather watches and warnings.

"The alerts are used whenever the National Weather Service calls for serious weather. In the midst of COVID-19 last week, the app was alerting Portage residents to an incoming hailstorm and severe thunderstorm. It ends up right on your phone and you can click to the weather report," Shackelford outlined.

The app home screen provides one click to: Portage EMA social media "Portage Prepares," a directory to all safety agencies in the county, local weather, the OHGO.com traffic website and weather radio from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. There is a tab on preparing for storms, tornadoes, flooding and excessive heat.

There is also a page where you can store personal information including medical details and forms to complete with information about your doctor, insurance, out-of-town contacts and important phone numbers.

How Portage County came to have its own version of the app is a down home story. While the company, OCV, LLC (myocv.com) that creates the technology is based in Alabama, a communication strategist on its staff, Jeff Baxter, is a 1981 graduate of Field High School. OCV creates custom mobile apps primarily for public safety agencies. Their products for police, EMA, fire and sheriff departments are in 40 states.

A forever Buckeye and Field Falcon fan, Baxter said he reached out to Portage County EMA as part of that connection to his former home. For questions about the app, contact Portage EMA at 330-297-3607.

# # #