

Family Preparedness Guide

Natural & man-made threats can devastate entire communities. Make sure your plans protect your family and take into consideration the needs of everyone you love. Be prepared by seeking help before a disaster strikes your community, your home and your family.

Making a Family Plan for Disasters & Emergencies

EVALUATE:

- ❑ Identify potential threats in your community, such as the location of floodprone areas, power plants and hazardous chemicals.
- ❑ Discuss how natural and man-made threats could affect your family.
- ❑ Evaluate your property's vulnerability to hazards, such as storm surge, flooding, wildfire and wind.
- ❑ Check your insurance coverage. Flood damage, for example, is not covered by a homeowner's insurance policy. It must be purchased ahead of time to be applicable.

PREPARE:

- ❑ Identify the safest areas of your home for each threat. In many circumstances, the safest area may not be your home but elsewhere in your community. During times of evacuation you will be given instructions on evacuation routes.
- ❑ Specify escape routes from your home and places to meet (rally points), such as a neighbor's home, a school or a public location.
- ❑ Make a plan for evacuating the area if required.
- ❑ Designate an out-of-area contact—friend or family member—so that each of your immediate family members has the same single point of contact.
- ❑ Plan to have at least two means of communication (e.g., email, phone, cell phone).
- ❑ Make a plan for your pets should you need to evacuate. Most shelters will accept service animals.
- ❑ Post emergency telephone numbers by your phones and make sure your children know how and when to call 911.
- ❑ Assemble and maintain a Disaster Supply Kit. A battery-powered weather radio equipped with a special alarm tone feature is a vital tool. During an emergency, National Weather Service forecasters will interrupt routine weather radio programming and send out the special tone that activates weather radios in the listening area.
- ❑ Take first aid, CPR and disaster preparedness classes.

MONITOR & ACT:

- ❑ When a disaster occurs, listen to news sources for information and instructions.
- ❑ Evacuate or seek medical attention quickly if authorities tell you to do so. If you can get no information, determine as best you can if you are in a danger area.
- ❑ Whether you stay or evacuate, don't panic. Follow your family plan.

Making a Disaster Supply Kit

A Disaster Supply Kit for your home, and for use during an evacuation, should include items in six basic areas: (1) water, (2) food, (3) first aid supplies and medications, (4) clothing and bedding, (5) tools and emergency supplies, and (6) important family documents. You will need the kit's supplies if you are confined to your home. They also are valuable if you evacuate to a place other than a well-stocked shelter, or if you're unsure of the shelter's supplies.

TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR KIT:

- Keep loose items in airtight plastic bags.**
- Gather the kit's items in easy-to-carry containers or duffel bags. Put them within reach, near the exit you use most often.**
- Check and update your kit and family needs at least once a year.**

TIPS FOR WATER & FOOD:

1 A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water daily. Heat and intense activity can double this amount. Children, nursing mothers, and those with special needs may require more.

2 Food preparation and sanitation require another two quarts per person per day.

3 Purchased bottled water that has been sealed is best for storage. It meets FDA guidelines for food, is not as vulnerable to temperature changes as unsealed water, and has no shelf life. (Some bottles do have expiration dates, but this is mainly for inventory control.)

4 Choose compact, lightweight foods that do not require refrigeration, cooking or preparation, and foods that use little or no water.

5 If you must heat food, pack cans of chafing fuel such as Sterno.

Disaster Preparation for Families with Special Needs

Those who have family members with special needs must take extra measures to ensure their preparedness. The following are suggestions from the American Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Families with special needs must carefully assess their options. They should ask themselves the following questions:

- Can we manage the entire needs of our family for three days with little or no outside assistance?**
- Can we meet any crisis or emergency on our own for that period of time?**
- Can we make decisions concerning our special needs without consultation or help for three days?**
- Do we have the supplies and equipment to meet our special needs for three days?**

If the answer is “no” to any of the above questions, families must seriously consider evacuation from their homes in the event of a disaster. Advance preparation should include how to evacuate and where to relocate. Many areas have “special needs shelters” that are equipped with medical staff and specialized equipment. In your preparation, check the shelters in your area and become familiar with their locations, procedures and policies concerning how many people are allowed to accompany the family member with special needs.

For more information about shelters, call your local Red Cross office, or contact your local county emergency management office to preregister for a special needs shelter.

SUPPLIES TO CONSIDER FOR SPECIAL NEEDS INDIVIDUALS:

- for respirators, other electric-dependent medical equipment or oxygen—make prior arrangements with your physician or check with your oxygen supplier about emergency plans**
- two-week stock of disposable supplies such as dressings, nasal cannulas, suction catheters, etc.**
- two-week supply of medications, prescription and non-prescription**
- electrical backup for medical equipment**
- copies of prescriptions for medical equipment, supplies and medications—ask your physician or pharmacist about proper storing of prescription medications**
- contact lenses and supplies**
- extra eyeglasses**
- extra batteries for hearing aids, communication device**

Children's Issues

Assemble a kit for your children. Some suggested items:

- a few favorite books
- crayons and paper
- two favorite small toys, such as a doll or action figure
- board game
- deck of cards
- puzzles
- favorite stuffed animal
- favorite blanket or pillow
- pictures of family and pets
- other special items that will comfort children

Children's fears can stem from their imaginations, and adults should take these feelings seriously. Words and actions can provide reassurance to a child who feels afraid. When talking to your child, be sure to present a realistic picture that is both honest and manageable.

Be aware that after a disaster, children most fear that:

- They will be separated from family.
- The event will happen again.
- Someone will be injured or killed.
- They will be left alone.

ADVICE FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS ON COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT DISASTER

In response to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offered some advice on communicating **with children and adolescents during times of crisis.**

It is important to communicate to children that the family circle is strong. Children need to be assured by their parents that the family is safe. Adolescents, in particular, can be hard hit by this type of disaster. Parents may watch for signs such as sleep disturbances, fatigue, lack of pleasure in activities previously enjoyed, and illicit substance abuse.

Overexposure to the media can be traumatizing. It is best not to let children or adolescents repeatedly view footage of traumatic events. Children and adolescents should not view these events alone.

Adults need to help children understand the emergency or disaster. Discussion is critical. In the event of a man-made disaster, stress that a terrorist act is one of desperation and horror. Explain it to your children in a simple way like, "There are bad people out there who do bad things. But no one group of people is all bad."

Pet Safety

The following pet safety information has been compiled from sources including the Humane Society of the United States in cooperation with the Red Cross.

HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO TAKE YOUR PETS:

Red Cross disaster shelters cannot accept pets because of health and safety regulations and other considerations. Service animals are the only animals allowed in Red Cross shelters. It may be difficult to find shelter for your animals in the midst of a disaster, so plan ahead.

Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets and restrictions on number, size and species. Ask if "no pet" policies could be waived in an emergency. Keep a list of "pet-friendly" places, including phone numbers with other disaster information.

Ask others outside your area whether they could shelter your animals. Also, prepare a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter animals in an emergency; include 24-hour phone numbers. Ask local animal shelters if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets during a disaster. Animal shelters may be overburdened caring for the animals they already have, so this should be your last resort.

ASSEMBLE A PORTABLE PET DISASTER SUPPLY KIT:

Keep items in an accessible place and store them in sturdy waterproof containers that can be carried easily. Your pet disaster supply kit should include:

- medications (heartworm, flea prevention), medical records (records of Coggins test for horses, rabies/ vaccination certificates for other pets)**
- registration records, microchip/tattoo information**
- first aid kit**
- sturdy leashes, harnesses, and/or carriers big enough for your pet to stand up and turn around**
- pet beds and toys, if easily transportable**
- current photos of pets**
- food and drinkable water for three days, bowls, can opener**
- cat litter/pan**
- information on feeding schedule, medical conditions, behavior problems, and name and number of veterinarian in case you have to foster or board animals**

LARGE ANIMALS:

Owners of large animals, such as horses or cattle, should prepare an Animal Safety Plan according to specific needs. Talk to your veterinarian or animal handler, and check online resources for more information.

Evacuation

In your Family Plan for Disasters and Emergencies, map out your route to shelters or to locations out of the area. Be familiar with alternate routes. Remember local meeting places, often called “rally points,” and an out-of-town contact in case family members are separated

If you have children in schools, familiarize yourself with their emergency plans and where students are to be sent if an evacuation is announced.

- Monitor news media for instructions about evacuation. If told to evacuate, do so quickly.**
- Follow evacuation route instructions.**
- Bring your Disaster Supply Kit.**
- Keep your vehicle filled with at least a half tank of gas at all times. Never store additional gasoline in your home, vehicle or shed.**
- If you don't have a vehicle, plan another way to leave.**
- Lock your house. Leave a note in a sealed envelope marked “emergency information” in an obvious location. Include when you left, where you are going, and contact numbers.**
- Check on the elderly, who may need your assistance and reassurance.**
- Enact your Pet Safety Plan.**

If time allows:

- Call or email your out-of-area contact about your plans.**
- If your home is damaged and you are instructed to do so, shut off water, gas and electricity before leaving. Be familiar with the location of shut-off valves before a disaster. If you turn off the gas, a professional must turn it back on. Do not attempt to do this yourself.**
- Check with neighbors who may need assistance and/or rides.**

When you are in an unfamiliar building, be aware of exit locations. At work, know your office evacuation plan.

Natural Threats—what you need to know

FLOODS:

Are you in a floodplain? Do you have adequate insurance? Flood facts and tips:

- As little as one foot of moving water can move most cars off the road.
- Just six inches of fast-moving floodwater can sweep a person off his or her feet.
- Do not wade through or allow children to play in floodwaters.
- Do not attempt to drive on flooded roads or bridges.
- Listen to the National Weather Service on your weather radio and monitor local media for flood watches and warnings.
- For flood insurance call the National Flood Insurance Program at 1-800-427-4661.
- Remember, flood damage is not covered by a homeowner's insurance policy. It must be purchased separately and ahead of time to be applicable.

HURRICANES & RELATED THREATS: STORM SURGE, INLAND FLOODING, HIGH WINDS, TORNADOS, SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS:

Do you live on the coast or in a low-lying, flood-prone area? Is your home equipped to withstand hurricane-force winds in excess of 74 miles per hour?

- Make sure your home has a wall-to-foundation connection (anchor bolts/re-bar).
- Reinforce the garage door and tracks with center supports.
- Brace all gable end framing with horizontal and vertical beams.
- Strap rafters/trusses to walls with hurricane straps or clips.
- Cover windows and doors with securely fastened, impact-resistant shutters using proper mounting fixtures.

Do you have a safe room? Do you have a pre-identified safe shelter if you must evacuate?

- A safe room in the house should have no or small exterior openings.
- The home of a friend or family member outside the threatened area is ideal.
- Know where local shelters are located.
- Leave with adequate time to get there—roadways likely will be crowded.

Disaster Supply Checklist

WATER & FOOD: Pack a three-day supply.

- one gallon of water per person per day
- ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- staples (salt, sugar, pepper, spices, etc.)
- powdered milk
- canned juices
- high-energy snacks
- comfort/stress foods
- food for infants
- food for individuals with special needs
- Pedialyte (to restore hydration if needed)
- mess kits or paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
- non-electric can opener, utility knife

TOOLS & EMERGENCY SUPPLIES:

- family preparedness guide
- cash or traveler's checks, coins
- map of the area for locating shelters
- battery-operated radio, extra batteries
- flashlight, extra batteries
- fire extinguisher: small canister ABC type
- pliers
- compass
- signal flare
- whistle
- shut-off wrench to turn off household water and/or gas
- tube tent
- plastic sheeting
- plastic storage containers
- plastic bucket with tight lid
- plastic garbage bags and ties for sanitation
- tape (duct, masking)
- candles
- matches in a waterproof container
- paper, pencil
- needles, thread
- medicine dropper
- aluminum foil
- toilet paper, towelettes
- towels
- soap, liquid detergent
- disinfectant
- household chlorine bleach
- feminine supplies
- personal hygiene items
- infant supplies (diapers, bottles, pacifiers)

CLOTHING & BEDDING:

Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person.

- sturdy shoes, work boots, hats, gloves
- blankets or sleeping bags
- rain gear
- extra prescription glasses, sunglasses

FIRST AID KIT:

Assemble a first aid kit containing these items for your home and one for each car.

Keep ready a three-day supply of each person's vital medications to include in the kit.

- prescription drugs
- sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- 2-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- 2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- triangular bandages (3)
- latex gloves (at least 2 pair)
- cleansing agent, soap and moistened towelettes
- antiseptic
- petroleum jelly or other lubricant

- assorted sizes of safety pins
- scissors
- tweezers
- needle
- thermometer
- tongue depressors (2)
- non-prescription drugs
- aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever
- anti-diarrhea medication
- antacid
- laxative
- antibiotic ointment
- syrup of Ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center)
- activated charcoal (use if advised by the Poison Control Center)
- sunscreen
- mosquito repellent

IMPORTANT FAMILY DOCUMENTS: Keep copies of records in a waterproof, portable container or scan documents and save on a portable USB drive or CD.

- wills
- insurance policies
- contracts and deeds
- stocks and bonds
- Social Security cards
- passports
- immunization records
- bank account numbers
- credit card account numbers and
- company names and telephone numbers
- inventory of valuable household goods
- family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)
- current photographs of family members