

APPENDIX E. Family Disaster Planning—Five Steps to Safety

1. Find Out What Could Happen to You

- › Contact your local American Red Cross chapter or emergency management office before a disaster occurs—be prepared to take notes.
- › Ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen. Request information on how to prepare for each.
- › Learn about your community’s warning signals: what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
- › Ask about animal care after a disaster. Animals are not allowed inside emergency shelters because of health regulations.
- › Find out how to help elderly or disabled persons, if necessary.
- › Find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children’s school or day care center, and other places where your family spends time.

2. Create a Disaster Plan

- › Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, severe weather, and earthquakes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.
- › Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.
- › Pick two places to meet:
 - Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
 - Outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home. Everyone must know the address and phone number.
- › Ask an out-of-state friend to be your “family contact.” After a disaster, it is often easier to call long distance than locally. Family members should call this person after an event and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your contact’s phone number.
- › Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets.

3. Complete the Following Tasks

- › Post emergency telephone numbers by telephones (fire, police, ambulance, school, etc.).
- › Post the addresses and phone numbers for at least three nearby hospitals (one near home, one near work, one near your child’s school).
- › Teach children how and when to call 9–1–1 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.
- › Show each family member how and when to turn off the utilities (water, gas, and electricity) at the main switches.
- › Check to see if you have adequate insurance coverage.
- › Get training from the fire department for each family member on how to use the household fire extinguishers (ABC type) and show everyone where you keep them.
- › Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.
- › Conduct a home hazard hunt.
- › Stock emergency supplies and assemble a disaster supplies kit (see appendix F).
- › Take an American Red Cross first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) class.
- › Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room.
- › Find the safe places in your home for each type of disaster.

4. Make Sure That You Have All Essential Personal Information for You and Each Member of Your Family

- › Blood types
- › Allergies
- › Medications
- › Past and current medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, high blood pressure)
- › Immunization history
- › Names and numbers for family physicians

(It may be helpful to put this information in a document, along with a photo ID. If there are mass immunizations or medicine distributions in your community, you may need a photo ID for each member of your family.)

5. Practice and Maintain Your Plan

- › Quiz your children every 6 months or so.
- › Conduct fire and emergency evacuations.
- › Replace stored water and stored food every 6 months.
- › Test and recharge your fire extinguisher(s) according to manufacturer's instructions.
- › Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

Based on the “Your Family Disaster Plan” developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (<http://www.fema.gov>) and American Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org>).

REFERENCE

Federal Emergency Management Agency, & American Red Cross. (2004). Your family disaster plan. <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/yfdp.pdf>.