

# Why Prepare

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## There are real benefits to being prepared.

- Being prepared can reduce fear, anxiety, and losses that accompany disasters. Communities, families, and individuals should know what to do in the event of a fire and where to seek shelter during a tornado. They should be ready to evacuate their homes and take refuge in public shelters and know how to care for their basic medical needs.
- People also can reduce the impact of disasters (flood proofing, elevating a home or moving a home out of harm's way, and securing items that could shake loose in an earthquake) and sometimes avoid the danger completely.

## The need to prepare is real.

- Disasters disrupt hundreds of thousands of lives every year. Each disaster has lasting effects, both to people and property.
- If a disaster occurs in your community, local government and disaster-relief organizations will try to help you, but you need to be ready as well. Local responders may not be able to reach you immediately, or they may need to focus their efforts elsewhere.
- You should know how to respond to severe weather or any disaster that could occur in your area—hurricanes, earthquakes, extreme cold, flooding, or terrorism.
- You should also be ready to be self-sufficient for at least three days. This may mean providing for your own shelter, first aid, food, water, and sanitation.

## Using this guide makes preparation practical.

- This guide was developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is the agency responsible for responding to national disasters and for helping state and local governments and individuals prepare for emergencies. It contains step-by-step advice on how to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.
- Used in conjunction with information and instructions from local emergency management offices and the American Red Cross, *Are You Ready?* will give you what you need to be prepared.

## Using Are You Ready? to Prepare

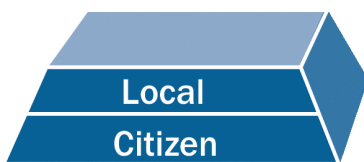
The main reason to use this guide is to help protect yourself and your family in the event of an emergency. Through applying what you have learned in this guide, you are taking the necessary steps to be ready when an event occurs.

Every citizen in this country is part of a national emergency management system that is all about protection—protecting people and property from all types of hazards. Think of the national emergency management system as a pyramid with you, the citizen, forming the base of the structure. At this level, you have a responsibility to protect yourself and your family by knowing what to do before, during, and after an event. Some examples of what you can do follow:



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|--------|---|
| Before | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know the risks and danger signs.</li> <li>• Purchase insurance, including flood insurance, which is not part of your homeowner's policy.</li> <li>• Develop plans for what to do.</li> <li>• Assemble a disaster supplies kit.</li> <li>• Volunteer to help others.</li> </ul> |
| During | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put your plan into action.</li> <li>• Help others.</li> <li>• Follow the advice and guidance of officials in charge of the event.</li> </ul>   |
| After  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repair damaged property.</li> <li>• Take steps to prevent or reduce future loss.</li> </ul>  |

You will learn more about these and other actions you should take as you progress through this guide.

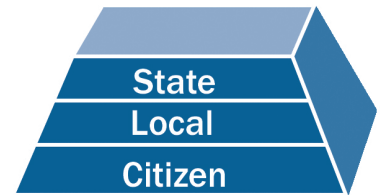


It is sometimes necessary to turn to others within the local community for help. The local level is the second tier of the pyramid, and is made up of paid employees and volunteers from the private and public sectors. These individuals are engaged in preventing emergencies from happening and in being prepared to respond if something does occur. Most emergencies are handled at the local level, which puts a tremendous responsibility on the community for taking care of its citizens. Among the responsibilities faced by local officials are:

- Identifying hazards and assessing potential risk to the community.
- Enforcing building codes, zoning ordinances, and land-use management programs.
- Coordinating emergency plans to ensure a quick and effective response.
- Fighting fires and responding to hazardous materials incidents.
- Establishing warning systems.
- Stocking emergency supplies and equipment.
- Assessing damage and identifying needs.

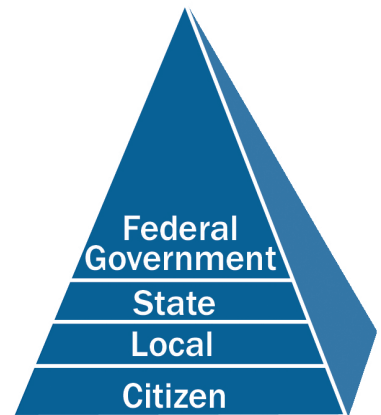
- Evacuating the community to safer locations.
- Taking care of the injured.
- Sheltering those who cannot remain in their homes.
- Aiding recovery efforts.

If support and resources are needed beyond what the local level can provide, the community can request assistance from the state. The state may be able to provide supplemental resources such as money, equipment, and personnel to close the gap between what is needed and what is available at the local level. The state also coordinates the plans of the various jurisdictions so that activities do not interfere or conflict with each other. To ensure personnel know what to do and efforts are in agreement, the state may offer a program that provides jurisdictions the opportunity to train and exercise together.



At the top of the pyramid is the federal government, which can provide resources to augment state and local efforts. These resources can be in the form of:

- Public educational materials, such as this guide, that can be used to prepare the public for protecting itself from hazards.
- Financial grants for equipment, training, exercises, personnel, and programs.
- Grants and loans to help communities respond to and recover from disasters so severe that the President of the United States has deemed them beyond state and local capabilities.
- Research findings that can help reduce losses from disaster.
- Technical assistance to help build stronger programs.



The national emergency management system is built on shared responsibilities and active participation at all levels of the pyramid. The whole system begins with you, the citizen, and your ability to follow good emergency management practices—whether at home, work, or other locations.

*Are You Ready? An In-Depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness* is organized to help you through the process. Begin by reading Part 1 which is the core of the guide. This part provides basic information that is common to all hazards on how to create and maintain an emergency plan and disaster supplies kit.

### Part 1: Basic Preparedness

- A series of worksheets to help you obtain information from the community that will form the foundation of your plan. You will need to find out about hazards that threaten the community, how the population will be warned, evacuation routes to be used in times of disaster, and the emergency plans of the community and others that will impact your plan.
- Guidance on specific content that you and your family will need to develop and include in your plan on how to escape from your residence, communicate with one another during times of disaster, shut-off household utilities, insure against financial loss, acquire basic safety skills, address special needs such as disabilities, take care of animals, and seek shelter.

- Checklists of items to consider including in your disaster supplies kit that will meet your family's needs following a disaster whether you are at home or at other locations.

Part 1 is also the gateway to the specific hazards and recovery information contained in Parts 2, 3, 4, and 5. Information from these sections should be read carefully and integrated in your emergency plan and disaster supplies kit based on the hazards that pose a threat to you and your family.

## Part 2: Natural Hazards

- Floods
- Hurricanes
- Thunderstorms and lightning
- Tornadoes
- Winter storms and extreme cold
- Extreme heat
- Earthquakes
- Volcanoes
- Landslides and debris flow
- Tsunamis
- Fires
- Wildfires

## Part 3: Technological Hazards

- Hazardous materials incidents
- Household chemical emergencies
- Nuclear power plant emergencies

## Part 4: Terrorism

- Explosions
- Biological threats
- Chemical threats
- Nuclear blasts
- Radiological dispersion device events

## Part 5: Recovering from Disaster

- Health and safety guidelines
- Returning home
- Seeking disaster assistance
- Coping with disaster
- Helping others

## References

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As you work through individual sections, you will see reference points. These are reminders to refer to previous sections for related information on the topic being discussed.

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Throughout the guide are lists of publications available from FEMA that can help you learn more about the topics covered. To obtain these publications, call the FEMA Distribution Center at 1-800-480-2520 or request them by mail from:

### FEMA Publications

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
P.O. Box 2012  
Jessup, MD 20794-2012

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Other publications cited throughout this guide can be obtained by contacting the organizations below:

### Other Publications

American Red Cross National Headquarters  
2025 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006  
Phone: (202) 303-4498  
[www.redcross.org/pubs/dspubs/cde.html](http://www.redcross.org/pubs/dspubs/cde.html)

National Weather Service  
1325 East West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
[www.nws.noaa.gov/education.html](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/education.html)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Rd, Atlanta, GA 30333, U.S.A  
Public Inquiries: (404) 639-3534 / (800) 311-3435  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

U.S. Geological Survey  
Information Services  
P.O. Box 25286  
Denver, CO 80225  
1 (888) 275-8747  
[www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov)

# Disaster Public Education

## Web sites

You can broaden your knowledge of disaster preparedness topics presented in this guide by reviewing information provided at various government and non-government Web sites. Provided below is a list of recommended sites. The Web address for each site reflects its home address. Searches conducted from each home site's page result in the most current and extensive list of available material for the site.

<b>Government Sites</b>	
Be Ready Campaign	<a href="http://www.ready.gov">www.ready.gov</a>
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry	<a href="http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov">www.atsdr.cdc.gov</a>
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a>
Citizen Corps	<a href="http://www.citizencorps.gov">www.citizencorps.gov</a>
Department of Commerce	<a href="http://www.doc.gov">www.doc.gov</a>
Department of Education	<a href="http://www.ed.gov">www.ed.gov</a>
Department of Energy	<a href="http://www.energy.gov">www.energy.gov</a>
Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.hhs.gov/disasters">www.hhs.gov/disasters</a>
Department of Homeland Security	<a href="http://www.dhs.gov">www.dhs.gov</a>
Department of Interior	<a href="http://www.doi.gov">www.doi.gov</a>
Department of Justice	<a href="http://www.justice.gov">www.justice.gov</a>
Environmental Protection Agency	<a href="http://www.epa.gov">www.epa.gov</a>
Federal Emergency Management Agency	<a href="http://www.fema.gov">www.fema.gov</a>
Food and Drug Administration	<a href="http://www.fda.gov">www.fda.gov</a>
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	<a href="http://www.noaa.gov">www.noaa.gov</a>
National Weather Service	<a href="http://www.nws.noaa.gov">www.nws.noaa.gov</a>
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	<a href="http://www.nrc.gov">www.nrc.gov</a>
The Critical Infrastructure Assurance Office	<a href="http://www.ciao.gov">www.ciao.gov</a>
The White House	<a href="http://www.whitehouse.gov/response">www.whitehouse.gov/response</a>
U.S. Department of Agriculture	<a href="http://www.usda.gov">www.usda.gov</a>
U.S. Fire Administration	<a href="http://www.usfa.fema.gov">www.usfa.fema.gov</a>
U.S. Fire Administration Kids Page	<a href="http://www.usfa.fema.gov/kids">www.usfa.fema.gov/kids</a>
U.S. Geological Survey	<a href="http://www.usgs.gov">www.usgs.gov</a>
U.S. Office of Personnel Management	<a href="http://www.opm.gov/emergency">www.opm.gov/emergency</a>
U.S. Postal Service	<a href="http://www.usps.gov">www.usps.gov</a>
USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station	<a href="http://www.wildfireprograms.com">www.wildfireprograms.com</a>
<b>Non-government Sites</b>	
American Red Cross	<a href="http://www.redcross.org">www.redcross.org</a>
Institute for Business and Home Safety	<a href="http://www.ibhs.org">www.ibhs.org</a>
National Fire Protection Association	<a href="http://www.nfpa.org">www.nfpa.org</a>
National Mass Fatalities Institute	<a href="http://www.nmfi.org">www.nmfi.org</a>
National Safety Compliance	<a href="http://www.osha-safety-training.net">www.osha-safety-training.net</a>
The Middle East Seismological Forum	<a href="http://www.meieisforum.net">www.meieisforum.net</a>
The Pan American Health Organization	<a href="http://www.disaster-info.net/SUMA">www.disaster-info.net/SUMA</a>