

Your Family Disaster Plan

Disasters strike without warning and being prepared at home will help to insure that you and your family can make the best of a bad situation. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but in many cases they cannot reach everyone right away and you need to be ready to take care of yourself for up to three days.

Some emergencies can force you to evacuate from your neighborhood or confine you to your home. It is important that you know what to do if basic services--water, gas, electricity or telephones--were cut off. Preparing in advance and working together as a team make it much easier to cope with an emergency situation.

Contact your local emergency management office to find out:

- ❑ What types of disasters are most likely to happen in your area.
- ❑ If your community has warning signals or sirens, what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
- ❑ Ask about animal care after disaster. Animals may not be allowed inside emergency shelters due to health regulations.
- ❑ Find out how you can help people with special needs if needed until first responders arrive.

Create a Disaster Plan

Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Many families already have an emergency plan for a house fire, so making an all-hazard plan will just add a few more details. Every member of the family will have a role during an emergency, so it is important to share ideas, responsibilities and work as a team when you create your plan.

- ❑ Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.
- ❑ Pick two places to meet:
 - ❑ Outside your home in the case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
 - ❑ Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone in the family should know the address and phone number of the designated meeting place.
- ❑ Pick an out-of-town or out-of-state friend to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it is often easier to call long distance than to make a local call. All family members should call this person and tell them if they are safe, and where they are to help reduce panic during an emergency.
- ❑ Discuss what to do in an evacuation and keep reference materials distributed by utilities and emergency managers with evacuation zones and routes in a designated area.
- ❑ Take some time to plan for your pets.

Complete This Checklist

- ❑ Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.).
- ❑ Teach children how and when to call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.
- ❑ Show each family member how and when to turn off the water, gas and electricity at the main switches. Keep water and gas keys in central location.
- ❑ Check if you have adequate insurance coverage annually and determine if specific types of disasters like hurricanes are covered or excluded under your policy.
- ❑ Teach each family member how to use the fire extinguisher (ABC type), and show them where it's kept.

- ⚡ Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on each level of your home (especially near bedrooms) and remember to change the batteries twice a year.
- ⚡ Stock emergency supplies and assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit. Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.
- ⚡ Determine the best escape routes from your home and mark them on a diagram in your family emergency kit. Find two ways out of each room.
- ⚡ Identify the safe spots in your home for each type of disaster.

Practice and Maintain Your Plan

- ⚡ Quiz your kids every six months so they remember what to do.
- ⚡ Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills.
- ⚡ Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six 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.

Family Emergency Kit

It is important to keep enough supplies in your home to meet the needs of your family for at least three days. Assemble a Family Emergency Kit with items you may need in an emergency or evacuation. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as suitcases, duffle bags or covered storage containers.

Include:

- ⚡ A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that won't spoil.
- ⚡ One change of clothing and footwear per person, and one blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- ⚡ A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications.
- ⚡ Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- ⚡ An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash or traveler's checks.
- ⚡ Sanitation supplies.
- ⚡ Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- ⚡ An extra pair of glasses.
- ⚡ Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Keep a smaller kit in the trunk of your car.

Utilities

Locate the main electric fuse box, water service main and natural gas main. Learn how and when to turn these utilities off. Teach all responsible family members. Keep necessary tools near gas and water shut-off valves.

Remember, turn off the utilities only if you suspect the lines are damaged or if you are instructed to do so. If you turn the gas off, you will need a professional to turn it back on.

Coming Together As A Community

Working with neighbors can save lives and property. Meet with your neighbors to plan how the neighborhood could work together during and after an emergency until first responders arrive. If you're a member of a neighborhood organization, such as a home association or crime watch group, introduce emergency preparedness to the group if it has not already been addressed. Know your neighbors' special skills (e.g., medical, technical) and consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such

as disabled and elderly persons. Make plans to help care with children and those with special needs in case families are separated.

Evacuation Planning

Evacuate immediately if told to do so:

- ⚡ Listen to your battery-powered radio and follow the instructions of local emergency officials.
- ⚡ Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.
- ⚡ Take your family disaster supplies kit
- ⚡ Lock your home.
- ⚡ Post a note telling others when you left and where you are going.
- ⚡ Use travel routes specified by local authorities--don't use shortcuts because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous.
- ⚡ Shut off water, gas and electricity before leaving, if instructed to do so.
- ⚡ Make arrangements for your pets.

Check for damage in your home...

Use flashlights--do not light matches or turn on electrical switches, if you suspect damage.
Check for fires, fire hazards and other household hazards.
Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly.
Shut off any other damaged utilities.
Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline and other flammable liquids immediately.