

Disaster Preparedness

Exceptional Family Member Program, podcast transcript

For more great information, visit <http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/tf/efmp>

While we never expect it, the truth is that a disaster can happen without warning to anyone, anywhere, on any day, and at any time. How prepared would you be in a crisis? Taking time to prepare in advance will improve your ability to respond and quickly meet the needs of your family in an emergency.

To prepare for a disaster, gather the information necessary to develop an action plan. Your action plan will vary greatly depending on your needs and the common types of disasters in your area. Start by researching potential and past natural or man-made disasters in your area. Take time to review your installation and local community emergency preparedness plans and recommended responses, then find out which types of mass notification systems are used to keep residents informed in the event of an emergency in your area. Finally, identify which local radio or TV stations cover emergency situations. If available in your area, sign up to receive emergency notifications by telephone, e-mail, or text message.

When you know which types of disasters to anticipate, you can develop a personal emergency preparedness plan. Carefully consider the availability of supplies, support, and resources that you and your family may need in an emergency situation. Take into account that care providers, special medical equipment, or medicines may not be readily available for days or even weeks. If you require life-sustaining care or other continued medical care, be sure to talk to providers to find out where and how care or treatment can be provided in the event of an emergency. Keep a cooler available for medications that require refrigeration. Whether you live on an installation or in the community, take the time to notify your local fire department or police station regarding any special medical needs or equipment you or a family member may have, especially oxygen tanks. Emergency responders may have methods for keeping information regarding a disability, equipment, response techniques, and other special needs on file in the event that assistance is required. Ask your electrical power company about back up power supplies or priority power restoration programs if any of your medical equipment requires a power source.

Your emergency plan should also address the possibility your family will need to evacuate. Have a plan in place for individuals who may hide from responders or not easily be evacuated. Identify one place just outside of your house and one place in the community to meet with caregivers, family, or friends in case you are separated, then practice ways to get out of your home, local area, or state. Designate a friend or relative who resides outside of your area that you, your family, and your friends can use to communicate in the event of an emergency. Be sure you can identify at least two people near your home who can contact help for you or your family members if needed.

Keep local emergency contact information readily available in the event that you need to request assistance from local emergency personnel. Identification bracelets or an emergency response reference card are helpful in the event that you or a family member become unable to communicate personal identification or emergency information regarding a disability or illness.

In the event of an emergency, your family may have to be self-sufficient until assistance arrives or until services return to normal. An emergency kit should include any supplies you will need to remain in your home for at least three days. Be sure your kit includes plenty of non-perishable food, water, household chlorine bleach, sanitary supplies, medication, first aid items, flashlights, batteries, radio, and any special equipment or assistive technology devices you may need. If you have a service animal, plan for its care

and needs as well, including such items as immunization records, food, water, bowls, medications, leash, and identification.

Your emergency supply kit should include an emergency information package. The Special Care Organizational Record provides a central location for you to organize necessary information, documents, and records. **The SCOR is available for download from MilitaryHOMEFRONT or a hard copy can be ordered from Military OneSource.** The package should include copies of all important legal and medical documents, such as passports, insurance cards, Medicare/Medicaid cards, photo IDs, proof of address, and marriage and birth certificates. Include a list of emergency contacts, caregivers, physicians, and other treatment providers. You should also consider keeping an extra set of keys, photocopies of credit and ATM cards, and enough cash to last several days. You may also wish to keep a record of your important possessions in the event an insurance claim needs to be filed after the disaster. Pack the items you will need in a sturdy and easy to carry container. You will need these items should you have to go to an emergency shelter.

For additional tips, information, and resources on how to prepare for a disaster, visit your local EFMP, Family Center office, or visit: www.disabilitypreparedness.gov, www.MilitaryHOMEFRONT.dod.mil, www.militaryonesource.com, the American Red Cross, or your installation's Military Aid Society.