

NOVEMBER: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

How do you define “emergency”? Are you prepared to care for yourself and others? To evacuate your home at a moment’s notice? (What would you want to keep if you could only take as much as you could pack in your car in the next 10 minutes? Or, what if you were at work or school when a disaster occurred, and couldn’t get home for three days... what would you do?)

You and your family or friends may not be together when disaster strikes, so it’s important to plan ahead: how you’ll contact one another; how and where you’ll get back together; what you will do in different situations.

WHY PREPARE?

It is estimated that seven out of ten individuals or families have not prepared for an emergency by making a plan or compiling (or purchasing) materials for a basic emergency kit. “Why should I?” you ask... isn’t it the responsibility of the city, county, state and federal government agencies to provide for my safety?”

We know that the next emergency is coming ... we just don’t know when or what kind it will be! From fires to floods, landslides, earthquakes – even man-made disasters, we continuously face emergency situations, and (as the experts tell us) it’s better to have a plan that you don’t need than to need a plan that you don’t have!

THE BENEFITS

Being prepared (as prepared as one can be) can reduce the fear and losses that accompany emergencies. Communities, families and individuals should know what to do in the event of a disaster – when to “stay put”, when to evacuate, how to perform basic first aid, etc.

THE NEED

Disasters affect hundreds of thousands every year – each disaster has lasting effects, both to people and property. If a disaster occurs in your community, local agencies and disaster relief organizations will try to help you. But you need to help yourself also: local responders may not be able to reach you immediately, or they may need to focus their efforts elsewhere... You should be self-sufficient for at least three days (even better, seven...remember how long it took for assistance to reach some of the people affected by Hurricane Katrina?)



GETTING STARTED

There are many sources of information about disaster preparedness... all of them include these three critical components:

- **GET (OR MAKE) AN EMERGENCY KIT**
- **HAVE A PLAN**
- **BE INFORMED**

BASIC EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT:

Water – one gallon per person per day for at least three days (for drinking and sanitation)

Food, at least three-day supply of non-perishable foods

Radio – battery-powered or hand-crank radio, and NOAA weather radio with tone alert, and extra **batteries** for both **Flashlight** with extra **batteries**

First aid kit and basic first aid **booklet**

Whistle to signal for help (flares are a bonus!)

Dust masks to help filter contaminated air, and **plastic sheeting** and duct tape to “shelter-in-place”^H

Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation

Tools – wrench, pliers to turn off water and gas lines

Can opener (if your food supply includes canned foods)

Local maps

Cell phone with **chargers!**

Medications and **prescription glasses / contact lenses**

Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper: one part bleach, nine parts water makes disinfectant; 16 drops bleach per gallon of water sanitizes water for drinking

Fire extinguisher

Matches in a waterproof container

Shelter (tent?), **blankets** for warmth

CA\$\$\$\$H in small denominations

MAKE A PLAN

- Identify an out-of-town contact
- Be sure every member of your family knows the phone number and has a cell phone, coins or a prepaid phone card to call the emergency contact
- Teach family members to use text messaging (can often get around network disruptions)
- Send copies of important documents to trusted family or friends at a distant location
- Subscribe to “alert” services
- Plan ahead for both the possibility of “staying put” (shelter-in-place) or evacuation
- Inquire about emergency plans at places where you or your family spend time: work, daycare, school, etc.
- Plan how to care for your pets in an emergency: only service animals (e.g., “canine companions”) may be permitted in public shelters during emergencies
- IF TIME PERMITS, Shut off utilities, and lock the door behind you; leave a note telling others when you left and where you went; check with neighbors who may need a ride

BE INFORMED

- Know what kind of disasters, both natural and man-made, are most likely to occur in your area and how you will be notified (emergency radio, TV broadcasts); you may hear a special siren
- Use available services and assistance in developing your response plan (your city, county, state; Red Cross; FEMA; local police and fire departments)
- Get trained, and volunteer to work with agencies who respond to emergencies - be prepared to care for more than yourself...

For more information, to go

www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/index.html

www.ready.gov/america/getakit/kit-print.html

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

^H www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/shelterinplace

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