

FAMILY DISASTER PLAN

Develop a family disaster plan to identify potential emergencies and be ready to act if disaster strikes.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION—

Learn the types of natural disasters in your region.

Local emergency management or civil defense officials can identify which disasters are most likely to hit your community.

Identify which human-caused or technological disasters can affect your region.

Hazardous materials accidents can occur anywhere chemical substances are stored, manufactured, or transported.

Learn whether or not your community has a warning system.

Not all communities have public warning systems. Contact your local emergency management or civil defense office to find out if your community has a warning system and if so, how it operates.

Workplace and school emergency response plans.

Employers and school officials should have a detailed emergency response (evacuation) plan that is available to the public.

DEVELOP A PLAN—

Keep it simple.

Household emergency plans should be kept simple enough so people can remember the important details. A disaster is an extremely stressful situation that can create confusion. The best emergency plans are those with very few details.

Identify two meeting places.

- The first meeting place should be a location right outside the home. This site is where everyone should meet in case of a sudden emergency, such as a fire.
- The second meeting place should be a building or park outside of the neighborhood in case household members cannot return home. Everyone should know the address of this location.

Be familiar with escape routes.

Depending upon the type of disaster, it may be necessary to evacuate the home. Plan several escape routes in case certain roads are blocked or closed.

Keep a portable, battery-operated radio.

Maintaining a communications link with the outside is a step that can mean the difference between life and death. Make sure that all family members know where the portable, battery-operated radio is located, and always keeps a supply of extra batteries.

Install smoke detectors on each level of the home, especially near bedrooms.

Post emergency telephone numbers (fire, police, and ambulance) by the telephones.

Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1 or the local emergency management number for help.

Teach each household member how to use a fire extinguisher. Make sure they know where it is kept.

Teach household members how to turn off utilities.

Conduct a home hazard hunt.

Identify objects in the house that could be dangerous in an emergency. For example, pictures hanging over a couch could easily fall off their hangers and hurt someone during an earthquake or a tornado.

Take a first aid and CPR class.

Call your local Red Cross chapter to register for classes.

SUPPLIES

Have disaster supplies on hand:

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Emergency food and water
- First aid kit and manual
- Nonelectric can opener
- Essential medicines
- Cash and credit cards
- Sturdy shoes

PETS AND DISASTER

Make arrangements for your pets as part of your household disaster planning. If you must evacuate, it is best to take your pets with you. For health and space reasons, pets will not be allowed in public shelters. If you have to leave your pets behind as a last resort, prepare an emergency pen in the home that includes a three-day supply of dry food and a large container of fresh water.

COMMUNICATION

Develop an emergency communication plan.

In case family members are separated from one another during a disaster (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), develop a plan for reuniting after the disaster.

Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the “family contact.” After a disaster, it is often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.

PRESERVING IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Make a complete inventory of your home, garage, and surrounding property. The inventory can be either written or videotaped. Include information such as serial numbers, make and model numbers, physical descriptions, and price of purchase (receipt, if possible).

Vital documents such as birth and marriage certificates, tax records, credit card numbers, financial records, and wills and trusts can be lost during a disaster. Make two photocopies of these documents and keep the originals in a safe deposit box, keep one copy in a safe place in the house, and give the second copy to an out-of-state friend.