

Kids: An Important Part of a Family Disaster Plan

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AUSTIN, Texas – As September looms, children are looking forward to a new school year. September is also National Preparedness Month, a fine opportunity for parents to involve kids in creating a family disaster plan in case of emergency.

Youngsters can be directly involved in putting together a family emergency preparedness kit and in making plans for the care of pets in case of disaster.

Talking with kids about the dangers that families can face is an important first step toward preparedness. Hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, floods or acts of terrorism are frightening to children and adults alike. Talking about such hazards with children can ease their anxiety.

When children have a sense of being directly involved and doing something positive and constructive, everyone gains energy and confidence. Here are some basic steps all families should follow to prepare for emergencies:

- Put together a family emergency kit, or Go Bag.
- Make a family disaster plan.
- Stay informed about potential emergencies by signing up for emergency alert systems/apps such as reverse 9-1-1 provided by your state or county emergency-management offices. Download the official FEMA app at Google Play or the Apple App Store. Or visit fema.gov/mobile-app.



- Learn what emergency plans have been established in your area by your state and local government, and share that information with the youngsters.

Helping their parents assemble an emergency kit is an ideal activity for children. (Visit <http://www.ready.gov/kids/step1/index.html>.) Explain to kids that the family might need to survive on its own for a little while after an emergency. This means having food, water, and other supplies to last at least three days.

What to include in a family Go Bag:

- One gallon of water per person per day for at least three days for drinking and sanitation.
- A three-day supply of non-perishable food.
- Battery-powered AM/FM radio and/or a NOAA Weather Radio receiver.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- First aid kit and whistle.
- A dust mask, plastic sheeting and duct tape.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties.
- Wrench, pliers, matches, can opener and Swiss Army knife.
- Local maps or rechargeable GPS.
- Cellphones with chargers.

Include prescription medications, eyeglasses, infant formula and diapers, pet food and water, and extra cash. For more information about assembling a family emergency kit, visit <http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html>.

Draw up a family disaster plan:

- Identify an out-of-town contact who may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members. If you have kids, the contact should be someone they know and trust.
- Be sure every member of the family has a cell phone to reach the emergency contact or designated “In Case of Emergency” number in your phone. Make sure to identify and inform them that you’ve listed them as emergency contacts.



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- Text messages can often get around cell network disruptions when a phone call might not be able to get through.
- Practice the disaster plan with the family.

Ask about emergency plans at work, daycare and school.

As is often said: Hope for the best, but plan for the worst.

