Speaker 1: [00:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2.35) I'm Mark Peterson and this is the FEMA podcast. Disasters can be frightening, confusing, and sad times for adults. So imagine how scary they can be for children. They may have lost pets, favorite toys, or even cherished treasures. They may not understand why belongings that were damaged by storms must be thrown out. Even children who did not experience a personal loss may still be frightened and have trouble coping after a disaster. But we know that children and youth are better able to cope with upsetting news when they understand more about the event. On this episode, we talk with Lauralee Coziol, FEMA’s National Advisor for Children in Disasters and explore the ways FEMA is helping children prepare for and be ready to recover after natural disasters. All right. I'm so thrilled today to talk to Lauralee Coziol, who is the National Advisor on Children in Disasters, one of the most unique jobs at FEMA I think. Lauralee, thank you.

Speaker 2: [01:09](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=69.94) Thank you. I'm so grateful to be here.

Speaker 1: [01:11](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=71.71) Whether you are a parent, an aunt or uncle, a guardian or even an educator, talking about making sure that kids feel secure in their safety during times of disaster is such an important part of the mission that FEMA does. And really the mission of being a guardian to a young person. Disasters, Lauralee, disasters are scary even for adults. So let's just dive right into this. You know, what are some of the biggest suggestions that you have or that you would give a parent or guardian when they're approaching the topic of children's maybe experiences of disaster, preparing for disasters, or even maybe after a disaster?

Speaker 2: [01:55](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=115.75) I think it all starts with having a plan. Most importantly, having a family communications plan. So knowing how you're going to reach one another in the event that you're not together when a disaster happens. Literally putting together a communications plan as a family. So collecting your family's contact information, identifying out-of-town contacts so that if you can't reach or connect with people who are maybe in your neighborhood or in your same community knowing who having everybody know, who will, you'll reach out to. So everybody's going to that same person. Gathering important phone numbers and addresses. So your child's school, childcare, doctors. And then when you're doing that, deciding upon a meeting place. So again, where are you going to meet if you're not together? And if you can't go back to your home - and including your entire family, including your children in on those preparedness conversations so that everybody has the same information - you're all comfortable with this if and when something were to occur and memorizing contact information. So many of us rely very heavily on our telephones and our telephone contact list. So for all of us, regardless of how old you are, knowing what those numbers are, if it's even just one phone number off the top of your head or having that phone number securely placed someplace so that your children can have that information when they need it.

Speaker 1: [03:26](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=206.44) I mean, it seems like just sitting down at a dinner table and just talking through a scenario would help that conversation along. Right?

Speaker 2: Absolutely.

Speaker 1: So if I were sitting there with my kids and my wife and I said, “Hey, you know, like what would happen if, you know, God forbid a tornado were to hit our school. What would we do? Who would we call? Would we have those numbers? Where would we go? Where would we meet up?” Right? Those are the the kind of exercise you need to go through.

Speaker 2: [03:57](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=237.31) Yes. And you could make it fun. You can talk about what you would put into your emergency preparedness kits or your go bag. So you've got games and you've got other supplies, which we'll talk about shortly. But make it fun. Make it challenging for the kids so that it's something that they're not feeling fearful of or feeling anxiety over, but something, you know… Make an adventure out of it.

Speaker 1: [04:21](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=261.91) You know, something that I've heard many times - and it always strikes me as interesting - that to know the numbers of those key people that you need to get ahold of in times of emergency because most of them are programmed in my phone and I don't know what the actual number is. It's just an amazing piece of advice that seems just so simple that now you have to think about. Right?

Speaker 2: Yep, exactly.

Speaker 1: So you mentioned that families, you know, kind of, we've talked about this theme of they might not be together when a disaster occurs. What more can be done now to help parents and guardians to reconnect quickly with their kids if they're separated? You know, if my kids are at school and I'm at work and, you know, maybe my wife is also at work in another location. You know, how do we get together?

Speaker 2: [05:10](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=310.41) So I think a really important piece is we talked about the communications plan and the family plan. But know what the evacuation and reunification plans are for your kids, whether they be schools, childcare, maybe a hospital or a juvenile justice facility. But there are approximately 69 million children in the United States who go to school or childcare on a daily basis. So when you think about that and you think about, you know, perhaps the no notice disaster happening, the importance of knowing what those facilities are going to be doing. So that gets down into response and in vehicles being able to get into help and ensure that everybody is okay. So you want to know. It goes beyond just being able to reconnect with your kids and your families. But when you are building your family communications plan, something that we've learned in previous disasters is identifying where you're going to meet but also bring a pen and a piece of paper with you so that you can write a note. That has happened in the past where families had pre-identified, where they would go but they were not going at the same time.

Speaker 2: [06:25](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=385.19) And so they were concerned that their family members or their friends had not had not come to meet them. But in reality, everything was fine. They couldn't use their phones because the electricity was down. The internet was down. So small little tricks like that. But it goes beyond family preparedness and children and adults being prepared, but also knowing what the plans are for those facilities who are taking care of your kids during the day.

Speaker 1: [06:54](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=414.85) Do you think it helps kids to actually like physically walk those plans?

Speaker 2: Absolutely. Yes.

Speaker 1: To actually experienced that place. Know where that place is that you're going to meet.

Speaker 2: [07:03](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=423.63) Yes. Yeah. Exercising a plan is critical.

Speaker 1: [07:07](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=427.98) In addition to having the plan, you know, maybe you do get back home or you have to go to another location and we always encourage people to have a kit. You know, these are simple supplies that can help them through the first few hours of an event. Is there something special that families with young kids should include in their preparedness kit that maybe they wouldn't normally think about?

Speaker 2: [07:28](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=448.79) Yeah, absolutely. I think one of the most important things are age-appropriate supplies. So whether that may be infant formula or baby food, diapers, wipes, electrolytes, especially if you're in the heat. But also things like hand sanitizer and anti-bacterial ointments, perhaps medications. Be thinking through those things because they may not be readily available. It's also important to remember that if you use infant formula that you mix with water, you may not be able to use tap water. So what type of water supply, bottled water, do you have with you? Or perhaps you're going to include a premixed formula. And then for nursing mothers, stick with your routine. Don't try to use formula if you normally would breastfeed. That's a very important preparedness piece; I think with pediatricians and talking with people before a disaster happens.

Speaker 1: [08:27](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=507.71) Yeah. One of the tips that - well I don't know if this is a tip - but one thing that my wife and I learned as we were putting together a sort of a kit, if you will, for when our kids were infants going into toddler age and we still were in diapers. We noticed that, you know, they move through diaper sizes so fast. It's just kind of crazy how fast they go through the sizes. So we just bought several sizes ahead. You can always, you know, sort tighten the diaper versus, you know, a situation where you have a much too small of a diaper. So it's like thinking through those things cause you don't want to have to be constantly changing out this kid. You want it to be something that's simple. So there's always sort of specific considerations for our kids. You know, we know our kids and so we want to make sure that we're, you know, really paying attention to their specific needs. But what about parents and guardians? What are the things that they should be thinking about if they have kids with disabilities or access and functional needs?

Speaker 2: [09:27](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=567.11) Be thinking about what you may be up against. Is there going to be a lack of electricity? Is there going to be a lack of transportation? How you're going to acquire the services that you would typically have on a regular day after a disaster happens? So talking with your doctor or maybe clinics or hospitals. But to be prepared for a delay in services due to a disaster, including additional items in your kit, such as batteries. You know, we talked a little bit about infant formula; but special dietary foods, extra medicines, maybe even an AC adapter for your car so you can charge different equipment such as a nebulizer. But I think just as important as thinking about what to include in your kit, thinking about all those things that you may need when everything is down because that is not all that unlikely to happen and we rely so much on electricity and clean water and running water.

Speaker 1: [10:36](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=636.71) You know you talked about transportation needs, and sort of inherent in that is understanding if you did need to evacuate to a shelter or some other location, whether it be a relative or a friend's, you know, home. Is there anything that parents or guardians should really know about that or should be considering now in their plans? Specific to evacuation? I mean, we're in the midst of hurricane season. Often we are under evacuation orders along the coast. I mean, there's gotta be some specific things for kids.

Speaker 2: [11:07](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=667.6) Yeah, absolutely. I think the most important thing for folks to remember is when you're evacuating to a shelter, you're not going to have the privacy of your own home. There may be a lot of people in very close living quarters to you. But the most important piece of all of this - in my mind at least - is remembering that you're responsible for the safety of your children. So the safety and security- so be with them if they go to the restrooms or if they're moving around. Just to ensure that you have somebody. Sometimes in a shelter there'll be areas that are set up for kids and they may be learning about disasters or playing games. But that piece of it is critical. And then if you are, you know - earlier we talked about putting a plan together. So also thinking about if a disaster were to happen in your area and you didn’t need to go to a shelter - congregate shelter - if you're going to stay with family or friends, pre-identifying who that is, where that is, writing all of that information into your plan. And then before the disaster happens, sharing that with your out-of-town contacts. So that again, it's cohesive and everybody knows, you know, you're all together as a family or as a unit to understand who's where and all of that good information.

Speaker 1: [12:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=752.37) Lauralee, we've talked a lot about preparing for the possibility of an emergency or disaster. Whether it's knowing where to go, having the communication plan on hand and practicing all of these things but what happens when families, kids, are actually faced with a disaster? How do we help them cope?

Speaker 2: [12:53](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=773.5) I think the most important thing is for you as the parent or guardian to understand what is happening or what is about to happen so that you can have an honest conversation with your kids. Encourage them to talk. Encourage them to ask questions. Have the information for them so, you know, what you talk to them about is going to be limited based upon their age and their coping skills. But have that conversation because they know that there is something that is happening. You know, give them small tasks that may help them feel like they've got control over a situation. Or if it's before a disaster, adding items into their go bag. So maybe a favorite toy or something that's going to help them to get through that time when they're not, you know…

Speaker 1: [13:44](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=824.44) You know, as I've had the opportunity to respond to disasters working for FEMA, one of the things that I've noticed in going to shelters is the really the sense of comradery amongst people, and families particularly. The play that goes on between kids of, you know, similar ages. But the reality of it is, the time while you're waiting to move on to some other type of, you know, temporary housing solution, it can be frankly just pretty boring. And kids obviously don't deal with that. Don’t deal with that well. What are some things that you can do if you're faced with this situation to help your kids through that?

Speaker 2: [14:29](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=869.48) Remembering that you may not be able to use your telephone or electronics. So many kids rely on that. So many adults rely on that. But you know, again, having that go back and having different items. So for younger kids it may be a stuffed animal. It may be crayons and a coloring book. You know, papers so that they can draw. Or for older kids and youth that may be having books to read, having a card game or a board game, something to write with if they want to journal what's happening. But be thinking that through. That’s such a very good point because you are going to get bored if you don't have something to look forward to, to pass that time.

Speaker 1: [15:13](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=913.8) And board made me not necessarily the right word, but it does seem like there is a lot of time that that needs to pass in order for the incident to pass or just for you know, potential housing situations to become available to help out. And I wonder, you know, in the midst of all of this, is there opportunities for older kids to maybe volunteer to be part of that comradery?

Speaker 2: [15:37](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=937.17) Yes, absolutely. And by doing so they may feel, you know, the feeling of giving back is a feeling of feeling good. So they're doing something to help somebody. There may be community organizations who they can begin talking to as early as the sheltering period about how they might be able to participate to help others. They may be able to do that in the shelter. They may be able to help in handing out food or water or something of that sort.

Speaker 1: [16:06](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=966.67) So the conversation about preparing kids for the possibility of disaster, it seems obvious that parents have a huge part of that. But kids do too. Kids are part of this conversation. So where can they go to learn more about, you know, the types of disasters but also what to do in those disasters?

Speaker 2: [16:25](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=985.89) Ready.Gov/Kids. There are a lot of resources there. There are activity books. We have an activity book called ‘Preparing with Pedro.’ We have a new game, ‘Ready to Help’, that also focuses on what to do in an emergency. And those are two different resources for younger kids. We have a lot of information about different types of disasters and where they may happen; how you can be better prepared for particular types of disasters depending upon where you live. There's a lot of information for parents there as well, helping your children to cope. And then we've opened that up so that we will even have resources to support emergency managers and schools and teachers and all of those facilities who take care of your kids during the day.

Speaker 1: [17:21](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1041.32) So Lauralee, the holidays are coming up. And it seems like this is a great time to be thinking about how to prepare your family, but also what would make a great stocking stuffer for your kids preparedness kit? So any tips?

Speaker 2: [17:36](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1056.02) Yeah, absolutely. We just talked about Pedro. We talked about including games or card games in a go kit. Well, why not include those in a stocking or, you know, something that's fun? Something that kids enjoy. That's challenging for them, but they're learning from it. And it's games. It's oriented towards having a really good time. ‘Ready to Help’ is a lot of fun. You walk away with some really great tips to be better prepared in emergencies and disasters. Maybe even thinking about a smaller, you know, stuffed animal or a board game that you can include in your kit. So it's a great opportunity.

Speaker 1: [18:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/pPuuHmWDj0wG-U1HhGnPbuAB_elPFzOL2StrZgBJVMKOzdxO_m4XyAnr8lvnJHS_uViWRVAA5zamvZOZF5zUbcs9u-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1097.35) We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and future episodes. Help us to improve the podcast by rating us and leaving a comment. If you have ideas for future topics, send us an e-mail at [fema-podcast@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:fema-podcast@fema.dhs.gov). If you'd like to learn more about this episode or other topics, visit fema.gov/podcast.