

How to Prepare

Whether they become a news headline or not, emergency situations disrupt lives everyday. It is important to take responsibility for your own safety and the safety of your family.

Plan Ahead:

Think about what could happen

- Conduct a brainstorming session to identify the disasters that could happen in your area.
- Consider factors such as limited power, food and water.
- Visit FEMA
- Reach your state or local government to see how you can prepare for events that happen in your area

Make a Plan

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to plan in advance: how you will contact one another; how you will get back together; and what you will do in different situations.

You can begin this process by gathering family members and making sure each person is well-informed on potential hazards and community plans. Discuss with them what you would do if family members are not home when a warning is issued. Additionally, your family plan should address the following:

- Escape routes
- Evacuation plans
- Family communications
- Utility shut-off and safety
- Insurance and vital records
- Special needs
- Care for pets: Information for pet owners
- Safety skills

Family Emergency Plan

- It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.

- Be sure every member of your family knows the phone number and has coins or a prepaid phone card to call the emergency contact.

- You may have trouble getting through, or the telephone system may be down altogether, but be patient.

Emergency Information

Find out what kinds of disasters, both natural and man-made, are most likely to occur in your area and how you will be notified. Methods of getting your attention vary from community to community. One common method is to broadcast via emergency radio and TV broadcasts. You might hear a special siren, or get a telephone call, or emergency workers may go door-to-door.

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as making an emergency supply kit and developing a family communications plan, are the same for both a natural or man-made emergency.

However, there are important differences among potential emergencies that will impact the decisions you make and the actions you take. Learn more about the potential emergencies that could happen where you live and the appropriate way to respond to them.

In addition, learn about the emergency plans that have been established in your area by your state and local government. Emergency preparedness is no longer the sole concern of earthquake prone Californians and those who live in the part of the country known as "Tornado Alley." For Americans, preparedness must now account for man-made disasters as well as natural ones. Knowing what to do during an emergency is an important part of being prepared and may make all the difference when seconds count.

Gather emergency supplies

When preparing for a possible emergency situation, it's best to think first about the basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth.

Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps

Additional Items to Consider Adding to an Emergency Supply Kit:

- Prescription medications and glasses
 - Infant formula and diapers
 - Pet food and extra water for your pet
 - Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container
 - Cash or traveler's checks and change
 - Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or information from www.ready.gov
 - Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person. Consider additional bedding if you live in a cold-weather climate.
 - Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. Consider additional clothing if you live in a cold-weather climate.
 - Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper – When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners.
 - Fire Extinguisher
 - Matches in a waterproof container
 - Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
 - Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, paper towels
 - Paper and pencil
 - Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children
- Visit our Disaster Survival list of products for more information