



# Cornell University

## Office of Emergency Planning & Recovery

### Protect Your Family...*Personal Preparedness Makes Sense*

PREPARE	PLAN	PRACTICE
Learn about the possible hazards and how to respond to each.	Meet with your family, talk about the hazards and what you would in each case.  Make sure everyone knows what they should do.	Review and practice your family disaster plan often.

When a large-scale disaster occurs, there response systems are place, but emergency responders can't be everywhere, helping everyone immediately. Fire departments, emergency medical services, police departments, and emergency managers are first on the scene to assess damage, secure public safety, and help those in immediate need. In addition, volunteer organizations like the American Red Cross, will provide shelter and assistance to meet those with immediate needs. There are public and private utility crews, who work to restore electricity, telephone and natural gas lines.

It may take hours, even days, for assistance to reach you. If the emergency is limited to your home, workplace, or immediate neighborhood, your plans have to be personalized. In either case, everybody in your family should be ready to act.

#### Prepare

Discuss the types of emergencies that could arise in your home or work, and the disasters that are most likely to occur in your community. Talk about what you would do in each situation. Children can learn what to do in an emergency, and can respond appropriately, if you tell them how to identify danger signals. Teach them what to do if they hear the sound of a smoke detector, or smell smoke or natural gas. The idea of an emergency or disaster can be scary to young children, so try to present the information in a way that will not be frightening or intimidating.

Discuss how each of you would escape from your home. You should identify two ways out of each room. Talk about the best place to be during each type of disaster. For example, in a tornado, the best place to be is in the basement, under a sturdy table or desk, away from windows.

## **For Example:**

*If disaster strikes...*

- No one is at home; you are at work; the kids are at school, and other family members are traveling on business. How do you find each other?
- And confines you to your home; Basic services that we take for granted, such as electricity, water, gas and telephone, may be unavailable for hours or weeks. You need to know how to cope with the situation.
- At the workplace and you need to stay on the job much longer than expected or cannot get home; who will take care of your children? Your pets?
- Suddenly, such as a tornado. You will need to know what to do, and where to take shelter.

## **Develop a Plan**

Developing a personal emergency plan will help you & your family to prepare to cope with the effects of disaster. Talking through possible situations can help everyone think about what to do. It doesn't take hours to plan and provides opportunities for the entire family to get involved.

What are the likely types of emergencies that may happen in Upstate New York?

- Snow / Ice
- Wind / Tornado
- Pandemic
- Flooding
- Chemical Spill

How will you respond?

- How do you evacuate your building?
- How will you evacuate local area or will you need to leave the state?
- Where will you go?
- How will you get there?

What will you need?

- Water
- Food
- Medicine
- Clothing

How long may you need to be away?

- 1 hour
- 1 day
- 1 week

How will you maintain communication with others?

- Cell phone - Radios
- Phone numbers of out of state family or friends (family call card)

You can see just how important it is to take steps to prepare for disaster before a disaster happens. Family preparedness works best when everyone participates.

## Put your plan into action

- Post emergency phone numbers for emergency medical services, the police department, fire department, poison center, Cornell University emergency hotline, "911" (if available in your area) and "check-in" contact near each telephone. If you have young children, it helps to illustrate the numbers with pictures.
- Learn first aid and CPR - everyone at home old enough to benefit from these classes should take them. Contact the American Red Cross or Heart Association for more information.
- Identify two (2) places for family members to meet to make sure that everyone is OK. One meeting place should be outside the home in case of a sudden emergency such as a fire. The place could be a street corner or neighbor's yard. If everyone meets at this place, it could eliminate the need for someone else to go in and look for missing family members, thus endangering another person. Pick a second meeting place outside the neighborhood in case family members cannot return home.
- Install and maintain fresh batteries in smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms. Working smoke detectors increase the chance of surviving a fire by 50%.
- Teach family members how to use an ABC fire extinguisher, and show them where it is kept.
- Check your home for potential hazards at least once a year. In a disaster, ordinary household items cause injury and damage. Anything that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire is a potential hazard. Keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children; unplug electrical equipment when not in use; replace frayed electrical plugs. Ask your local fire department for more information.
- Make sure that everyone in the family knows the shut-off locations for electric, water and gas and how and when to shut them off. Keep appropriate tools (including working flashlights!) nearby.
- Don't forget your pets. If it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for them. Plan for the worst case scenario. If emergency officials recommend that you stay in your home, keep your pets with you. If you have to evacuate and leave your pets behind, never leave them in a crate. They will be rendered helpless until someone else can reach them.
- Make a disaster supply kit (or purchase [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)), with a 3-day supply of the things you and your family will need if you must evacuate. Kits can be stored in an easily accessible, easy to carry container, such as a plastic tote, duffel bag, large trashcan, or suitcase.

### Container

- Flashlight - don't forget the batteries
- Portable radio - don't forget the batteries

### Food

- Ready to eat canned meats, fish, fruits, vegetables, beans and soups
  - Don't forget the manual can opener
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola
- Peanut butter or nuts
- Dried fruits
- Crackers

### **Drinks**

- Bottled water
- Canned juices
- Drinks with electrolytes

### **Cleaning Items**

- Soap and water or alcohol based (60-95%) hand wash
- Cleansing agent / soap
- Garbage bags
- Tissues , toilet paper, paper towels

### **Medical, Health and Emergency Supplies**

- Prescribed medical supplies
- Fever medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Thermometer
- Anti-diarrheal medication
- Vitamins
- First aid kit

### **Other items to consider:**

- Cash – no power, no ATM access
- Important papers (license, birth certificates, insurance cards)
- Pets (food, water, shelter)
- Small children (special food, diapers, activities)

### **Practice your plan**

Take time to test your family disaster plan to insure that it works. Quiz your children at least once every six months, so that they will remember what to do. For example, do they remember your "check-in contact's" phone number? Make sure that everyone, even the baby-sitter or elder caregiver, knows your family's emergency phone number, as well as the location & number of the second meeting place.

Conduct home fire & emergency evacuation drills. Does everyone know two escape routes from each room? Are fire escape ladders placed near windows above the first floor? Do children know how to use them? Test smoke detectors monthly & change the batteries at least twice a year (i.e. when changing clocks for daylight savings time). It has been estimated that 1/3 of U.S. smoke detectors have dead or missing batteries. Test & recharge your ABC fire extinguishers according to manufacturer's specifications.

### **Share your plan**

Once you have your personal emergency plan in place, encourage your family and neighbors to take these same steps. After a major disaster, it may take days for emergency responders to reach everyone. Preparing to work with your neighbors can save lives and property, and increase everyone's ability to cope.

Meet with your neighbors to plan how you can work together until official help arrives. Start out by learning what specific skills your neighbors have, such as medical, communications, or technical skills. Also, you might want to ask a neighbor to be your buddy, someone who can check on you and whom you can check on after a disaster. Consider how you can help others with special needs, such as disabled or elderly persons.

The following web pages also can offer you additional information for your family's well being; and tips for Personal Emergency Planning.

**Red Cross** - <http://www.redcross.org>

**Federal Emergency Management Agency** - <http://www.fema.gov/>

**State Emergency Management Office** - <http://www.semo.state.ny.us/>

**Ready America** – <http://www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/index.html>

Families can and do respond to and recover from these events better by preparing in advance and working as a team.

**Simply put, knowing what to do before and after disaster strikes is  
a family's... a workplace's... and a neighborhood's... best protection !**