



Cornell University

## OFFICE OF EMERGENCY PLANNING & RECOVERY

### *4 Basic Steps To Prepare*

1. Learning about the hazards and how to prepare for each
2. Talking about the idea of disaster planning with your family.
3. Putting your plan into action.
4. Practicing your plan.

### **Why Prepare ?**

When a large-scale disaster occurs, emergency managers, fire departments, emergency medical services & police departments are first on the scene to assess damage, secure public safety, and help those in immediate need. They are joined by volunteer organizations like the American Red Cross, which provides shelter and assistance to meet emergency needs. There are public and private utility crews, who work to restore electricity, telephone and natural gas lines. There is a response system in place, but in times of disaster emergency responders can't be everywhere, helping everyone immediately. It may take hours, even days, for assistance to reach your area. And 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.

#### **For example:**

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. Who will take care of Your children ? Your pets ? until you are able to get home ?

- You need to get out fast. You should have a plan for where to go, and what to take with you.
- Suddenly, like a tornado. You need to know what to do, and where to take shelter.

You can see how important it is to take steps to prepare for disaster before it happens. Preparing for emergencies is everyone's responsibility. Families can and do respond to and recover from these events better by preparing in advance and working as a team.

Developing a personal emergency plan will help you & your family prepare to cope with the effects of disaster. It takes very little time to do, and it provides opportunities for the entire family to get involved. The personal emergency plan includes:

### **Put your plan into action...**

These steps are simple, and require a minimum of time. Every family member can participate.

Here are a few ideas:

- 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.
- Make sure that everyone in the family knows the locations of electrical, water and gas shut-offs, and how and when to shut them off. Keep appropriate tools (including working flashlights!) nearby.
- 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 for fire hazards.
- Don't forget your pets. If it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for them. Plan for the worse 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.
- Reduce the chance of fire in your home: 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.

- 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.
- Store at least a 2-week supply of the things you would need if confined to your home by an emergency or a disaster, such as a flashlight, a portable radio, extra batteries, non-perishable food & water, & a first aid kit. Keep in mind that when disaster strikes, you may need to evacuate in a moment's notice; you may not have the time to get the first aid kit from the bathroom, food & water from the kitchen, and the battery-powered radio from the den. Therefore, assemble a disaster supply kit, with a 3-day supply of the things you need in an evacuation. Kit contents can be stored in an easily accessible, easy to carry container, such as a duffel bag, large trashcan, or suitcase. Your disaster supplies kit should include a flashlight, battery-powered radio, extra batteries, first aid kit, water in plastic containers, non-perishable food, clothing & bedding, tools, & emergency supplies, and special family needs.

[HTTPS://WWW.REDCROSSSTORE.ORG](https://www.redcrossstore.org)

### **Meet with your family and plan ahead**

Here are a few examples of topics the family should discuss as a group:

- Discuss the types of emergencies that could arise in your home or work, and the disasters that are most likely to occur in our community, and 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.
- Discuss the possibility of evacuation. If you had to leave your home for several days, consider where you'd go, what you would do, and what items you would take with you. Remind family members that when an emergency or disaster does occur, they should listen to a battery-powered radio for instructions.
- Discuss how you would keep in contact with each other. Family members could be anywhere when disaster strikes. Pick two 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.

- For example, flooding or hazardous materials incidents can close roads or neighborhoods. Possible meeting places include a friend's house, community center, or neighborhood park. Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "check-in contact." In disasters, it is often easier to call long-distance than within the stricken area. Family members should call this person to "check-in," to tell them where they are, and how they are doing. Children should memorize this phone number, or carry it with them.

As you can see, family preparedness works best when everyone participates. With the whole family involved, you can assign specific tasks to each family member, so they remember what to do in case of disaster.

Every community faces hazards that can put people at risk. In upstate New York, the risks are natural disasters such as flood, ice storm or blizzard, heat wave, tornado and man-made hazards, such as a hazardous materials spill, transportation incidents and terrorism.

### **Learning what the hazards are and how to prepare for them.**

The following web pages for additional information for your family's well being; and tips for Personal Disaster Planning.

<http://www.coughsafe.com/>

<http://www.icesticker.com/>

<http://www.redcross.org/>

This site has downloadable brochures and checklists on family disaster planning that are really wonderful. If you are unable to get them from the internet; call the Office of Work and Family Services at 255-3649

<http://www.fema.gov/>

<http://www.merimage.com/pope911/OES/ready8.htm>

<http://www.kokuanurses.com/disaster.htm>

<http://www.sarpy.com/ema/fdp.htm>

### **Cornell University – Status of Campus Operations**

<http://www.cornell.edu/about/status/index.cfm>

## **DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT**

- Stock up today and store in a water-resistant container! Replenish as necessary, especially at the
- beginning of winter and flood season:
- Two week supply of prescription medicines
- Two week supply of nonperishable/special dietary foods
- Drinking Water/containers: 1 gal/per person/per day (minimum 3 days)

- Flashlights and (7 sets) batteries for each member of the family
- Portable radio and (7 sets) batteries
- First aid book and kit including bandages, antiseptic, tape, compresses, non-aspirin pain reliever, anti-diarrhea medication
- Mosquito repellent & citronella candles; matches
- Two coolers (one to keep food; the other to go get ice)
- Plastic tarp for roof/window repair, screening, tools and nails, etc.
- Water purification kit (tablets, chlorine [plain] and iodine)
- Infant necessities (medicine, sterile water, diapers, ready formula, bottles)
- Two weeks supply of non-perishable pet food
- Clean up supplies (mop, buckets, towels, disinfectant)
- Camera and film
- Non-electric can opener
- Extra batteries for camera, portable TV & lamps, etc.
- Plastic trash bags
- Toilet paper, paper towels and pre-moistened towelettes.

### **Items to take with you if you have to evacuate**

- Pillows, blankets, sleeping bags or air mattresses
- Extra clothing, shoes, eyeglasses, etc.
- Folding chairs, lawn chairs or cots
- Personal hygiene items (toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, etc.)
- Quiet games, books, playing cards and favorite toys for children
- Important papers:  
(driver's license, special medical information, insurance policies and property inventories)

### **Commodities needed before and after a storm**

- Cash (With no power, banks may be closed, checks and credit cards unaccepted and ATMs may not be operational)
- Charcoal, wooden matches and grill
- Ice
- Keep a disaster supplies kit in the car, in case you're stranded or unable to return home.
- Keep important family documents such as health & immunization records, mortgage records and insurance policies in a fireproof & waterproof container. Consider keeping copies of these documents in a safe deposit box. For insurance purposes, keep an itemized list of personal property, including home furnishings, clothing & valuables. Photographs of your possessions are helpful as well.

Ongoing practice your plan with your family

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 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.

### Review

- **Step 1**— is learning about the hazards in our community, and how to respond to each.
- **Step 2**— is to meet with your family & talk about the hazards & plan what to do in case of each. For example, pick two places to meet in the event of an emergency, and ask an out of state friend to be your "check-in contact."
- **Step 3**— is to put your plan into action. It includes assembling a disaster supplies kit, installing smoke detectors, and learning first aid.
- **Step 4**— is to test and practice your family disaster plan. For example, you can conduct evacuation drills every six months, to help you remember what to do when the time comes.

Once you have your personal emergency plan in place, encourage your 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.

Don't forget to make plans for childcare

in case parents can't get home.

**Simply put, knowing what to do after disaster strikes is**

**a family's...**

**a workplace's...**

**and a neighborhood's...**

**best protection !**