

Steps to Emergency Preparedness



Emergencies can happen at any time. Hurricanes, floods, snowstorms, terrorism, earthquakes, hazardous materials spills, and fire are some examples of natural and man-made disasters that require awareness and preparedness. While state and local emergency response teams are ready and able to assist, they may not be able to reach everyone right away. The first 72 hours after a disaster are critical. Know how to take care of yourself and your family should disaster strike. Prepare by increasing your awareness and readiness for both natural and man-made disasters. There are three basic steps everyone should take to prepare for a possible emergency situation.

Assemble an emergency kit.

Everyone should be able to survive relatively comfortably at home on their own for at least three days. During that time, you may be without outside aid until the danger subsides. A well-stocked emergency kit should include:

- One gallon of water per day per individual
- Non-perishable foods
- Manual can opener
- Warm clothes/sleeping bags
- Prescription medication
- Extra cash
- Flashlights & extra batteries
- Candles & waterproof matches
- Battery powered or wind-up radio
- First aid supplies
- Special items for babies, seniors, people with disabilities, and pets
- Duct tape and heavy duty plastic garbage bags

Make a family communications plan.

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes. Make sure everyone knows how to get in touch and where to go.

- In case local communications are down, designate an out-of-state friend or relative as a central contact point.
- Keep a list of family and emergency contacts near the phone or computer.
- Plan escape routes from your home - two routes from each room.
- Designate a safe room where everyone can gather. Best choice is inside room with few doors and windows.
- Know how to shut off the water, electricity, and other utilities.
- Select a safe gathering place outside of town where everyone can meet if evacuation is necessary.
- Familiarize yourself with emergency plans for places where you and your family may be located such as schools, day care providers, and businesses.

Learn more about readiness.

Planning helps. If your family knows what to expect, they will react more calmly during and after a disaster.

- Make accommodations for the elderly, those with special needs, and pets.
- Organize, update, and safeguard your insurance policies and other important documents.
- Know where to access local emergency information such as radio, television and computer based sources.
- Get to know your neighbor's special skills and needs. Plan now to work together after a disaster until help arrives.
- Take training to learn more about basic first aid, CPR, hazardous materials and other risk reduction techniques.

Don't be caught unprepared. Take steps to protect yourself and your family when disaster strikes. For more information on disaster preparedness, visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on the web at:

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