

Develop a Family Disaster Plan

Basic Steps to Prepare your Family for a Disaster - Some simple steps can be taken to protect our families and ensure the safety of our children, while at the same time making it easier to recover if and when we have to go through a future disaster. This family readiness guide is designed to help you and your family be prepared for future disasters.

1 Find Out What Can Happen To Your Family

Take these steps to find out what could happen to your family:

- 1.** Contact your Local Emergency Management Office or your local American Red Cross Chapter to find out which disasters could affect you specifically.
- 2.** Determine what types of disasters are likely to happen near you and how to prepare for each.
- 3.** Identify what your community's warning sirens sound like and what to do if you hear them.

2 Create a Family Emergency Plan

Hold a family meeting: Keep it simple and work as a team!

- 1.** It is important to warn children - without overly alarming them - about potential disasters.
- 2.** Use the following guidelines to teach children about disaster and to make them feel as if they are helping in disaster planning.
- 3.** Tell children that a disaster is something that could hurt people or cause damage. Explain that “sometimes nature provides too much of a good thing”, like fire, rain, and wind.
- 4.** Tell children there are many people who can help them in a disaster.
- 5.** Have a common plan in case family members are separated:
- 6.** Choose a place to go outside of your neighborhood in case you cannot go home. Choose someone out-of-town to be your family contact.

7. Keep emergency phone numbers by each phone.

Teach Children:

- How to call for help (emergency numbers).
- When to call each emergency number.
- How to dial long distance.
- How to memorize the names and numbers of local and out-of-state- emergency contacts.
- Show everyone how and when to turn off the utilities.
- Locate the main electric fuse box, water service main, and natural gas main.
- Keep a wrench near gas and water shut-off valves.
- Remember: if you turn off the gas, you will need a professional to turn it back on again.
- Do a home hazard hunt for items that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire.
- Find safe places in your home for each type of disaster.
- Have all adults take a Red Cross First Aid and CPR Class.

If you are told to evacuate, please take the following steps:

- In Texas, there is no such thing as a mandatory evacuation, however if the Emergency Management Office recommends evacuating, take their advice and do so immediately. It could save your life.
- Listen to the radio, TV, or a NOAA Weather Radio for instructions from local officials.
- They will provide instructions on evacuation routes and shelter openings.
- Shut off water, gas, and electricity if told to do so.
- Leave a note telling when you left and where you are going.
- Call your family contact to tell them where you are going.
- Make sure you have all of your disaster supplies (see checklist)

- Secure doors and garage doors from the inside.
- Fill up your car with gasoline.
- Use evacuation routes recommended by officials.

If you decide to stay at home during a disaster, do the following:

- Only stay at home if you have NOT been ordered to leave.
- Prepare your home as if you were evacuating
- Stay in a large center room with few windows.
- If flooding occurs, move to higher floors.
- Keep all windows and doors closed tightly.
- Monitor radio for news and weather reports continuously.
- Turn off propane tank. Unplug all unnecessary appliances.
- Fill bathtub and large containers with water for sanitary purposes.

- Use flashlights instead of candles. Cook with Canned Heat; DO NOT USE charcoal or pressurized gas inside!
- Turn refrigerator to maximum cold and open only when necessary.
- Turn off utilities if told to do so by authorities.
- If you are in a multiple-story building and away from the water, go to the first or second floors and take refuge in the halls or interior doors.
- Stay inside until “all clear” is announced. If seeking shelter during a hurricane, do not leave your home when the eye of the storm passes – Eye wall winds, the strongest of the storm, can start to back up with very little notice.
- Be alert for and ready to seek shelter from tornadoes, which can happen during a hurricane or a severe thunderstorm.

3 Create a Disaster Supply Kit

Household Items

- Battery-powered radio

- Battery-powered flashlights
- Extra batteries
- Cash or Travelers Checks and change
- Map to follow evacuation routes/ find shelters
- Minimum 3-day supply of nonperishable, packaged or canned food (e.g. Canned or dried juice mixes, powdered or canned milk, peanut butter, jelly, crackers, unsalted nuts, trail mixes, cereals, rice, cookies, hard candies, instant coffee, tea bags)
- Basic food seasoning (salt/pepper)
- Manual can opener
- Paper plates
- Cups
- Minimum 3-day supply of bottled drinking water one gallon of water per person per day. Don't forget water for pets. Store water in sealed unbreakable containers. Replace every 6 months.
- First Aid Kit
- Fire extinguisher (small ABC type)
- Duct tape
- Waterproof matches
- Sewing kit
- Plastic storage containers
- Paper, pencils and pens
- Aluminum foil

- Plastic sheeting/tarps
- Basic tool kit (adjustable wrench, screwdrivers, hammer, etc.)

Family Documents (stored in a water-proof container):

- Birth Certificates
- Marriage Certificates
- Death Certificates
- Ownership Documents
- Insurance Policies
- Passports/ Visas
- Social Security Cards
- Bond/Stock Issues
- Wills/ Living Trusts
- Medical Records/ Children's vaccinations histories
- Photocopies of all cards carried in wallet
- Backup disks of computer information
- Irreplaceable photographs/videotapes/family heirlooms
- Inventory of personal property for filing insurance claims. List everything and include receipts of big-ticket items.
- Videotape or photos of home(s) contents to supplement your written inventory of your home.

- Clothing and Bedding (For Each Family Member)
- Sturdy shoes or work boots
- Rain gear
- Blankets and sleeping bags
- Hat and work gloves
- Thermal underwear
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent and sun screen

4 Practice and Maintain Your Plan.

Without practice and maintenance, your family risks forgetting its disaster plan, and your disaster supplies will expire or be ruined. Use this schedule to remember to practice and maintain your plan.

Every Month

Test Your Smoke Alarms.

Every 6 Months

Go over Family Disaster Plan and do escape drills. Quiz children. Replace stored food and water. Make sure to rotate clothing according to the season.

Every year

Wash blanket/clothing supplies. Replace batteries in smoke alarms.