

FAMILY DISASTER PLAN

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. Families can and do cope with disasters by preparing in advance and working together as a team. Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility. Therefore, we urge you to develop a Family Disaster Plan.

There are questions that will need to be answered such as where will your family be when disaster strikes? How will you find each other and will you know if your children are safe?

Suggested steps to create and implement a family disaster plan:

1. Contact the local chapter of the American Red Cross, county emergency management or the National Weather Service and ask what types of disasters could occur in your area and how you should respond. Are there Community Warning Signal and Evacuation Plans for your community?
2. Pick two places to meet: right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire; and outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.
3. Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.). Teach your children how and when to call 911. (Everyone, including small children, should know their home address and phone number).
4. Ask an out-of-state friend or family member to be the "family contact" for everyone to call if the family gets separated. Make sure each family member knows the "family contact" phone number. After a disaster, it is often easier to call long distance rather than calling someone locally.
5. If you are a pet owner, that plan should include your pets. Being prepared can save their lives. In the event of a disaster, if you must evacuate, the most important thing you can do to protect your pets is to evacuate them, too. Red Cross disaster shelters cannot accept pets because of the state's health and safety regulations and other considerations. It may be difficult, if not impossible, to find shelter for your pet in the midst of a disaster, so plan ahead. Some suggestions:
 - A. Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets. Ask if "no pet" policies could be waived in an emergency. If you have notice of an impending disaster, call ahead for reservations.
 - B. Ask friends, relatives, or others outside the affected area whether they could shelter your pet.
 - C. Prepare a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter pets in an emergency and include 24-hour phone numbers.
 - D. Have your family learn basic safety measures, such as CPR and First Aid.

6. Show each family member how to:

- A. Turn off water, gas and electricity at the main switches;
- B. Use a fire extinguisher;
- C. Conduct a home hazard hunt in which you inspect your home for items that can move, fall, break or cause a fire, and correct them;
- D. Stock emergency supplies and assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit. (See suggested Supply Kit Checklist);
- E. Determine the best escape routes from your room and find safe spots in your home for different types of disasters.

Practice and maintain your plan:

Ask questions frequently to make sure your family remembers the designated meeting places, phone numbers and safety rules in your Family Disaster Plan.

Conduct drills.

- Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six months.
- Test and recharge your fire extinguisher according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Check Smoke alarms and batteries monthly (batteries should be changed at least once a year).