

Storm Season is Here... Are You Prepared?

The storm season is upon us. Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and other natural disasters can strike quickly and without much warning. Your best defense is to be prepared. The website www.ready.gov recommends these three steps to help your family prepare for a disaster.



1. Get a Kit

You may need to survive on your own after an emergency. This means having your own food, water, and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least three days. Keep in mind that basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment, and telephones may be cut off for days, or even a week or longer. Here are some recommended items to include in a basic emergency supply kit:

Emergency Supply Kit

- Water**, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation.
- Food**, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Try to avoid foods that will make you thirsty.
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio** and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both.
- Flashlight** and extra batteries.
- First aid kit.**
- Whistle**, to signal for help.
- Dust mask** to help filter contaminated air, and plastic sheeting and duct tape to create a shelter-in-place.
- Moist towelettes**, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- Wrench** or pliers to turn off utilities.
- Can opener** for food (if kit contains canned food).
- Local maps.**
- Cell phone** with chargers, inverter, or solar charger.

Additional Items to Consider Adding to an Emergency Supply Kit:

- Prescription medications and glasses.
- Infant formula and diapers.
- Pet food and extra water for your pet.

- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification, and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.
- Cash or traveler's checks and change.
- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or information from www.ready.gov.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person. Consider additional bedding if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Complete change of clothing including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. Consider additional clothing if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper – When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe, or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Fire Extinguisher.
- Matches in a waterproof container.
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items.
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, plastic utensils, and paper towels.
- Paper and pencil.
- Books, games, puzzles, or other activities for children.

2. Make a Plan

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to plan in advance: how you will contact one another; how you will get back together; and what you will do in different situations.

Family Emergency Plan

- Identify an **out-of town contact**. Be sure every member of your family **knows the phone number** and has a cell phone, **coins**, or a **prepaid phone card** to call the emergency contact. If you have a cell phone, program that person(s) as "ICE" (In Case of Emergency) in your phone. If you are in an accident, emergency personnel will often check your ICE listings in order to get a hold of someone you know. Make sure to tell your family and friends that you've listed them as emergency contacts.
- Teach family members how to use text messaging (also known as SMS or Short Message Service).
- Subscribe to **alert services**. Many communities now have systems that will send instant text alerts or e-mails to let you know about bad weather, road closings, local emergencies, etc. Sign up by visiting your local Office of Emergency Management website.

Planning to Stay or Go

Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the emergency, the first important decision is whether you stay where you are or evacuate. You should understand and plan for both possibilities. Use common sense and available information, including what you are learning here, to determine if there is an immediate danger. In any emergency, local authorities may or may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should watch TV, listen to the radio, or check the Internet often for information or official instruction as it becomes available.

Emergency Information

Find out what kinds of disasters, both natural and man-made, are most likely to occur in your area and how you will be notified. Methods of getting your attention vary from community to community. One common method is to broadcast via **emergency radio** and **TV broadcasts**. You might hear a special siren, or get a telephone call, or emergency workers may go door-to-door.

Emergency Plans

There are tools available on www.ready.gov to help you create and print a Comprehensive Family Emergency Plan. You may also want to **inquire about emergency plans** at places where your family spends time: **work**, **daycare**, and **school**. If no plans exist, consider volunteering to help create one. Talk to your neighbors about how you can work together in the event of an emergency. You will be better prepared to safely reunite your family and loved ones during an emergency if you think ahead and communicate with others in advance.

3. Be Informed

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as making an emergency supply kit and developing a family communications plan, are the same for both a natural or man-made emergency.

However, there are important differences among potential emergencies that will impact the decisions you make and the actions you take. Learn more about the potential emergencies that could happen where you live and the appropriate way to respond to them. In addition, learn about the emergency plans that have been established in your area by your state and local government.

Here are some helpful websites to help you create and maintain your disaster preparedness plan:

www.ready.gov

In addition to the information provided above, the Ready America website offers several downloadable publications for your use. Click on the "Downloading and Ordering all *Ready* Publications" link on the home page.

www.fema.gov

Visit the FEMA website and click on "Plan & Prepare" for access to information about preparing for specific natural disasters, and downloadable guides to planning and preparing for a disaster.

www.redcross.org

For more information about disasters specific to your area of the country, visit the Red Cross website and click on "Preparing and Getting Trained". Choose "Preparedness Fast Facts" for a complete list of downloadable disaster information.

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