

September is National Preparedness Month

Your everyday routines can be disrupted with little or no warning by natural disasters, fires or other catastrophic events. How you handle and survive an emergency depends on how well you are prepared. There are things you should consider and do to make sure that you are ready in the event an emergency does occur.

National Preparedness Month, sponsored each September by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is a nationwide effort to increase Americans awareness of emergency preparedness. National Preparedness Month was so designated in recognition of one of America's worst disasters, the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, which occurred in September. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security encourages you to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies.

Are You Ready To React In an Emergency?

What if it is necessary to take shelter, which is staying inside a building with doors/windows closed and locked, would you be prepared? Have you thought about what you would do if you had to evacuate your home in a moment's notice? What would (or should) you take with you? Do you know where you would go? Do you have a way to get there? Can you take your pets?

The US Department of Homeland Security recommends that everyone be able to answer those questions. They also recommend that you build emergency supply kits and develop personal communication and evacuation plans for emergencies.

Personal Communication Plan:

Identify people outside of your immediate family that can be contacted in the event you can't communicate directly with your family. Make a card with those phone numbers and give copies to all family members. Identify:

- An emergency contact in your local area;
- An out-of-state contact in case the emergency affects your local contact;
- A family meeting place.

Assist Emergency Responders in Contacting Your Family:

If you were sick or injured, would emergency responders know who to contact? A simple addition to your cell phone's phone book can change that. All you need to do is add the letters I C E (meaning In Case of Emergency) and put in your contact's information. For additional entries, name them ICE 2, ICE 3, etc. Emergency responders and hospital personnel look to cell phones for identification and notification purposes.

Home Emergency Kit:

Every home should have a Home Emergency Kit. Putting together a complete emergency supply kit is essential to being properly prepared at home. The kit should be stocked with items that you would need to survive during a disaster. Although not an inclusive list, Home Emergency Kits should contain the following:

- One (1) gallon of water per person per day for at least three (3) days, for drinking and sanitation;
- At least a 3-day supply of nonperishable food, and a can opener if your kit contains canned food;
- Butane-Propane backpacking or camping stove with a 3-day supply of fuel;
- Hand crank or battery-powered radio with extra batteries;
- Flashlight and extra batteries;
- First aid kit;
- Whistle to signal for help;
- Dust mask, plastic sheeting, and duct tape. There are circumstances when you may need to stay put and create a barrier between yourself and potentially contaminated air outside, a process known as "shelter-in-place." You can use these things to tape up windows, doors, and air vents if you need to seal off a room from outside contamination.
- Hand sanitizer, moist wipes, and garbage bags for personal sanitation.
- Wrench and/or pliers; you may need these to turn off utilities (know where your gas and water shutoff valves are located). A crowbar and other tools may come in handy;
- Local maps.

Evacuation Plan:

In an emergency, you may be instructed to evacuate your home quickly. Make sure you know:

- Two or more ways to exit your home or building;
- Where you should meet with family after being evacuated;
- The location of your Travel Emergency Kit.

Travel Emergency Kit:

Everyone should build a Travel Emergency Kit. Putting together a complete emergency supply kit is essential to being properly prepared during evacuation. The kit should be stocked with items that you would need to survive if you had to evacuate your home during a disaster. Although not an inclusive list, Travel Emergency Kits should contain the following:

- One day's worth of clothing, including shoes;
- Towel(s) and washcloth;
- Hand sanitizer, moist wipes, and garbage bags for personal sanitation.
- Blanket and/or sleeping bag;
- Personal care items (medications, toiletries, etc.);
- Flashlight and extra batteries;
- Radio and extra batteries;
- Water and non-perishable foods;
- Extra set of car keys;
- Cash and credit card;
- Copies of important documents (driver's license, prescriptions, bank account information, etc.);
- Local maps.

If you have a car, keep your gas tank filled at least half full. In an emergency fuel may not be available. Keep the following items in your car:

- Cell phone;
- Whistle to signal for help;
- Bottled water;
- Hand sanitizer, moist wipes, and garbage bags for personal sanitation.
- Non-perishable food;
- First aid kit;
- Flashlight and extra batteries;
- Flares or light sticks;
- Vehicle emergency kit (jumper cables, tire jack, spare tire);
- Blanket;
- Camping shovel;
- Basic tool kit;
- Local maps.

Always Be Prepared For an Emergency