



Disaster Services

FAMILY PREPAREDNESS GUIDE



CONVOY OF HOPE



WELCOME

I never thought it would happen to me.

We didn't expect it to be this bad.

I wish we were better prepared.

These are all statements our Disaster Services team has heard many times when deployed to a disaster. That's why we came up with this simple Family Emergency Guide to help your family begin the preparedness journey.

It's true you can't prepare for everything. However, we do believe there are simple steps families can take to better prepare themselves for whatever storm comes their way.

Proverbs 21:31 (NIV) states, "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD." This verse reminds us that, while God is ultimately sovereign in all things, it does not negate our responsibility to "[make] ready" our households.

Preparedness is not merely putting aside a case of water and some ramen noodles. It requires us to think through scenarios, try to anticipate potential needs, and take practical action toward preparing for those needs. A family that is well prepared is more resilient to a disaster and better equipped to help those around them.



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FAMILY PREPAREDNESS KIT

The Family Preparedness Kit takes the basics of survival, as well as other commonly recommended items for an emergency supply kit, and breaks them down into five phases. You can add each section to your kit individually one week at a time or create your kit all at once. *It's not a matter of how quickly you complete your kit, only that you do.*

There is checklist in the back of this manual filled with practical suggestions of things to include in your kit. It should help you begin to prepare your family in the event you need to be self-sufficient for three days. Every family is unique and has different needs and preferences, so feel welcome to add things to your kit that you think would make your family better prepared in the event of an emergency.



PHASE 1 WATER

Store a minimum of one gallon of water per person per day for three days. During disasters, water is primarily used for drinking and sanitation. Remember children, nursing mothers, and individuals with medical conditions may require more water per day. If you live in a warm climate, additional water also may be necessary.

Water should be stored in clean, tightly sealed, plastic containers. Rotate water supply every six months. Water can be frozen in plastic containers and, in disaster situations, placed in coolers to keep perishable food and prescription medications cool. It can then be consumed as drinking water when it melts. Be sure not to overfill bottles to avoid breakage when water freezes.

PHASE 2 CANNED, PACKAGED & COMFORT FOOD

Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food for each person in your household. Select foods that require no refrigeration or water for preparation. Choose foods your family will eat and enjoy, but be aware that some foods such as chocolate and caffeine cause dehydration. When planning your food needs, remember children, nursing mothers, and individuals with allergies or medical conditions may have specific dietary requirements or restrictions. Be sure to include a manual can opener and eating utensils in your kit.



PHASE 3
WARMTH, WEATHER RADIO, FLASHLIGHTS & EXTRA BATTERIES

Add blankets, sleeping bags, sturdy shoes, rain gear, and an extra set of clothes for each family member to your kit. If you live where severe winter weather is possible, add gloves, hats, coats, and thermal long underwear for each person. Items like sleeping bags, rain gear, and sturdy shoes can be used for other family activities and, when not in use, stored with your preparedness supplies for quick access.

Get one flashlight and extra batteries for each person in your household. Heavy-duty or alkaline batteries have a shelf life of 5 years, while lithium batteries may last as long as 10 years. Remember, once a battery is placed in a flashlight it can lose its charge in as little as 6 months.

PHASE 4
CLEAN AIR, FIRST AID & PERSONAL HYGIENE

Include two to three N95 masks for every person in your family. In some emergencies, tiny microscopic particles can be released into the air. Flooding can create an airborne mold, explosions can release fine debris, and (in a biological threat) germs may be released that can make you sick.

For every member of your family, have a separate one-gallon ziplock bag filled with personal hygiene items. A complete list of hygiene items is in the Family Preparedness Kit Checklist in the back of this guide.

Make sure to have a complete first-aid kit. It should include latex gloves, sterile dressings, antibiotic ointment, cleansing agents, a variety of adhesive bandages, and non-prescription drugs.

Have at least a week's worth of your prescriptions on hand. Consult your doctor or pharmacist to see what else you may need and how to store extra prescription medications, such as insulin or heart and blood pressure medicine.

PHASE 5
SPECIAL ITEMS

Your Family Preparedness Kit should include important documents stored in a box that is portable, waterproof, and fireproof. Make an extra copy of all important documents and, if possible, store it with a trusted family member or friend. Consider scanning documents onto an external hard drive. It's also a good idea to include a copy of a utility bill for proof of residence should you have difficulty re-entering your neighborhood or applying for different types of aid post-disaster. For a complete list of important documents, see the Family Preparedness Kit checklist.

Pack supplies for each household pet and service animal. Take pet food, bottled water, pet medications, veterinary records, cat litter/pan, can opener, food dishes, and any other essential pet-related items with you. See the "Care for Pets" section in the Family Preparedness Guide for more information and the checklist for a more comprehensive list. Include a recent photo of you and your pet in your Family Preparedness Kit to help document ownership if you are separated.

STORING YOUR FAMILY PREPAREDNESS KIT

● **Store your family preparedness kit in a cool dry location in your home.** Pack items into clean sturdy totes. Remember to keep your kit up to date with the latest documents, unexpired food, and relevant weather attire.





FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Disasters can strike at any time and usually with little warning. For this reason, it is important to plan how you will contact each family member if you are not together when a disaster occurs. Sometimes there is no cell service or Wi-Fi. Think about how you will communicate with your spouse and/or children in different situations.

In the back of this guide, there is a contact form for each adult and child in your family. Once you have completed your contact form, have family members keep a copy handy in a wallet, purse, or backpack. You may want to send a copy to each child's school or daycare to keep on file.

Keep a copy of your family communications information readily accessible to all family members. A copy should also be included in your Family Preparedness Kit.



UTILITIES SHUT-OFF & SAFETY

In the event of a widespread local emergency, authorities may instruct you to shut off the utilities to your home. The following is general guidance for shutting off utility services. Modify this information as necessary to reflect shutoff requirements as directed by your local utility company.

Water

Teach your family about risks associated with water leaks, including damage to your home and electrocution hazards. It is vital that each member of your household learn where the shutoff valve is located and how to turn off the water.

- Find the main water shutoff valve to your home. Water valves are usually located near the water meter, in a basement, or in a garage.
 - Please note: This is not the street valve in the cement box at the curb. That valve is extremely difficult to turn and requires a special tool.

Other Water Utility Notes:

- During extremely cold weather, leave one or more faucets open, allowing water to trickle out and keep pipes from freezing.
- Regardless of whether your home has city or well water, follow boil orders when advised by city management.

Electricity

It is wise to teach all responsible household members where and how to shut off the electricity.

- Find the location of your electrical panel box, and teach all family members how to turn off the main breaker to your home. Electrical panel boxes are typically located in a garage, basement, laundry room, or closet.

Other Electrical Utility Notes:

If you have a generator and lose power to your home, DO NOT hardwire a generator into your electrical panel. An explosion, fire, or electrocution can result. Contact a professional electrician or vendor for information about whole-house backup generators and transfer switches.

When using a gasoline powered generator, follow the manufacturer's operation guidelines, including placing a generator outside in a well-ventilated area to avoid carbon monoxide buildup.





INSURANCE & VITAL RECORDS

Insurance

Review your existing policy amounts and coverages for property, health and life insurance to ensure they're the best fit for you and your family.

If your home is located in a flood-prone area, consider purchasing flood insurance. Buying flood insurance to cover the value of your home and its contents will not only provide greater peace of mind but will speed the recovery if a flood occurs.

Inventory Home Possessions

Make a record of your personal property for insurance purposes. Take photos or a video of the interior and exterior of your home. Include personal belongings in your inventory. Store a copy of your home inventory photos, video, and/or written records in your Family Preparedness Kit.

Money

Consider saving money in an emergency savings account that could be used in any crisis. It is advisable to keep a small amount of cash at home in a safe place where you can quickly access it in case of evacuation or there is a widespread power outage and banks are closed.



EVACUATION PLANS

Educated and Aware

A large part of preparedness is becoming educated and aware of what type of potential emergencies could occur in the area where you live. Consider the characteristics of the area you live in- do you live in a floodplain? Are tornadoes common occurrences for your part of the country? Have there been widespread evacuations due to wildfires in the past in your community? Understanding what has taken place in the past and the likelihood of what could take place in the future is incredibly valuable in the preparedness process.

Escape Routes

The scope of an emergency can be limited to your home, or it can affect an entire region. Determine meeting locations based on the potential scope of an emergency. For example, if the emergency is around your immediate home, consider meeting next to the neighbor's mailbox. If the emergency causes you to evacuate from your city, consider meeting at a gas station or grocery store outside the city that your family is all familiar with. Decide on meeting locations for different scopes of emergencies, and put the information in your family communications plan.

Home Evacuations

In the event of a home emergency, identify safe escape routes within the home. Review the routes with your family, especially children, so they know how to exit each room in an emergency. As a family, choose locations to meet in case of an emergency. Involve your children in the selection process to teach them about safety and help them remember where to meet.



EVACUATION PLANS (CONT.)



Community Evacuations

Community evacuations are more common than many people realize and can happen for a variety of reasons from industrial accidents releasing harmful substances to approaching wildfires or hurricanes.

When community evacuations become necessary, local officials provide information to the public through the media. In some circumstances, other warning methods such as sirens or telephone calls are used.

The amount of time you have to evacuate will depend on the hazard. If the event is a weather condition, such as a hurricane that can be monitored, you may

have a day or two to prepare. However, many disasters allow no time for people to gather even the most basic necessities, which is why having a Family Preparedness Kit is essential.

Ask local authorities about emergency evacuation routes and see if maps are available with evacuation routes marked.

Evacuation Guidelines: Prepare Yourself & Your Family

ALWAYS

- Be sure to have a full tank of gas in your car if an evacuation seems likely. Gas stations may be closed during emergencies or unable to pump gas during power outages. Plan to take one car per family to reduce congestion and delay.
- If you don't own a car, preplan evacuation arrangements with family or friends.
- Keep up to date with your local weather station, weather radio, or emergency services social media pages.
- If instructed to do so, gather your family and leave immediately.
- Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather
- Follow recommended evacuation routes.
- Be alert for washed-out roads and bridges. Do not drive into flooded areas.
- Stay away from downed power lines.

IF TIME PERMITS

- Be sure to pack the most necessary items from your Family Preparedness Kit into whatever vehicle you're evacuating in.
- Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection.
- Secure your home by closing and locking doors and windows.
- Unplug electrical equipment (such as computers and televisions) and small appliances (such as toasters and microwaves). Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding.
- Leave the gas utility on unless otherwise directed by local authorities.
- Let others know where you are evacuating to.





CARE FOR PETS

Whether you decide to stay put in an emergency or evacuate to a safer location, you will need to make plans in advance for your pets. Keep in mind that what is best for you is typically best for your animals. If you evacuate your home, **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND**. Pets are not likely to survive on their own.

Plan for Pet Disaster Needs

- Make sure identification tags are up to date and securely fastened to your pet's collar. If possible, attach the address and/or phone number of your evacuation site.
- Make sure you have a secure pet carrier, leash, or harness for your pet.



SAFETY SKILLS & COURSES

It is important that family members know how to administer first aid, perform CPR, and use a fire extinguisher.

Administering First Aid

The American Heart Association (AHA) and local American Red Cross chapters (ARC) can provide information about First Aid, CPR, and automated external defibrillator (AED) training. Official certification by AHA or ARC provides protection for those giving first aid under the "Good Samaritan Law."

For more information about basic life-saving skills, visit the following sites:

[American Heart Association](#)

[American Red Cross](#)

Using a Fire Extinguisher

Make sure you know how to select, locate, and use your fire extinguisher. Be sure everyone in your household knows how to use your fire extinguisher and where it is kept. Minimally, you should have an ABC type fire extinguisher.

For more information on preparedness and training, visit these websites to access free resources and free online classes:

[ready.gov](#)

[training.fema.gov/nims](#)



WEATHER MONITORING

With modern technology, it's never been easier to know what the weather will do. Weather monitoring is a simple precaution you can take to help keep your family safe.

Recommended Weather Apps

- Emergency Red Cross – This app allows you to monitor specific locations for multiple severe weather hazards like floods, earthquakes, tornados, and hurricanes.
- NOAA Weather Radar – Provides a radar to monitor weather movement in your area.

Websites

[Storm Prediction Center](#)

[U.S. Geological Survey](#)

[Local National Weather Service](#)

[National Hurricane Center](#)

