

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GUIDE: A Resource for Families



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# PREPARE FOR A DISASTER

Disasters can happen anytime, with or without warning. A disaster can be the result of a man-made incident such as a terrorist attack or a natural event, such as a flood or ice storm. No community is immune to the effects of a disaster – and it is important that we take steps to prepare.

This Guide highlights some of the steps you can take now to prepare yourself and your family. A good approach is *D.A.R.E. to Prepare*:

- Determine what types of disasters might affect your family and decide on the steps that you need to take to be ready for those disasters.
- Address any special concerns or circumstances that you may have with local emergency managers.
- Ready yourself and your family by creating a disaster supply kit and a family disaster communication plan.
- Educate yourself by reading information about and taking courses on, preparing for, and responding to disasters.

This Guide will help you get started with disaster preparedness. It provides you with information on:

- How to prepare for a disaster
- How to put together a disaster supply kit
- How to evacuate and shelter-in-place
- Safety tips



# DISASTER PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

- Decide on two meeting places: The first should be at, or near, your home; the other should be outside of your neighborhood, in case you cannot get home.
- Ask about school disaster plans.
- Plan how family members can contact each other. A Family Communication Plan and a useful Family Communication Card are included in this kit.
- Prepare a disaster kit with emergency supplies (See page 3).

Make sure you have on hand:

- Special equipment and supplies such as hearing aid batteries
  - Current prescription names and dosages
  - Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of doctors and pharmacists
  - Detailed information about the medication needs and medical history of each member of the family
- Ensure that all family members wear appropriate medical-alert tags.
  - Know the location of shelters, evacuation points, and routes in your community.
  - Know the location of and how to use your home's utility shut-off switches.
  - Keep important phone numbers listed by the telephone and teach children how and when to call 9-1-1.
  - Consult with your insurance agent about your insurance coverage. Most policies do not cover earthquakes or flood damage. Protect valuable property and equipment with special insurance riders.
  - Determine how you will protect your pets or animals in the event of a disaster. Most emergency shelters do not allow pets. Keep ID tags secured to your pet.
  - Check that all smoke and carbon monoxide detector batteries are working.
  - Every six months change the smoke and carbon monoxide detector batteries and the perishable supplies in your disaster kit.
  - Speak with neighbors about their emergency plans and how you can help each other during a crisis.

# BUILD A FAMILY DISASTER KIT

A disaster kit should contain all of the items that you would need for three days. It should be stored in a place that you can easily reach. All family members should know where the kit is located and the contents should be checked or replaced every six months. It is important that the kit be easy to move so that you could take it with you if you evacuate.

- Keep in a plastic bag with a tight closure: copies of medical and financial records, maps, passports, property deeds, birth certificates, and emergency contact lists.
- Prepare an activity kit for kids with a favorite toy, books, crayons, board games, decks of cards, scissors, glue, and puzzles, etc.
- Store at least one gallon of water per person per day. Store the water in clean plastic containers. Label and date each container, replacing the stored water every six months.
- Pack blankets, a first aid kit, cell phone, cell phone chargers, a non-electric can opener, tools, essential medications for at least seven days, clothing, hygiene supplies, a whistle for emergency signaling, a battery-operated radio with extra batteries and a flashlight with extra batteries.
- Store non-perishable foods that do not require refrigeration or cooking and need little or no water. Store the food in a plastic or metal container to protect from pests. Label and date each container, replacing the food every six months. Include a can of solid fuel and matches to heat the food. Examples of food items include:
  - Ready-to-eat meats
  - Dried cereal, fruits and vegetables
  - Canned or dried soups and juices
  - Peanut butter and non-perishable jelly
  - Food for infants and people on special diets
  - Salt, pepper, spices and sugar
  - Candy or cookies
  - Instant coffee or tea
  - Crackers or trail mix
- Pack an envelope with an extra credit card, some cash, and an extra set of car keys.
- Rethink your needs each year and update your kit as your family's needs change.

## KITS FOR PURCHASE

Disaster Supply Kits can be purchased with the essential supplies (standard or basic kits) or with additional safety supplies (deluxe kits) at various websites.

Two websites we found offering kits with a variety of options are:

[AMERICANFAMILYSAFETY.COM](http://AMERICANFAMILYSAFETY.COM)  
and [GETREADYGEAR.COM](http://GETREADYGEAR.COM).

# WHAT TO DO IN A FLOOD



Flooding has been responsible for the deaths of more than 10,000 people since 1900 and for property losses that total over \$1 billion each year. Flood waters can be extremely dangerous. The force of six inches of swiftly moving water can knock people off their feet. Keep these guidelines in mind:

- The best protection during a flood is to leave the area and go to shelter on higher ground.
- Follow the directions of emergency management officials and if ordered or recommended to evacuate, then **evacuate**. Take your disaster supply kit with you and go to a designated shelter.
- When traveling, do not drive where water is over the road, as part of the road may already be washed out. If your car stalls in a flooded area, abandon your car. Floodwaters rise rapidly and can sweep a car (and its occupants) away. Many deaths have resulted from attempts to move stalled cars.
- After the flood, take safety precautions when entering buildings as flood waters may cause damage to the structure, cause gas lines to rupture, and create electrical shorts and other hazards.

# EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE ACTIONS

During an emergency, officials may recommend that you and your family take emergency protective action. This could include evacuating your home or sheltering-in-place. Through the Emergency Alert System (EAS), which uses commercial radio, television, and cable systems, emergency management officials broadcast instructions and information about emergencies. The NOAA weather alert radio, which receives weather information broadcast by the National Weather Service, can also receive EAS notices. These radios can be bought at your local hardware or electronics store.

## HOW TO EVACUATE

- Make transportation plans with your family/friends if you do not have a car.
- Keep your automobile gas tank full if an evacuation seems likely.
- Gather all persons in the house and leave together, taking your disaster supply kits with you.
- Do not try to pick up children at their schools. They will be taken to a designated reception center or shelter outside the area. You will be able to pick up your children there.
- Household members outside the area may be advised not to return during an evacuation. They will be directed to the reception center or shelter where they can join you.
- Listen to an Emergency Alert System radio or television station for information and instructions. Listen carefully for information about evacuation routes and follow those instructions. Local officials may alter the route to make the evacuation go more quickly.
- Use recommended evacuation routes and obey all traffic control officials along your route.
- Do not call your local fire or police departments for information unless absolutely necessary. Emergency workers will need their telephone lines for emergency use.
- Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Close and lock windows and doors.
- Check with neighbors to see if they need assistance or shared transportation.
- If you have livestock, unless otherwise instructed, shelter them with a three-day supply of feed and water.
- Stay away from any downed electrical lines you may encounter.
- Do not drive into high water.
- Notify a friend or family member who is out of state where you are going and when you plan to leave.

# EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE ACTIONS

CONTINUED

## If You Have Time:

- Turn off lights, unnecessary appliances, water and gas connections.
- Make arrangements for pets as they may not be allowed in shelters.

## How to Shelter-In-Place

When conditions threaten life or safety, public safety officials may order you to shelter-in-place: that is, go immediately indoors and remain in place. If a shelter-in-place message is given for your community, you should do the following:

- Go indoors and close all windows and doors. Turn off all window fans, air conditioners, clothes dryers, kitchen and bath exhaust fans, and other sources of outside air.
- You may be required to shut off utility service at your home. Follow the directions of your utility service. Familiarize your household with the locations and shut-off procedures for:

**Natural Gas:** Once turned off, natural gas should only be turned back on by a qualified professional.

**Water:** A precious resource during and following a disaster, do not drink tap water until authorities confirm safety. Locate and label main household valve.

**Electricity:** Shut off individual circuits prior to shutting off the main circuit breaker. Teach all responsible household members where to locate and how to shut off the main electrical circuit box.

- Keep pets indoors. If you have livestock, shelter them too. Use stored feed and water from a covered source.
- If you are traveling in a car or truck, close the windows and air vents and turn off the heater or air conditioners.

If sheltering-in-place is ordered during school hours, children will be sheltered in the school building and cared for by school personnel.

# SIX MONTH CHECK-UPS

## Smoke, Fire, and Carbon Monoxide

Fire and public safety officials urge citizens to remember to change their smoke and carbon monoxide detector batteries when they change their clocks for Daylight Savings in the spring and fall. More than 90 percent of American homes have smoke detectors, but an estimated one-third are either not working or are missing batteries. Residential fires represent about 25 percent of all fires and unattended cooking or human error is the leading cause. Careless smoking, however, is the leading cause of fire deaths. It is important that smoke detectors be installed in proper locations and be checked at least twice a year. Many local fire departments offer free smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and fire prevention programs.

## Your Family Disaster Kit

Review your Family Communication Plan and update as necessary. Also, replenish the supplies and water you have stored in your Family Disaster Kit. Batteries in your kit should be checked at least every six months and replaced yearly.

Best time to review and replenish? When you change your clocks for Daylight Savings in the spring and fall.



# HOME FIRE SAFETY

Each year, more than 4,000 Americans die, and more than 25,000 are injured in fires, many of which could be prevented. To protect your family, it is important to understand the basic characteristics of fire. Fire spreads quickly; there is no time to gather valuables or make a phone call. In just two minutes, a fire can become life threatening. In five minutes, a residence can be engulfed in flames.

Properly working smoke alarms double the chances of your family's survival. Place smoke alarms on every level of your home. Place them outside bedrooms on the ceiling or high on the wall (four to 12 inches from the ceiling), at the top of open stairways, or at the bottom of enclosed stairs and near (but not in) the kitchen.

Make sure all windows will open. No window should be nailed or painted shut. Make sure security gratings on windows have a fire safety opening feature so that they can be easily opened from the inside.

Develop an escape route from each room in your home.

Consider escape ladders if your home has more than one level, and ensure that burglar bars and other antitheft mechanisms that block outside window entry are easily opened from inside.

For further assistance, ask your local fire department to inspect your home for fire safety and prevention.



# GENERATOR SAFETY

If installed improperly, portable generators can create a potential shock hazard by back-feeding into utility lines. This can create a life-threatening situation for line crews clearing limbs from downed power lines. Any generator in use must have a disconnect switch which isolates the generator from the utility's incoming power lines. Also, if improperly installed, generators can produce poisonous gases that can escape into living spaces. Wherever possible, generators should be installed only outside. If the generator is to be installed inside, it should be located in a detached building or structure and vented to the outside.

## ARE YOU PREPARED?

This guide has provided you with important steps that you can take to prepare yourself and your family for a disaster. These guidelines should help ensure your family's safety!



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503 North Charles Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
Phone: 410.547.3600  
Fax: 410.547.3610



**CASEY FAMILY SERVICES**

127 Church Street  
New Haven, CT 06510  
Phone: 203.401.6900  
Fax: 203.401.6901

[www.caseyfamilyservices.org](http://www.caseyfamilyservices.org)

**The Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services works with children, youth,  
and families at the following locations:**

**CONNECTICUT**

789 Reservoir Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06606  
Phone: 203.372.3722  
800.332.6991  
Fax: 203.372.3558

43 Woodland Street  
Hartford, CT 06105  
Phone: 860.727.1030  
800.732.6921  
Fax: 860.727.9355

**MAINE**

75 Washington Avenue  
Portland, ME 04101  
Phone: 207.772.4110  
800.559.1115  
Fax: 207.761.0748

30 Summer Street, Suite 5  
Bangor, ME 04401  
Phone: 207.973.2491  
866.662.2739  
Fax: 207.973.2494

**MARYLAND**

25 North Caroline Street  
Baltimore, MD 21231  
Phone: 410.342.7554  
800.992.2802  
Fax: 410.342.7556

**MASSACHUSETTS**

18 Palmer Street  
Lowell, MA 01852  
Phone: 978.937.1877  
800.883.8836  
Fax: 978.937.2262

Family Resource Center  
562 Market Street  
Lowell, MA 01854  
Phone: 978.452.3600  
Fax: 978.937.3591

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

105 Loudon Road, Building 2  
Concord, NH 03301  
Phone: 603.224.8909  
800.417.7375  
Fax: 603.224.2584

551 Meadow Street  
Littleton, NH 03561  
Phone: 603.444.9909  
866.622.2739  
Fax: 603.444.9918

Family Resource Center  
Paul Smith Elementary School  
41 Daniel Webster Drive  
Franklin, NH 03235  
Phone: 603.934.6306  
Fax: 603.934.5195

Family Resource Center  
Franklin Middle School  
200 Sanborn Street  
Franklin, NH 03235  
Phone: 603.934.3170  
Fax: 603.934.5875

Family Resource Center  
Franklin High School  
115 Central Street, Room #231  
Franklin, NH 03235  
Phone: 603.934.3294  
Fax: 603.934.5187

**RHODE ISLAND**

1268 Eddy Street  
Providence, RI 02905  
Phone: 401.781.3669  
800.499.7141  
Fax: 401.781.0945

**VERMONT**

46 Main Street, Suite 1A  
Winooski, VT 05404  
Phone: 802.655.6688  
800.244.1408  
Fax: 802.655.9444

160 Palmer Court  
White River Jct., VT 05001  
Phone: 802.649.1400  
800.607.1400  
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