

Emergency Planning and Disaster Supplies



Emergency Planning

Immediately after an emergency, essential services may be cut-off and local disaster relief and government responders may not be able to reach you right away. Even if they could reach you, knowing what to do to protect yourself and your household is essential.

This chapter describes how to prepare for any kind of disaster. It also provides specific information about emergency water and food, and a recommended disaster supply kit.

Creating a disaster plan

One of the most important steps you can take in preparing for emergencies is to develop a household disaster plan.

1. Learn about the natural disasters that could occur in your community from your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter. Learn whether hazardous materials are produced, stored or transported near your area. Learn about possible consequences of deliberate acts of terror. Ask how to prepare for each potential emergency and how to respond.
2. Talk with employers and school officials about their emergency response plans.
3. Talk with your household about potential emergencies and how to respond to each. Talk about what you would need to do in an evacuation.
4. Plan how your household would stay in contact if you were separated. Identify two meeting places: the first should be near your home—in case of fire, perhaps a tree or a telephone pole; the second should be away from your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.
5. Pick a friend or relative who lives out of the area for household members to call to say they are okay.
6. Draw a floor plan of your home. Mark two escape routes from each room.
7. Post emergency telephone numbers by telephones. Teach children how and when to call 911.
8. Make sure everyone in your household knows how and when to shut off water, gas, and electricity at the main switches. Consult with your local utilities if you have questions.

9. Take a first aid and CPR class. Local American Red Cross chapters can provide information. Official certification by the American Red Cross provides “good Samaritan” law protection for those giving first aid.
10. Reduce the economic impact of disaster on your property and your household’s health and financial well-being.
 - Review property insurance policies before disaster strikes—make sure policies are current and be certain they meet your needs (type of coverage, amount of coverage, and hazard covered—flood, earthquake)
 - Protect your household’s financial well-being before a disaster strikes—review life insurance policies and 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 or traveler’s checks at home in a safe place where you can quickly gain access to it in case of an evacuation.
 - Be certain that health insurance policies are current and meet the needs of your household.
11. Consider ways to help neighbors who may need special assistance, such as the elderly or the disabled.
12. Make arrangements for pets. Pets are not allowed in public shelters. Service animals for those who depend on them are allowed.

Emergency planning for people with special needs

If you have a disability or special need, you may have to take additional steps to protect yourself and your household in an emergency. If you know of friends or neighbors with special needs, help them with these extra precautions. Examples include:

Assemble a disaster supply kit before disaster strikes.

- Hearing impaired may need to make special arrangements to receive a warning.
 - Mobility impaired may need assistance in getting to a shelter.
 - Households with a single working parent may need help from others both in planning for disasters and during an emergency.
 - Non-English speaking people may need assistance planning for and responding to emergencies. Community and cultural groups may be able to help keep these populations informed.
 - People without vehicles may need to make arrangements for transportation.
 - People with special dietary needs should have an adequate emergency food supply.
1. Find out about special assistance that may be available in your community. Register with the office of emergency services or fire department for assistance, so needed help can be provided quickly in an emergency.
 2. Create a network of neighbors, relatives, friends and co-workers to aid you in an emergency. Discuss your needs and make sure they know how to operate necessary equipment.

3. Discuss your needs with your employer.
4. If you are mobility impaired and live or work in a high-rise building, have an escape chair.
5. If you live in an apartment building, ask the management to mark accessible exits clearly and to make arrangements to help you evacuate the building.
6. Keep extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, food for guide or hearing-ear dogs, or other items you might need. Also, keep a list of the type and serial numbers of medical devices you need.
7. Those who are not disabled should learn who in their neighborhood or building is disabled so that they may assist them during emergencies.
8. If you are a care-giver for a person with special needs, make sure you have a plan to communicate if an emergency occurs.

Disaster Supply Kits



You may need to survive on your own for three days or more. This means having your own water, food and emergency supplies. Try using backpacks or duffel bags to keep the supplies together.

Assembling the supplies you might need following a disaster is an important part of your disaster plan. You should prepare emergency supplies for the following situations:

- A disaster supply kit with essential food, water, and supplies for at least three days—this kit should be kept in a designated place and be ready to “grab and go” in case you have to leave your home quickly because of a disaster, such as a flash flood or major chemical emergency. Make sure all household members know where the kit is kept.
- Consider having additional supplies for sheltering or home confinement for up to two weeks.
- You should also have a disaster supply kit at work. This should be in one container, ready to “grab and go” in case you have to evacuate the building.
- A car kit of emergency supplies, including food and water, to keep stored

in your car at all times. This kit would also include flares, jumper cables, and seasonal supplies.

The following checklists will help you assemble a disaster supply kit that meets the needs of your household. The basic items that should be in a disaster supply kit are water, food, first-aid supplies, tools and emergency supplies, clothing and bedding, and specialty items. You will need to change the stored water and food supplies every six months, so be sure to write the date you store it on all containers. You should also re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your household changes. Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supply kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers such as an unused trash can, camping backpack or duffel bag.

Water: the absolute necessity

1. Stocking water reserves should be a top priority. Drinking water in emergency situations should not be rationed. Therefore, it is critical to store adequate amounts of water for your household.
 - Individual needs vary, depending on age, physical condition, activity, diet, and climate. A normally active person needs at least two quarts of water daily just for drinking. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people need more. Very hot temperatures can double the amount of water needed.
 - Because you will also need water for sanitary purposes and, possibly, for cooking, you should store at least one gallon of water per person per day.
2. Store water in thoroughly washed plastic, fiberglass or enamel-lined metal containers. Don't use containers that can break, such as glass

bottles. Never use a container that has held toxic substances. Sound plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles, are best. You can also purchase food-grade plastic buckets or drums.

- Containers for water should be rinsed with a diluted bleach solution (one part bleach to ten parts water) before use. Previously used bottles or other containers may be contaminated with microbes or chemicals. Do not rely on untested devices for decontaminating water.
- If your water is treated commercially by a water utility, you do not need to treat water before storing it. Additional treatments of treated public water will not increase storage life.
- If you have a well or public water that has not been treated, follow the treatment instructions provided by your public health service or water provider.
- If you suspect that your well may be contaminated, contact your local or state health department or agriculture extension agent for specific advice.
- Seal your water containers tightly, label them and store them in a cool, dark place.
- It is important to change stored water every six months.

For water purification for immediate or near term use, please read the "Shelter" chapter of this guide.

Food: preparing an emergency supply.

1. If activity is reduced, healthy people can survive on half their usual food intake for an extended period or without any food for many days. Food, unlike water, may be rationed safely, except for children and pregnant women.

2. You don't need to go out and buy unfamiliar foods to prepare an emergency food supply. You can use the canned foods, dry mixes and other staples on your cupboard shelves. Canned foods do not require cooking, water or special preparation. Be sure to include a manual can opener.
3. Keep canned foods in a dry place where the temperature is fairly cool. To protect boxed foods from pests and to extend their shelf life, store the food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers.
4. Replace items in your food supply every six months. Throw out any canned good that becomes swollen, dented, or corroded. Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies. Date each food item with a marker. Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in front.
5. Food items that you might consider including in your disaster supply kit include: ready-to-eat meats, fruits, and vegetables; canned or boxed juices, milk, and soup; high-energy foods like peanut butter, jelly, low-sodium crackers, granola bars, and trail mix; vitamins; foods for infants or persons on special diets; cookies, hard candy; instant coffee, cereals, and powdered milk.

You may need to survive on your own after a disaster. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it may take days. Basic services, such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment and telephones, may be cut off for days, even a week or longer. Or you may have to evacuate at a moment's notice and take essentials with you. You

probably won't have the opportunity to shop or search for the supplies you'll need. Your household will cope best by preparing for disaster before it strikes.

First aid supplies

Assemble a first aid kit for your home and for each vehicle:

- The basics for your first aid kit should include:
 - First aid manual
 - Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
 - Assorted sizes of safety pins
 - Cleansing agents (isopropyl alcohol, hydrogen peroxide)/soap/germicide
 - Antibiotic ointment
 - Latex gloves (2 pairs)
 - Petroleum jelly
 - 2-inch and 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6 each size)
 - Triangular bandages (3)
 - 2-inch and 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls each)
 - Cotton balls
 - Scissors
 - Tweezers
 - Needle
 - Moistened towelettes
 - Antiseptic
 - Thermometer
 - Tongue depressor blades (2)
 - Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant
 - Sunscreen.
- It may be difficult to obtain prescription medications during a disaster because stores may be closed or supplies may be limited. Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications. Be sure they are stored to meet instructions on the label and be mindful of expiration dates—be sure to keep your stored medication up to date.

- Extra pair of prescription glasses or contact lens.
- Have the following nonprescription drugs in your disaster supply kit:
 - Aspirin and nonaspirin pain reliever
 - Antidiarrhea medication
 - Antacid (for stomach upset)
 - Syrup of ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the poison control center)
 - Laxative
 - Vitamins.
- Kitchen items:
 - Manual can opener
 - Mess kits or paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils
 - All-purpose knife
 - Household liquid bleach to treat drinking water
 - Sugar, salt, pepper
 - Aluminum foil and plastic wrap
 - Re-sealing plastic bags
 - If food must be cooked, small cooking stove and a can of cooking fuel
- Sanitation and hygiene items:
 - Washcloth and towel
 - Towelettes, soap, hand sanitizer, liquid detergent
 - Tooth paste, toothbrushes, shampoo, deodorants, comb and brush, razor, shaving cream, lip balm, sunscreen, insect repellent, contact lens solutions, mirror, feminine supplies
 - Heavy-duty plastic garbage bags and ties—for personal sanitation uses—and toilet paper
 - Medium-sized plastic bucket with tight lid
 - Disinfectant and household chlorine bleach
 - Consider including a small shovel for digging a latrine

Tools and emergency supplies

It will be important to assemble these items in a disaster supply kit in case you have to leave your home quickly. Even if you don't have to leave your home, if you lose power it will be easier to have these items already assembled and in one place.

- Tools and other items:
 - A portable, battery-powered radio or television and extra batteries (also have a NOAA weather radio, if appropriate for your area)
 - Flashlight and extra batteries
 - Signal flare
 - Matches in a waterproof container (or waterproof matches)
 - Shut-off wrench, pliers, shovel and other tools
 - Duct tape and scissors
 - Plastic sheeting
 - Whistle
 - Small canister, A-B-C-type fire extinguisher
 - Tube tent
 - Compass
 - Work gloves
 - Paper, pens, and pencils
 - Needles and thread
 - Battery-operated travel alarm clock
- Household documents and contact numbers:
 - Personal identification, cash (including change) or traveler's checks, and a credit card
 - Copies of important documents: birth certificate, marriage certificate, driver's license, social security cards, passport, wills, deeds, inventory of household goods, insurance papers, immunizations records, bank and credit card account numbers, stocks and bonds. Be sure to store these in a watertight container.

- Emergency contact list and phone numbers
- Map of the area and phone numbers of places you could go
- An extra set of car keys and house keys.

Clothes and bedding

- One complete change of clothing and footwear for each household member. Shoes should be sturdy work shoes or boots. Rain gear, hat and gloves, extra socks, extra underwear, thermal underwear, sunglasses.
- Blankets or a sleeping bag for each household member, pillows.

Specialty items

Remember to consider the needs of infants, elderly persons, disabled persons, and pets and to include entertainment and comfort items for children.

- For baby
- For the elderly
- For pets
- Entertainment: books, games, quiet toys and stuffed animals.

It is important for you to be ready, wherever you may be when disaster strikes. With the checklists above you can now put together an appropriate disaster supply kit for your household:

- A disaster supply kit kept in the home with supplies for **at least three days**;
- Although it is unlikely that food supplies would be cut off for as long as two weeks, consider storing additional water, food, clothing and bedding other supplies to expand your supply kit to last up to two weeks.
- A work place disaster supply kit. It is important to store a personal supply of water and food at work; you will not be able to rely on water fountains or coolers. Women who wear high-heels should be sure to have comfortable flat shoes at their workplace in case an evacuation requires walking long distances.
- A car disaster supply kit. Keep a smaller disaster supply kit in the trunk of your car. If you become stranded or are not able to return home, having these items will help you be more comfortable until help arrives. Add items for severe winter weather during months when heavy snow or icy roads are possible—salt, sand, shovels, and extra winter clothing, including hats and gloves.