

A Basic Guide to Household and Personal Preparedness

WHY SHOULD WE PREPARE?

Each year emergencies and disasters disrupt the lives of hundreds if not thousands of people. If a disaster occurs, government and relief organizations will provide help as soon as possible but you need to be ready as well. This guide will assist you in helping to protect yourself, your loved ones and to better prepare and respond.

You should be ready to be self-sufficient for at least three days. This may mean providing for your own shelter, food and water, first aid, and sanitation. In the event of a disaster or emergency, officials may direct you to either remain where you are (shelter in place) or to evacuate. If requested to shelter in place, you may be at home, or at school, or at work. Familiarize yourself with emergency and evacuation plans of your workplace, your school, and your children's school. For your household, develop a plan and make sure that you and your loved ones are familiar with it. Make time to go over the plan and to rehearse it. Plan drills.

MAKING A PLAN

- Make a plan with household members and go over what to do, where to go if evacuating, how to find each other, and how to communicate with each other in the event of an emergency.
- Go over with all household members what to do in case of fire, severe weather, and other emergencies. Explain how to respond to each.
- Put together a "Go Bag" (portable disaster kit) for each household member and a household emergency supply kit (what to have in your home)
- Locate safe spots in your home for each type of disaster.
- Discuss what to do about power outages and personal injuries.
- Show family members how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at main switches.
- Post emergency numbers near telephones.
- Teach children how and when to call 911, police, and fire.
- Instruct household members to turn on the radio for emergency information.
- Establish assistance arrangements with neighbors.
- Plan what to do with special needs people.
- Plan what to do with pets.

EVACUATION

An evacuation may be necessary in some emergencies or disasters. Officials will inform you when to evacuate through the media and direct warnings.

Evacuate immediately when you:

- Are directed to do so by an official.
- Are in immediate danger (such as a fire).

If evacuation is needed:

- Make a floor plan of the house and determine how to evacuate from each room. Mark two escape routes from each room.
- Determine place where your household will meet after a disaster. Identify two places: one right outside your home and another outside your neighborhood.
- Make sure everyone knows the address and phone of both meeting places.
- Designate an out of town friend or relative as a contact person that everyone can call if separated. During disasters, local phone circuits may be busy but long-distance calls may be easier. Use this contact to communicate with each other.
- Wear sturdy shoes and comfortable, protective clothing such as long pants and long sleeve shirts.
- Make sure to bring your "Go Bags".
- **SHELTER IN PLACE**
- When evacuation to shelters is neither appropriate nor possible, you may be asked to stay where you are. Sheltering in place is an effective way to protect yourself in many emergencies involving contaminated air. However, you should only do so if directed by emergency officials.

When sheltering in place is needed:

1. Go inside your home or the nearest appropriate facility (school, library, place of worship, etc.).
2. Take shelter in a room that has few doors or windows. Ideally, a room to shelter in place should allow at least 10 square feet per person.
3. Seal all doors and windows.
4. Turn off all ventilation systems.
5. Do not use the phone - keep phone lines available for emergency calls.
6. Stay tuned to your radio or television for emergency information and updates.
7. Make use of your go bag and emergency supply kit.