

Your Family Disaster Plan

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services—water, gas, electricity or telephones—were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away.

Families can and do cope with disaster by preparing in advance and working together as a team. Follow the steps listed in this brochure to create your family's disaster plan. Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility.

4 Steps to Safety

1. Find Out What Could Happen to You.

Contact your local emergency management office and American Red Cross Chapter—be prepared to take notes:

- Ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen. Request information on how to prepare for each.
- Learn about your community's warning signals: what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
- Ask about animal care after disaster. Animals may not be allowed inside emergency shelters due to health regulations.
- Find out how to help elderly or disabled persons, if needed.
- Next, find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or daycare center and other places where your family spends time.

2. Create a Disaster Plan.

Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, severe weather and earthquakes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.

- Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.
- Pick two places to meet:
 1. Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
 2. Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone must know the address and phone number.
- Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "family contact". After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your contact's phone number.
- Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets.

3. Complete This Checklist.

- Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.)
- Teach children how and when to call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.
- Show each family member how and when to turn off the water, gas and electricity at the main switches.
- Check if you have adequate insurance coverage, with special attention to flood insurance.
- Teach each family member how to use the fire extinguisher (ABC type), and show them where it's kept.
- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.
- Conduct a home hazard hunt.
- Stock emergency supplies and assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.
- Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room.
- Find the safe spots in your home for each type of disaster.

4. Practice and Maintain Your Plan.

- Quiz your kids every six months so they remember what to do.
- Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills.
- Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six months.
- Test and recharge your fire extinguisher(s) according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries twice each year, when you set your clocks for daylight savings or standard time.

PLANNING FOR SPECIFIC DISASTERS



NOAA NEWS PHOTO

FIRE. More than 24 million fires are reported nationwide annually, resulting in over \$11 billion in property damage.

The United States has one of the highest fire death rates per capita in the world. At least 6,000 people die in fires each year and an additional 100,000 are injured. Senior citizens and children under 5 are at highest risk. Fire is fast, dark and deadly, emitting smoke and gases that can render a person unconscious within minutes. It is the most likely disaster that families will experience.



FEMA NEWS PHOTO

FLOODS. Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters and can occur nearly anywhere in the United States. Flooding has been responsible for the deaths of more than 10,000 people since 1900. Property damage attributable to flooding now totals over \$1 billion each year. The sheer force of just six inches of swiftly moving water can knock people off their feet. Cars are easily swept away in just two feet of water. Flash floods can occur with little or no warning—and can reach full peak within minutes. Rapidly rising walls of water can reach heights of 30 feet or more and are generally accompanied by a deadly cargo of debris.



HEATHER OLIVER/
FEMA NEWS PHOTO

WINTER STORMS. Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region. Even areas which normally experience mild winters can be hit with a major snow storm or extreme cold. The results can range from isolation to the havoc of cars and trucks sliding on icy highways.



FEMA NEWS PHOTO

POWER OUTAGE. Everyone experiences power interruptions from time to time. Unfortunately, many of these outages come at times of weather extremes or accompany various disasters. When the power is out we lose our primary source of artificial light and many lose their source of heat and water as well. When the power is out, safety becomes a major concern.



Fire Getting Prepared

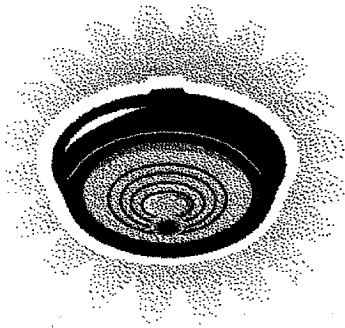
Working smoke detectors double your chance of surviving a fire.



In Case of Fire

Not sure you can control the fire? Evacuate and then call the fire department from a neighbor's house.

- Install smoke detectors, according to the manufacturer's directions, on every level of your house: outside bedrooms on the ceiling or high on the wall, at the top of open stairways, or at the bottom of enclosed stairs and near (but not in) the kitchen.
- Clean smoke detectors once a month and change batteries at two specified times each year, when you set your clocks for Daylight Savings or Standard Time.
- Plan two escape routes out of each room. Contact your local fire authority for help in planning for the safe escape of those with disabilities.
- Make sure windows are not nailed or painted shut and security grating on windows have a fire safety opening feature.
- Teach everyone to stay low to the floor when escaping from a fire.
- Pick a meeting place outside your home for the family to meet after escaping from a fire. **ONCE OUT, STAYOUT !**
- Practice your escape plans at least twice a year.
- Clean out storage areas. Store flammable and combustible liquids in approved containers.
- Keep containers in the garage or an outside storage area.
- Inspect electrical appliances and extension cords for bare wires, worn plugs and loose connections annually.
- Clean and inspect primary and secondary heating equipment annually.
- Learn how to shut off the gas and electricity in an emergency.
- Install A-B-C type fire extinguishers: teach family members how to use them.
- Inspect or service your fire extinguisher annually.
- Do not attempt to extinguish a fire that is rapidly spreading.
- Use water or a fire extinguisher to put out small fires.
- Never use water on an electrical fire.
- Smother oil and grease fires in the kitchen with baking soda or salt, or put a lid over the flame if it is burning in a pan.



After a Fire

Don't throw away damaged goods until and official inventory has been taken.

- If your clothes catch fire—**Stop—Drop—Roll**—until the fire is out.
- Sleep with your door closed.
- If the smoke alarm sounds, crouch down low, feel the bottom of the door with the palm of your hand before opening it. If the door is hot, escape through the window. If the door is not hot and this route is your only means of escape, crawl below the level of the smoke and use the first available exit door to escape. If you cannot escape, leave the door closed, stay where you are and hang a white or light-colored sheet outside the window.
- Stay out of the burned structure.
- Notify your local disaster relief service if you need housing, food, etc.
- Call your insurance agent.
- Ask the fire department for assistance in retrieving important documents.
- Keep records of all clean-up and repair costs.
- Secure personal belongings.
- If you are a tenant, notify the landlord.

Floods

Getting Prepared

Learn what to do when you hear flood warning signals.



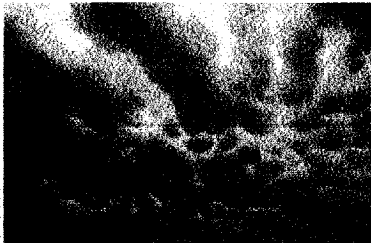
FEMA NEWS PHOTO

- Find out if you live in a flood-prone area and identify dams in your area.
- Ask your local emergency management coordinator about official flood warning signals.
- Know the terms Flood Watch, Flash Flood Warning, Flood Warning, and Urban and Small Stream Warning.
- Plan for evacuation.
- Consider purchasing flood insurance.
- Take steps to floodproof your home. Call your local building department or emergency management office for information.
- Keep all insurance policies and your household inventory in a safe place.

In Case of Heavy Rains

If there is any possibility of a flash flood occurring, move immediately to higher ground.

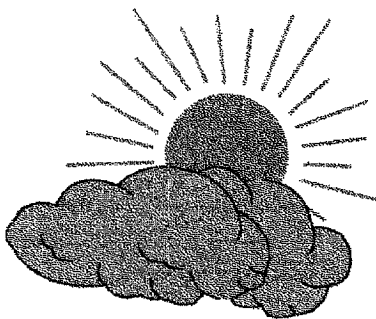
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NATIONAL SEVERE
STORMS LABORATORY



- Be aware of flash floods.
- Listen to radio or television stations for local information. Be aware of streams, drainage channels and areas known to flood suddenly.
- If local authorities issue a flood watch, prepare to evacuate. Secure your home. If time permits, secure items located outside the house.
- If instructed, turn off utilities at the main switches or valves.
- Fill your car with fuel.
- Fill the bathtub with water in case water becomes contaminated or services are cut off.
- Sterilize the bathtub first.
- Stay away from flood waters.
- When deep flooding is likely, permit the flood waters to flow freely into your basement to avoid structural damage to the foundation and the house.

After a Flood

Flood waters may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage. The water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.



- Stay away from flood waters.
- Stay away from moving water. Moving water six inches deep can sweep you off your feet.
- Be aware of areas where flood waters have receded and may have weakened road surfaces.
- Stay away from and report downed power lines.
- Stay away from disaster areas unless authorities ask for volunteers.
- Continue listening to the radio for information about where to get assistance.
- Consider health and safety needs. Wash your hands frequently with soap and clean water if you come in contact with flood waters.
- Throw away food that has come in contact with flood waters.
- Call your insurance agent.
- Keep records of all clean-up and repair costs.
- Take photos of or videotape your belongings and your home prior to and after an event.
- Don't throw away damaged goods until an official inventory has been taken.

Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

Getting Prepared

Dress for the weather and keep a “winter car kit” in the trunk of your car.

FEMA NEWS PHOTO



During a Winter Storm

When using kerosene heaters, maintain ventilation to avoid a build-up of toxic fumes.

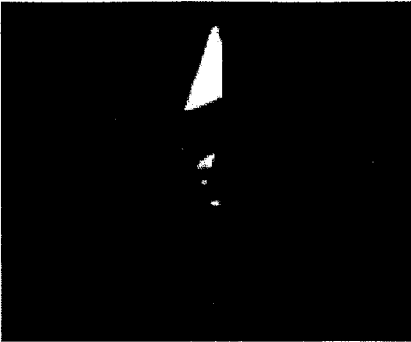
- Know the terms used by weather forecasters.
- Consider purchasing a battery-powered NOAA weather radio and stock extra batteries.
- Keep rock salt to melt ice on walkways and sand to improve traction.
- Make sure you have sufficient heating fuel.
- Make sure you have an alternate heat source and a supply of fuel.
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic.
- Insulate walls and attics.
- Caulk and weatherstrip doors and windows.
- Keep your car “winterized” with antifreeze. Use snow tires.

- Listen to the radio or television for weather reports and emergency information.
- Wear several layers of loose fitting, light weight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing.
- Wear mittens instead of gloves.
- Wear a hat— most body heat is lost through the top of the head.
- Avoid overexertion.
- Watch for signs of frostbite. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
- Conserve fuel if necessary by keeping your house cooler than normal.
- Refuel kerosene heaters outside and keep them at least three feet from flammable objects.
- If you must travel, consider using public transportation.
- When using kerosene heaters, gas lanterns or stoves inside the house, maintain ventilation to avoid a build-up of toxic fumes. *Never use charcoal or gas barbeques inside; they produce carbon monoxide.*
- Connect lights and appliances directly to a generator, not to an existing electrical system.

NOTE: Leave one light switch in the on position to alert you when service is restored.

When the Lights Go Out

Report power outages to the utility company.



- If your house is the only one without power, check your fuse box or circuit breaker panel.
- Turn off large appliances before replacing fuses or resetting circuits.
- If power is out in the neighborhood, disconnect all electrical heaters and appliances to reduce the initial demand and protect the motors from possible low voltage damage.
- If you leave home, turn off or unplug heat producing appliances.
- Unplug computers and other voltage sensitive equipment to protect them against possible surges when power is restored.
- Conserve water, especially if you are on a well.
- Keep doors, windows and draperies closed to retain heat in your home.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. If the door remains closed, a fully loaded freezer can keep foods frozen for two days.
- Be extremely careful of fire hazards caused by candles or other flammable light sources.

Caught in Your Car During a Blizzard

Remain in your vehicle and wait to be found.

- Pull off the highway and set your hazard lights to flash. Hang a distress flag from the radio antenna.
- Run the engine and heater about ten minutes each hour to keep warm. While the engine is running, slightly open a window and keep the exhaust pipe free of snow.
- Exercise lightly to maintain body heat. Huddle with passengers to stay warm.
- Take turns sleeping.
- Be careful not to run the car battery down.
- If stranded in a remote rural or wilderness area, spread a large cloth over the snow to attract attention of rescue personnel.
- Once the blizzard passes, you may need to leave the car and proceed on foot.

If You Have Pets

Create a survival kit for your pet. This should include:

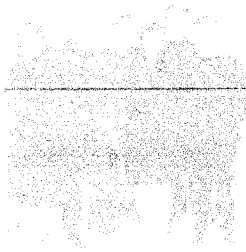


- Identification collar and rabies tag
- Carrier or cage
- Leash
- Any medications (be sure to check expiration dates)
- Newspapers and plastic trash bags for handling waste
- At least a two-week supply of food, water and food bowls
- Veterinary records (most animal shelters do not allow pets without proof of vaccination)

If you have no other choice but to leave your pet at home, place your pet in a safe area inside your home with plenty of water and food. Never leave pets chained outside. Place a note outside your home listing what pets are inside, where they are located, and phone numbers of where you can be reached.

Recovering From an Emergency

Recovery continues even after you return home, as you and your family face the emotional and psychological effects of the event. Reactions vary from person to person, but may include:



- Restless sleep or nightmares
 - Anger or wanting revenge
 - Numbness or lack of emotion
 - Needing to keep active, restlessness
 - Needing to talk about your experiences
 - Loss of appetite
- Weight loss or gain
 - Headaches
 - Mood swings

Crisis, grief and stress counseling is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for you or a family member suffering persistent emotional or psychological problems related to an emergency.

All of the above are normal reactions to stressful events, and it is important to let people react their own way. It may be helpful to:

- Talk with your family and friends about what happened and how you feel about it, and try to evaluate and plan for the chance it could happen again.
- Volunteer at a local shelter, blood bank, or food pantry to assist emergency victims.
- Consult your minister or spiritual advisor.

In particular, children may need reassurance and extra attention. It is best to encourage them to share their feelings, even if you must listen to their stories repeatedly - this is a common way for children to grasp what they've experienced. You may also want to share your feelings about the event with them.

Notes

NEW JERSEY EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM COVERAGE AREAS

Tune to the station covering your area for
additional information in an emergency.

