

Preparing for Emergencies

Preparing for emergencies makes sense. The likelihood that you and your family will survive a house fire depends on working smoke detectors, a well practiced exit strategy and a trained fire department. The same is true for surviving a terrorist attack or a natural disaster. We must have plans in place and be prepared, no matter when or where a disaster strikes.

Steps for Being Prepared Include:

1. **Have an emergency kit.** Emergency kits should include a minimum of three days worth of supplies for you and your family. One kit should have everything you need to stay where you are and make it on your own. The other kit should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you have to get away.

Recommended supplies include:

- Water. One gallon per person per day for drinking and sanitation.
- Food. A minimum of a three-day supply of non-perishable foods that are easy to store and prepare such as protein bars, dried fruits or canned foods. Don't forget a manual can opener.
- If you live in a cold climate, include warm clothes and a sleeping bag for each member of the family.
- Filter masks (N95 masks available at hardware stores) or cotton t-shirts to help filter the air. Some potential terrorist attacks could send tiny microscopic particles into the air. These particles can harm you if they get into your body, so it is important to create a barrier between yourself and any contamination. It is very important that the mask or other material fits your face snugly so that most of the air you breathe comes through the mask and not around it. Do whatever you can to make the mask fit children.
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to seal windows and doors if you need to create a barrier between yourself and any possible contamination from the outside.
- A battery powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- A first aid kit and moist towelettes.
- A whistle to signal for help and a wrench or pliers for turning off utilities.
- Unique family items such as infant formula, diapers, and family documents.



2. **Develop a family communication plan.** Your family may not be together when a disaster strikes, so it is important to have an emergency communication plan in place. Plan on how you will contact one another and review what you will do in different situations. Consider a plan where each family member calls or emails the same out of town friend or relative. It may be easier to make a long distance call than to call across town. Be sure each person knows the phone number and has a prepaid phone card to call emergency contacts.
3. **Create a plan to shelter-in-place.** There are circumstances when staying put and creating a barrier between yourself and potentially contaminated air outside can be a matter of survival. If you see large amounts of debris in the air, or if local authorities say the air is badly contaminated, you may want to shelter in place and seal the room. Consider pre-cutting plastic sheeting to seal windows, doors and air vents. Additionally, immediately turn off air conditioning, forced air heating system, exhaust fans and clothes dryers.
3. **Create a plan to get away.** Have a plan in place how you will gather your family and anticipate where you will go. It is best to choose several destinations in different directions so you have options in an emergency. Additionally, become familiar with alternate routes as well as other means of transportation out of your area.
4. **Know emergency plans at school and work.** Think about the places where you and your family spend time; school, work, and other places your family frequents. Talk with your children's school and your employer about how they will handle emergencies.