



## Four Steps to Prepare Your Family for Disasters

This guide will help you and your family prepare for a disaster. Keep this sheet in a special place so you will always know where to find it. Get the family together now to start following the 4 steps to safety readiness!

### 1. Find out what the disaster risks are in your area.

Find out from your local emergency management office, health department, or American Red Cross chapter

- What types of disasters are likely to happen and how to prepare for each
- What your community's warning signals sound like and what to do if you hear them
- How to help the elderly and people with special needs

### 2. Create a family disaster plan.

Hold a family meeting; keep it simple and work as a team.

#### Plan

Talk about the dangers of the disaster(s) with your family.

- Have a plan in case you are separated.
  - Choose a place outside your neighborhood in case you cannot go home (A).
  - Choose someone out of town to be your family contact (B). Each family member and any babysitter must know the address and phone number for A and B.
- Fill out the local emergency phone numbers and child identification cards. Fill out an Emergency Information Form (EIF) for each child with special health care needs. (See [www.aap.org/advocacy/emergprep.htm](http://www.aap.org/advocacy/emergprep.htm).)
- Become familiar with the specifics of your child's child care or school disaster plans as you could be separated from your child during a disaster.
- Plan what to do if you are asked to evacuate.
- Plan several escape routes.
- Plan how to take care of your pets.

#### What to Tell Children

It is important to educate children about disasters without overly alarming them. Use the following guidelines:

- Tell children that a disaster is something that could hurt people or cause damage. Explain

that nature sometimes provides “too much of a good thing”—fire, rain, and wind.

- Explain how important it is to make a family disaster plan.
- Teach children
  - How to call for help
  - When to call each emergency number
  - To call the family contact if separated
  - To keep personal identification information in their possession at all times

#### Evacuation

If you are told to evacuate, take these steps

- Leave right away if told to do so.
- Listen to your battery-powered radio for instructions from local officials.
- Wear protective clothing and shoes.
- Shut off water, gas, and electricity if told to do so.
- Leave a note telling when you left and where you are going.
- Call your family contact to tell him or her where you are going.
- Take your family emergency supplies (listed on the next 2 pages).
- Lock your home.
- Use routes suggested by officials.

### 3. Complete this checklist.

- Put emergency phone numbers by each phone.
- Show everyone how and when to turn off the utilities.
- Make sure you have enough insurance coverage (for example, flood, fire, earthquake).
- Do a home hazard hunt for items that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire.
- Stock enough emergency supplies to last 3 days.
- Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.
- Plan home escape routes—2 from each room.
- Find safe places in your home for each type of disaster.
- Make 2 copies of important documents and keep the originals in a safe-deposit box. Keep 1 copy on hand and give the second to your out-of-town contact.

#### 4. Practice and maintain your plan.

Every month...

Test your smoke alarms.

Every 6 months...

Go over the family disaster plan and do escape drills. Quiz children. Replace stored food and water.

Every year...

Replace the batteries in smoke alarms (unless your smoke alarm uses long-life batteries).

#### Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Meet with neighbors to plan how you can work together during a disaster.

- Talk about who has special skills (eg, medical, technical).
- Make plans for child care in case parents cannot get home.

#### Utilities

Do the following so you will be ready if told to turn off your utilities:

- Find the main electric fuse box, water service main, and natural gas main.
- Learn how and when to turn these off, and teach family members.
- Keep a wrench and flashlight near gas and water shutoff valves.
- If you turn the gas off, you will need a professional to turn it back on.

#### Important Documents

Make 2 copies and keep the originals of the following in a safe-deposit box or waterproof container:

- Wills, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, investments
- Passports, social security cards, immunization records, EIF
- Bank account numbers/credit card account numbers
- Inventory of valuable household goods
- Family records and photos (eg, birth and marriage certificates)
- Documentation to assist in identifying children who may be separated from their parents (eg, photos, adoption records, birth certificates)

#### Emergency Supplies List

- Signal flare
- Map of the area and important phone numbers
- Special items for infants and the elderly (diapers, formula, medication)
- Three gallons of water per person
- Three-day supply of ready-to-eat canned or packaged food
- Manual can opener
- Paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Toiletries (10-day supply of prescription medications, hand sanitizer)
- Cell phone batteries and/or phone charger
- A change of clothing, rain gear, and sturdy shoes for each family member

Put the following supplies in an easy-to-carry waterproof container:

- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries
- First aid kit and manual and prescription medications
- A credit card and cash
- Personal identification
- An extra set of car keys
- An extra pair of eyeglasses
- Matches in a waterproof container

Visit the US Department of Homeland Security Web site ([www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)) and AAP Children, Terrorism & Disasters Web site ([www.aap.org/terrorism](http://www.aap.org/terrorism)) for more information.

#### From Your Doctor

The information in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on the individual facts and circumstances.

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