

The Homeowner's Guide to **Disaster Preparedness**

Natural disasters are a fact of life. With some basic planning and thinking ahead, preparing your home, family and workplace for a natural disaster is easy. Electricity, gas, water, and telephones may not be working. In addition, public safety services such as police and fire departments will be busy handling serious crises. You should be prepared to be self-sufficient—able to live without running water, electricity and/or gas, and telephones. Regardless of where you live, it is important to have plans in place to ensure that you and your family are prepared should an emergency arise.

Research which types of events could occur in your community.

- Contact local authorities to learn how community alerts are issued and the evacuation routes you will need to follow.
- Inquire about emergency plans at work, school, and any other locations that family members frequent on a regular basis.
- Determine how to care for your pet(s) since most temporary shelters only permit service dogs to enter. Start by visiting the American Red Cross website's Animal Safety section to learn about suggested alternatives. (www.redcross.org)

Develop a family emergency plan.

- Create contact information cards for each family member.
- Select a reliable out-of-state relative/friend who family members should contact.
- Establish home escape routes and practice them.
- Learn how to shut off your utilities.
- Procure proper insurance coverage and protect your vital records.
- Create a short list of what to take in case of a fire.

Create a disaster supply kit for your home, your car, and your office. Your home kit should include:

- Food – There should be enough food for 72 hours, preferably one week.
- Water – Water supply should be enough so each person has a gallon a day for 72 hours, preferably one week. Store in airtight containers and replace it every six months. Store disinfectants such as iodine tablets or chlorine bleach, eight drops per gallon, to purify water if necessary.
- First Aid Kit – Make sure the first aid kit is well stocked, especially with bandages and disinfectants.
- Non-electric can opener, knife and utensils.
- Battery-operated radio, flashlights, batteries, pens and paper.
- Be sure to review the contents of the kit every six months and replace anything that's about to expire.
- Your office and car kits should contain a pared down collection of the items above, as well as comfortable shoes. In addition, you will want to add flares and jumper cables to your car's inventory.

Source: American Red Cross at www.redcross.org

