

Family Emergency Preparedness Plan

Family plan should address the following:

- Evacuation routes
- Family communications
- Utility shut-off and safety
- Insurance and vital records
- Evacuation plan
- Caring for animals

Evacuation routes

Draw a floor plan of your home. Use a blank sheet of paper for each floor. Mark two escape routes from each room. Make sure children understand the drawings. Post a copy of the drawings at eye level in each child's room. Establish a place to meet in the event of an emergency, such as a fire.

Family communications

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another. Think about how you will communicate in different situations. Complete a contact card for each family member. Have family members keep these cards handy in a wallet, purse, backpack, etc. You may want to send one to school with each child to keep on file. Pick a friend or relative who lives out-of-state for household members to notify they are safe.

Below is a sample contact card

Family Communication Plan
Contact Name
Telephone
Out-of-state Contact Name
Telephone
Neighborhood Meeting Place
Meeting Place Telephone
Dial 9-1-1 for Emergencies

Utility Shut-off and Safety

In the event of a disaster, you may be instructed to shut off the utility service at your home.

Natural Gas

Natural gas leaks and explosions are responsible for a significant number of fires following disasters. It is vital that all household members know how to shut off natural gas.

If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone out quickly. Turn off the gas, using the outside main valve if you can, and call the gas company from a neighbor's home.

**If you have any questions or concerns, please call Cook Children's Home Health at (800) 747-8242.
A nurse is available 24 hours a day.**

Family Emergency Preparedness Plan

Because there are different gas shut-off procedures for different gas meter configurations, it is important to contact your local gas company for guidance on preparation and response regarding gas appliances and gas services to your home. When you learn the proper shut-off procedure for your meter, share the information with everyone in your household.

CAUTION: If you turn off the gas for any reason, a qualified professional must turn it back on. NEVER attempt to turn the gas back on yourself.

Water

Water quickly becomes a precious resource following many disasters. It is vital that all household members learn how to shut off the water at the main house valve.

- Cracked lines may pollute the water supply to your house. It is wise to shut off your water until you hear from authorities that it is safe for drinking.
- The effects of gravity may drain the water in your hot water heater and toilet tanks unless you trap it in your house by shutting off the main house valve.

Preparing to shut off water

- Locate the shut-off valve for the water line that enters your house.
- Make sure this valve can be completely shut off. Your valve may be rusted open, or it may only partially close. Replace it if necessary.
- Label this valve with a tag for easy identification, and make sure all household members know where it is located.

Electrical

Electrical sparks have the potential of igniting natural gas if it is leaking. It is wise to teach all responsible household members where and how to shut off the electricity.

Preparing to shut off electricity

- Locate your electricity circuit box.
- Teach all responsible household members how to shut off the electricity to the entire house.

Insurance and vital records

Obtain property, health, and life insurance if you do not have them. Review existing policies for the amount and extent of coverage to ensure that what you have in place is what is required for you and your family for all possible hazards.

If you live in a flood-prone area, consider purchasing flood insurance to reduce the risk of flood loss. Buying flood insurance to cover the value of a building and its contents will not only provide greater peace of mind, but will speed the recovery if a flood occurs. You can call 1(888) FLOOD 29 to learn more about flood insurance.

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Money

Consider saving money in an emergency savings account that could be used in any crisis. It is advisable to keep a small amount of cash or traveler's checks at home in a safe place where you can quickly access them in case of evacuation.

Evacuation: More common than you realize

Ask local authorities about emergency evacuation routes and see if maps are available with evacuation routes marked.

Evacuation Guidelines

Always:	If time permits:
Keep a full tank of gas in your car if an evacuation seems likely. Gas stations may be closed during emergencies and unable to pump gas during power outages. Plan to take one car per family to reduce congestion and delay.	Gather your disaster supplies kit.
Make transportation arrangements with friends of your local government if you do not own a car.	Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and a cap.
Listen to a battery-powered radio and follow local evacuation instructions.	Secure your home: Close and lock doors and windows. Unplug electrical equipment, such as radios and televisions, and small appliances such as toasters and microwaves. Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding.
Gather your family and go if you are instructed to evacuate immediately.	Let others know where you are going.
Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather.	
Follow recommended evacuation routes.	
Do not take shortcuts; they may be blocked.	
Be alert for washed-out roads and bridges. Do not drive into flooded areas.	
Stay away from downed power lines.	

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Caring for pets

Animals also are affected by disasters. Use the guidelines below to prepare a plan for caring for pets.

Guidelines for Pets Plan

- Identify shelter.
- Gather pet supplies.
- Ensure your pet has proper ID and up-to-date veterinarian records.
- Provide a pet carrier and leash.

Take the following steps to prepare to shelter your pet

- Call your local emergency management office, animal shelter, or animal control office to get advice and information.
- Keep veterinary records to prove vaccinations are current.
- Find out which local hotels and motels allow pets and where pet boarding facilities are located. Be sure to research some outside your local area in case local facilities close.
- Know that, with the exception of service animals, pets are not typically permitted in emergency shelters as they may affect the health and safety of other occupants.

Kit locations

Since you do not know where you will be when an emergency occurs, prepare supplies for home, work, and vehicles. (See Appendix A, B, and C)

Home

Your disaster supplies kit should contain essential food, water, and supplies for at least three days. Keep this kit in a designated place and have it ready in case you have to leave your home quickly. Make sure all family members know where the kit is kept. Additionally, you may want to consider having supplies for sheltering for up to two weeks.

Work

This kit should be in one container, and ready to “grab and go” in case you are evacuated from your workplace. Make sure you have food and water in the kit. Also, be sure to have comfortable walking shoes at your workplace in case an evacuation requires walking long distances.

Car

In case you are stranded, keep a kit of emergency supplies in your car. This kit should contain food, water, first aid supplies, flares, jumper cables, and seasonal supplies.

Practicing and maintaining you plan

Once you have developed your plan, you need to practice and maintain it. For example, ask questions to make sure your family remembers meeting places, phone numbers, and safety rules. Conduct drills such as drop, cover, and hold on for earthquakes. Test fire alarms. Replace and update disaster supplies.

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For additional information on emergency preparedness go to the following website:
http://www.fema.gov/pdf/areyouready/basic_preparedness.pdf

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