

Helping Parents Prepare for Disaster

Tip Sheet

2013

Taking care of your family includes being ready for emergencies. Disasters take different forms—natural (earthquakes, tornados, wildfires), family loss, school shootings, and community violence. Taking steps to be prepared for these events can reduce stress and make coping with all sorts of disasters easier. If you prepare for potential disaster situations, your children are likely to handle it better, too.

What Can I Do to Prepare?

- **Make a plan with your family.**

Discuss what type of disasters could happen and what to do for each. This plan includes how you would talk with each other, where you would go, and what would you take. Your local Red Cross, emergency management office or health department can give advice, suggestions, or information related to different situations.

- **Decide how to stay in touch.**

Set up two meeting places. One location should be right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire. The second location should be outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home. Discuss several ways to get safely to each of these locations. If possible, have an out-of-town family contact. Make sure your children know the address and telephone number for all locations, and your contact knows your emergency plans.

- **Put together a disaster supply kit.**

Items should include:

- Three gallons of water per person
- A three-day supply of food per person
- Medication and medical supplies
- Flashlight and batteries
- First aid kit
- Battery-operated radio
- Cell phone and charger
- Complete change of clothing for each person
- Personal hygiene items
- Spare set of keys
- Copies of personal documents
- Family and emergency contact information
- Cash and copies of credit cards
- Multipurpose tool
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Map of area



If you have a baby, small child, or a senior living with you, consider any special needs they may have and add these to your kit. Examples include: diapers, bottles and formula, games and activities for your child, and extra eyeglasses or hearing aids.

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- **Know how to stay informed.**

Identify how local authorities will provide information during a disaster and where you can possibly get help. Learn about existing preparedness plans in your town. If you have school-aged children, also be informed of their school emergency preparedness plans.

- **Have some first aid training.**

Make sure that at least one member of your household is trained in first aid and CPR and knows how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED).

- **Plan how to take care of your animals.**

If you are a pet owner or have a service animal, include in your planning how they would take care of them. This planning may include adding supplies to your disaster kit and knowing where animals can be safely sheltered during an emergency.

- **Practice your plan before a disaster.**

Periodically review your plan with your family to make sure they remember what to do. This is also a good time to see if any changes in your plan are needed. Check your disaster supply kit, replace water and food, and make sure batteries are working.

Disaster Distress Helpline

If you are experiencing signs of distress as a result of a disaster, the SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline provides 24/7, year-round crisis counseling and support.

- Call 1-800-985-5990
- TTY for deaf/hearing impaired:
1-800-846-8517
- Text "TalkWithUs" to 66746

To Learn More:

CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/>

American Academy of Pediatrics Family Readiness Kit

www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Getting-Your-Family-Prepared-for-a-Disaster.aspx

SAMHSA Disaster Distress

www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency

www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/commplan.shtm

American Red Cross

www.redcross.org