

Prepare for an Emergency



CHALLENGE
Create a disaster plan and emergency kit this month.

Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Plan Ahead" and "Make Your Emergency Kit."
2. To complete the Challenge, you must assemble disaster and first-aid kits by the end of the month. In addition, you should create a disaster plan and review your disaster plan with your family to make sure you and your loved ones are prepared for an emergency.
3. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

Plan Ahead

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood, workplace, or school or can confine you to your home. What would you do if you suddenly found yourself without such basics as electricity, gas, telephones – even water, food, and shelter? Would you know what to do?

A natural or man-made catastrophe – whether a storm, flood, fire, or hostile attack – could cut you off from support services for hours ... or days. Being prepared for emergencies is crucial at home, school, work and in your community.

The American Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommend you assemble an emergency supply kit. Once disaster hits, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. But if you've gathered supplies in advance, your family can better endure an evacuation or home confinement.

In addition to an emergency supply kit, these and other relief agencies also recommend you make a plan. For example, should a fire break out in your home, do you have an evacuation route? What about a place for your family to assemble outside?



Plan what you will do for a variety of disaster scenarios, whether at home or traveling. Check with the local Red Cross chapter to learn what kinds of disasters are more likely to occur in your area (e.g., earthquakes, flooding, tornadoes), and the best way to prepare for them.

Once you make a plan, practice it while you're calm and thinking clearly. This enables you to fine-tune it before you have to put it into action.

- **Learn how to turn off utilities** (e.g., gas and water) and how to work fire extinguishers.
- Make sure everyone knows where your **emergency kit is stored**.
- **Identify emergency evacuation routes** and shelters in your community and near your workplace.
- **Identify a gathering place** close to your home should you need to evacuate due to fire or some other emergency.
- Decide where family members should meet if you are separated in an emergency. **Choose a backup meeting location, too**, in case the first location is impossible to reach.
- **Identify a point-person** in the family who will serve as the central contact to call in case of confusion.
- **Choose an out-of-state friend or relative** to serve as a backup contact, in the event that local lines are tied up or out of service.
- **Provide every member of the family with a cell phone** or prepaid phone card to make sure they can make a call in an emergency.
- **Consider family members with special needs** while making plans. (For example, who will help someone in a wheelchair?) Don't forget your pets either. (For example, where can you leave pets if you have to evacuate to a hotel that does not allow them?)
- **Practice the plan at least once a year** – twice is even better.

Know how you would best get information during a disaster (e.g., radio, television, telephone/text messaging, local emergency warning systems, printed notices, NOAA weather station, or word of mouth). And, take a first aid class from your local Red Cross chapter.

Prepare Your Kit

Gather the supplies you may need if your family is confined at home. Place the supplies you'd most likely need for an evacuation in an easy-to-carry container, such as a large, covered trash container, a camping backpack, or a duffel bag. Store your kit in a convenient place known to all family members – but not so convenient that you end up raiding and depleting the supplies. An unused closet, the garage, or a section of the basement could work well.

Since you don't know where you'll be if disaster hits, you should also assemble smaller versions of the emergency kit – for work and one for each car.

Check your kit every 6 months and replace expired or outdated items, such as water, food, and batteries. In addition, re-think your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update clothes, for example. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.

The Basics

There are 5 basics you should stock for your home: water, food, first aid and emergency supplies, clothing and bedding, and special items. If you choose to assemble your disaster supplies yourself, make sure you have the following items.

1. Water

- Store 1 gallon of water per person per day (at least a 3-day supply – a 2-week supply is best)

- Water purification tablets

Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles. A normally active person needs to drink at least 2 quarts of water each day. Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people will need more.

2. Food

- Store at least a 3-day supply of nonperishable food.
- Be sure to include a manual can opener

Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation, or cooking, and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Select food items that are compact and lightweight, such as ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, and nuts. Avoid foods that will make you thirsty.

The Red Cross sells emergency preparedness kits for both home and the workplace. Check with your local chapter or online at: www.redcross.org.

3. First Aid, Emergency Supplies, & Tools

Assemble a first-aid kit for your home and one for each car. The Red Cross sells first-aid kits. If you want to assemble one yourself, make sure you include the recommended items. You can purchase most of these items at your local pharmacy or supermarket, and then place them in a sealed container to keep them clean. A fishing tackle box, for instance, would work well as a first-aid kit.

Use the following checklist to help you pack your first aid and emergency supplies.

Wound Care

- 2-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- Triangular bandages (3)
- 2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- Adhesive tape (1 inch and narrower)
- Band-Aids® in various sizes, including butterfly bandages
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Thermometer
- Tongue blades (2)
- Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant
- Medications
- Wound cleansers (soap, gels, or wipes)
- Nonaspirin pain reliever (adult and child) or aspirin (for adult use only)
- Antihistamine for allergic reactions
- Antiseptic ointment or cream (such as bacitracin or triple antibiotic ointment)
- Calamine lotion or hydrocortisone cream (1%)
- Antacid for stomach upset



- Activated charcoal for inadvertent overdoses
- Saline eye drops
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Syrup of Ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center)
- Laxative
- Oral glucose preparation for low blood sugar

Ask your doctor about the best way to store a 3-day supply of prescription medications

Other Supplies

- Assorted sizes of safety pins
- Latex gloves (2 pairs)
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Needle
- Ace bandages
- Hot/Cold packs
- Cotton swabs
- Thermometer
- Sunscreen



Tools and Emergency Supplies

- Cell phone (with nonelectrical charger, such as a car charger)
- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils
- Emergency preparedness manual
- Battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Non-electric can opener, utility knife
- Fire extinguisher: small canister ABC type
- Tube tent
- Pliers
- Duct tape
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container



- Flashlight, batteries, and extra bulbs
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Needles, thread
- Medicine dropper
- Whistle
- Plastic sheeting
- Map of the area (with highlighted evacuation routes and shelters)



Sanitation

- Toilet paper, towelettes
- Paper towels
- Soap, liquid detergent
- Feminine supplies
- Personal hygiene items (e.g., toothbrush and comb)
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses)
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Disinfectant
- Household chlorine bleach
- Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water



What's your Readiness Quotient?

Take this test from the Council for Excellence in Government: www.whatsyourrq.org/

4. Clothing and Bedding

Be sure you have set aside the basics in clothing and bedding, as listed below. You might also want to include some comfort items like travel pillows and sleeping pads for adults or a stuffed animal for each child.

- At least one complete change of clothing per person (Remember underwear!)
- Two pair of socks and sturdy shoes or work boots per person
- Rain gear
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Hat and gloves
- Thermal underwear or other warm clothing
- Sunglasses
- Space blanket

5. Special Items

You'll want to keep children calm and entertained. Also, remember family members with special needs, such as infants, the elderly, or disabled persons. Keep a week's supply of the following items.

Entertainment

- Non-electric games and books
- Paper, pencils, and crayons

For Baby

- Bottles and formula
- Diapers
- Pacifier or comfort item
- Powdered milk
- Medications



For Older Adults

- Medications
- Denture needs
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Extra eyeglasses
- Hearing-aid batteries
- Incontinent products

For Pets

Find out in advance where pets are accepted. They are normally *not* allowed in shelters. Check with your vet, animal shelter, or animal control office for advice.

- Water
- Food
- Medicine
- Carrier/Kennel
- Record of shots
- Leash, collar, I.D., and license



Important family documents

Keep copies of these records in a waterproof, portable container:

- Will, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, stocks and bonds
- Passports, social security cards, immunization records
- Bank account numbers
- Credit card account numbers
- Inventory of valuable household goods
- Telephone numbers – especially out-of-area contacts
- Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)

If Disaster Strikes

- Listen for official news and instructions on what to do next.
- Communicate with family members according to your plan.
- If the disaster takes place near your home, follow instructions on whether or not to evacuate.
- Check on neighbors, especially those who are elderly or have young children.

- If you have gas appliances, such as a stove or water heater, smell for gas leaks. Do not light matches, candles, or turn on electrical switches if you smell gas. Open windows and doors, and leave the house immediately.

Now that you've prepared, encourage your neighbors, work place, and community groups to make a plan and to gather supplies so they can be ready as well.

Further preparedness.

Knowing basic survival skills could help you in a disaster situation. The U.S. Army Survival Manual is available in PDF form at this site: www.basegear.com/fm2176.html

Sources:

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). 2008. www.fema.gov/plan/index.shtml
American Red Cross. 2008. www.redcross.org



