

Emergency And Disaster Preparedness For You And Your Family

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Before making yourself available to help friends and the community at large during a local or regional emergency or disaster, first take care of yourself and your family's needs.

Try to attend any local emergency preparedness seminars presented in your area. If you can't attend one of these meetings, be sure to read all of the information in this article.

In the paragraphs below, I have described some of the basic steps to be taken. First, there is a short list. This is followed by an introductory discussion. This is followed by a series of check-lists and lists of materials to be kept in your several EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS KITS.

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Immediately below is a short HURRICANE Preparedness list.

(Shelter at home – away from windows)

Water - at least 1 gallon daily per person for 3 to 7 days

Food - at least enough for 3 to 7 days

- non-perishable packaged or canned food / juices
- foods for infants or the elderly
- snack foods
- non-electric can opener
- cooking tools / fuel
- paper plates / plastic utensils

Blankets / Pillows, etc.

Clothing - seasonal / rain gear/ sturdy shoes

First Aid Kit / Medicines / Prescription Drugs

Special Items - for babies and the elderly

Toiletries / Hygiene items / Moisture wipes

Flashlight / Batteries

Radio - Battery operated and NOAA weather radio

Telephones - Fully charged cell phone with extra battery and a traditional (not cordless) telephone set

Cash (with some small bills) and Credit Cards - Banks and ATMs may not be available for extended periods

Keys

Toys, Books and Games

Important documents - in a waterproof container or watertight resealable plastic bag (*Very important—for each family member*)

- insurance, medical records, bank account numbers, Social Security card, passports, licenses, etc.

Tools - keep a set with you during the storm

Vehicle fuel tanks filled

Pet care items

- proper identification / immunization records / medications
- ample supply of food and water
- a carrier or cage
- muzzle and leash

If you choose to go to a shelter, you need a go kit containing at least the above items plus critical medications (each fully labeled), changes of clothing, a pillow, and a sleeping bag for each family member. Earplugs will be very helpful, since personal space in shelters tends to be quite limited. You might also consider a small inflatable air mattress to go on the provided cot! Don't forget a hand pump!

Introductory discussion

If you are impatient, jump down to the "Lists" section and learn what should go into your KIT(S), then take the time to read the text.

Much of the information you will read below has been "adapted" from other sources such as FEMA, Ready.gov, QST, the Salvation Army, and the Red Cross.

It would be a good idea to top off your car gas tank(s) now and try to keep tank levels above 3/4 full until after the weather threat passes. Be sure to keep at least 1/2 tank of gas in your car(s) and carry a LIST of emergency phone numbers with you at all times. If you can't evacuate, you must be prepared for sheltering in part of your home or in a public shelter. Remember, on Long Island you may be able to relocate to the home of friends or relatives fifty or more miles away in the face of severe flooding or hurricane warnings....if you get on the roads early enough. If you do temporarily relocate, be sure some of your neighbors know how and where to contact you (your cell phone number(s), your host's phone numbers, email addresses, snail mail addresses).

Finally, I've provided a list of resources. Be sure to visit the www.ready.gov web site at your earliest opportunity. Then check out the other references.

1. Overview of a Basic Disaster Plan

Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, severe weather, earthquakes, and other emergencies to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team (see reference material for guidance). Discuss the types of disasters (e.g., hurricane, fire, power failure, flood, terrorist action) that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case. Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets.

1. Pick two places to meet: One should be right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire. A second one should be outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone must know the address and phone number of each location – including cell phones.

2. Ask an out-of-state friend or relative to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your contact's phone number.

3. Assemble emergency kits for a) sheltering in place, 2) evacuation. Be sure to include

clothes, documents, cash (including coins!), tools, food, sanitation and hygiene supplies

2. Make Your Plans

Plan in advance what you will do in an emergency. Be prepared to assess the situation. Think of how you would use common sense and whatever you have on hand to take care of yourself and your loved ones.

Develop a Family Communications Plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another and review what you will do in different situations. Consider a plan where each family member calls, or e-mails, the same friend or relative in the event of an emergency. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members. Be sure each person knows the phone number and has coins or a prepaid phone card to call the emergency contact. You may have trouble getting through, or the phone system may be down altogether, but be patient. Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the *event*, the first important decision is whether you stay put, or get away. You should understand and plan for both possibilities. Use common sense and the information you are learning here to determine if there is immediate danger. Listen to a radio or watch television for official instructions, as they become available.

Create a plan to stay at home and possibly “shelter-in-place”.

There are circumstances when you will choose to remain in your home. Be prepared by stocking sufficient water, food, clothing, and other supplies, for each family member, for at least 3 days. If flooding is a possibility, be sure to move all your supplies “above ground level”.

Plan how you might work with neighbors after you have provided for your family’s safety and well-being. Working with others can save lives and property. Plan how you could work together after a disaster, until help arrives. Know each others’ special skills (e.g., medical, technical, construction, electrical, plumbing) and consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as disabled and elderly persons. Make plans for childcare in case parents can’t get home—and establish clear communication links.

Create a Plan to Get Away.

Plan in advance how you will assemble your family and anticipate where you will go. Choose several destinations in different directions, if possible, so you have options in an emergency. If you have a car, keep at least a 3/4 tank of gas in it at all times. Each of your cars should have both local and regional printed maps and a GPS unit, if possible. Become familiar with alternate routes as well as (possible) other means of transportation out of your area. If you do not have a car, plan how you will leave if you have to. Take your emergency supply kit, unless you have reason to believe it is contaminated. Lock the house door behind you. Take pets with you if you are told to evacuate. But, if you are going to a public shelter, leave early and know which shelter(s) allow pets inside. Check now for information on how your community handles pets in an emergency. Here on Long Island there are several (limited resources) shelters for pets and owners. If you believe the air may be contaminated, drive with your windows and vents closed and keep the air conditioning and heater turned off. Listen to the radio for instructions.

Know Emergency Plans at School and Work. Think about the places where your family spends time: school, work and other places frequented by your family. Talk to your childrens' schools and your employer(s) about emergency plans. Find out how they will communicate with families during an emergency. If you are an employer, be sure you have an emergency preparedness plan. Review and practice it with your employees. A community working together during an emergency also makes sense. Be sure that each of your children has a list of telephone numbers of other family members and contact people. The list should also contain the address of your primary evacuation site. Talk to your neighbors about how you might work together

3. Be Informed

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling a supply kit and developing a family communications plan, are the same for both natural and manmade emergencies. However, there are significant differences among potential terrorist threats, such as biological, chemical, explosive, nuclear and radiological, which will impact the decisions you make and the actions you take. By beginning a process of learning about these specific threats now, you are preparing yourself to react in an emergency. Go to www.ready.gov now to learn more.

Be prepared to adapt this information to your personal circumstances and make every effort to follow instructions received from authorities on the scene. With these simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected. Get ready now.

Complete This Checklist

- * Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, doctor, LIPA, etc.).
- * Get a ac/battery powered WEATHER RADIO now and be sure it receives your local radio station.
- * Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.
- * Show each family member how and when to turn off the utilities (water, gas, and electricity) at the main switches. Keep necessary tools available!
- * Check if you have adequate insurance coverage.
- * Get training from the fire department for each family member on how to use the fire extinguisher (ABC type), and show him or her where it's kept.
- * Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.
- * Conduct a home hazard hunt.
- * Stock emergency supplies and assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit.
- * Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.
- * Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room, if possible.
- * Find the safe places in your home for each type of disaster.

* Make photocopies of all critical documents to be taken with you.

Practice and Maintain Your Plan

- • Quiz your kids every six months or so.
- • Conduct fire and emergency evacuations.
- • Replace stored water and stored food every six months.
- • Test and recharge your fire extinguisher(s) according to manufacturer's instructions.
- • Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

In an emergency or disaster:

Check for Injuries - Give first aid and get help for seriously injured people.

Listen to Your Battery-Powered/crank generator Radio for News and Instructions

Check for Damage in Your Home...

Use flashlights. Do not light matches or turn on electrical switches, if you suspect damage.

Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly.

Shut off any other damaged utilities. (You will need a professional to turn gas back on.)

Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline, and other flammable liquids immediately.

Remember to...

- • Confine or secure your pets.
- • Call your family contact—do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.
- • Check on your neighbors, especially elderly or disabled persons.
- • Make sure you have an adequate water supply in case service is cut off.

4. Get a kit of emergency supplies

Be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to make it on your own for at three days, maybe longer. While there are many things that might make you more comfortable, think first about fresh water, food and clean air. Consider two kits. In one, put everything you will need to stay where you are and make it on your own. The other should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you (i.e., a GO KIT), if you have to get away.

You'll need a gallon of water per person per day for drinking and sanitation. Include in the kits a three-day supply of non-perishable foods that are easy to store and prepare such as protein bars, dried fruit or canned foods. During cold weather seasons, include warm clothes and a sleeping bag for each member of the family. Some potential events could send tiny microscopic "junk" into the air. Many of these materials can only hurt you if they get into your body, so think about creating a barrier between yourself and any contamination. It's smart to have something for each member of the family that covers their mouth and nose, such as two to three layers of a cotton t-shirt, handkerchief or towel or filter masks, which are readily available in hardware and Home Depot or Lowes stores. It is very important

that the mask or other material fit your face snugly so that most of the air you breathe comes through the mask, not around it. Do whatever you can to make the best fit possible for children. Also, include duct tape and heavyweight garbage bags or plastic sheeting that can be used to seal windows and doors if you need to create a barrier between yourself and any potential contamination outside.

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Basic Equipment for Emergencies — check list

Place all these items in one or two portable containers and keep them accessible.

Food and water

- * At least one gallon of bottled water per person, per day
- * Canned food: soups, stews, beans, pastas, meat, poultry, fish, fruits and vegetables
- * Energy bars and dried foods
- * Honey, peanut butter, nuts, syrup, jams, salt and pepper, sugar, instant coffee and tea
- * Eating utensils and plastic dishes

Keep enough water and non-perishable food to meet your needs for at least 3 days. Check the food and replace the water every year.

Survival

- * Small fuel-driven stove and fuel (follow the manufacturer's directions and store properly)
- * Waterproof matches, plastic garbage bags, duct tape and paper towels
- * Disposable plates and glasses, knives, forks, spoons, manual can-opener and bottle opener
- * Food and water
- * Flashlight and spare batteries
- * Crank or battery-operated radio (portable stereo and headphones)
- * Candles and matches or lighter
- * Whistle (in case you need to attract attention)
- * Toiletries, spare eyeglasses and other personal items
- * First aid kit, prescription drugs
- * Extra set of house and car keys and money (including small change for pay telephones)
- * Copies of your important documents (identification, personal papers)
- * Winter clothing, boots and blankets or sleeping bags

Each member of the family could have his/her own personalized survival kit in a backpack, ready to go in case of evacuation.

Vehicle

- * Shovel, scraper and snow brush
- * Sand, salt or cat litter and antifreeze
- * Matches and candles in a metal container
- * Spare clothing and shoes, blanket

- * Tow rope, jumper cables, windshield-washer fluid
- * First aid kit with seatbelt cutter
- * Roadmaps, whistle, and flashlight
- * Water and emergency food (e.g., energy bars)
- * Warning light or road flares
- * Fire extinguisher

Always try to keep your gas tank at least half full, especially in the winter.

Detailed Checklist

Personal Items:

- _ Blanket, nylon, fleece-lined, 48" x 56" or
- _ Blanket, microfiber, 50" x 60"
- _ Lantern, LED (D batteries)
- _ Spare Batteries, D (4)
- _ Flashlight (with batteries installed)
- _ Matches, wind- and water-proof
- _ Can Opener
- _ Fire Starter, magnesium
- _ Magnifier, hand, 10-power
- _ Sewing kit, personal
- _ Towel, bath
- _ Bag, Trash, 33 gal. (2)
- _ Bag, Ziploc, asstd.
- _ Batteries, AA (48)
- _ Batteries, AAA (16)
- _ Batteries, 9Volt (3)
- _ Mask, dust (4)
- _ Rope, 1/8" nylon (100 ft)
- _ Towelette, hand sanitizer, pack
- _ Utensils, disposable plastic (6 sets)
- _ Cup, steel, canteen
- _ Poncho, nylon
- _ Towel and washcloth

- _ Toilet Tissue (2)
- _ Eyeglasses, prescription
- _ Lotion, hand sanitizer, waterless
- _ Meds, prescription (AM & PM)
- _ Medications, prescription (3 daily doses)
- _ Sunscreen, SPF-35
- _ Insect Repellant (25% DEET or Equivalent)
- _ Lip Balm, Carmex
- _ Comb
- _ Dental Floss
- _ Dental Picks
- _ Ear Plugs, disposable foam (5 pr)
- _ Lotion, antiperspirant
- _ Waterless hand sanitizer, (4 oz. or larger)
- _ Personal hygiene items
- _ Mirror, 3" x 5"
- _ Mouthwash
- _ Shampoo
- _ Soap, bath
- _ Swabs, cotton
- _ Toothbrush
- _ Toothpaste

Food and Water:

- _ Meal, Ready-to-Eat (6)
- _ Dehydrated foods in resealable containers
- _ Heater, catalytic, MRE (6)
- _ Water, bottled, 0.5 L (18)

Clothing:

- _ Sandals, shower
- _ Shirt, short sleeve, pocket-T (2)
- _ Shirt, short sleeve, polo (2)
- _ Shirt, sweat-suit, medium-weight

- _ Socks, athletic, cotton, white (3 pr)
- _ Socks, boot, wool/nylon blend (2 pr)
- _ Trousers, hiking shorts
- _ Trousers, rip-stop cotton (2)
- _ Trousers, sweat-suit, medium-weight
- _ Underwear (3)
- _ Underwear, thermal, shirt
- _ Underwear, thermal, trousers

First Aid Kit:

- _ Blanket, emergency, mylar, 56" x 84"
- _ Scissors, bandage, small
- _ Tweezers
- _ Safety Pin (2)
- _ Gloves, examination, Nitril(2 pr)
- _ Pin, safety, asstd.
- _ Splint, wire, small
- _ Clippers, nail
- _ Mirror, steel
- _ Bag, Ziploc, quart (5)
- _ Blade, razor, single edge
- _ Tape, first aid, 1" cloth
- _ Dressing, adhesive, finger (3)
- _ Dressing, adhesive, knuckle (3)
- _ Dressing, adhesive, 2" x 3" (5)
- _ Dressing, adhesive, 3" x 4" (3)
- _ Dressing, adhesive, strip (10)
- _ Dressing, gauze pad, 3" x 4" (3)
- _ Dressing, eye
- _ Dressing, gauze sponge, 4" x 4" bulk
- _ Bandage, butterfly closure, large (6)
- _ Bandage, gauze roll, 3" x 5 yd
- _ Bandage, liquid, first-aid, antiseptic
- _ Bandage, triangular

- _ Moleskin, 3” x 4” (4 sht.)
- _ Tablets, anti-diarrhea, Imodium A-D
- _ Tablets, acid reducer, Zantac 75
- _ Tablets, Ibuprofen 200 mg
- _ Towelette, hand sanitizer (4)
- _ Solution, Iodine
- _ Handbook, emergency

Do not forget to have a pack of all critical records, medical information, insurance policy information, House and Car Keys, driver’s license & car registration, and CASH—including a roll of quarters.

<http://www.ready.gov>

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/brochures.shtml> for latest versions of listed brochures.

<http://www.fema.gov/news/disasters.fema> Disaster Declaration Information

<http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/howto/index.shtm> Self-Help information and instruction manuals

<http://www.redcross.org/disaster/disasterguide/> Disaster Guide

Closing comments

Once we go beyond doing for ourselves and our families, everything becomes much more complex and requires properly trained leaders. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) supports FEMA with a number of residential and on-line training (certificate) programs. These start with IS-100, which describes the history, features and principles, and organizational structure of the Incident Command System. It also explains the relationship between ICS and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). For additional information, this link will bring you to the FEMA course list page:

<http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp>. The next link will get you to a disaster information page (and more links): <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/index.shtm>. Finally, <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/> will take you to The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program information site.

We have to take care of our selves and our families first. Next, if we are able, we should be available to help our friends and neighbors