

# MILESTONE ACTIVITY LIST

## 1. Earthquake

- To prepare for an earthquake, consider stashing some emergency supplies in advance, [advises the Earthquake Country Alliance](#), a partnership of organizations and alliances focused on earthquake preparedness. Their site offers advice on stocking an “under-bed bag” and a “go bag.” For example, the former may include shoes in a closed bag under the bed, to protect them (and your feet) from broken glass, while the latter would ideally contain enough supplies for three days in case of evacuation.
- During an earthquake, the best guidance is to drop, cover, and hold on, Cotter says. If you feel an earthquake, drop to your hands and knees and crawl or move to cover underneath a sturdy piece of furniture — away from shelves and other things that could fall. “Hold on to the shelter to keep it protecting you, especially over your head and neck,” he says. It’s important not to start evacuating until after the shaking has stopped. The vast majority of injuries in an earthquake, Cotter notes, happen when people try to run during the shaking and get hit by debris or fall down.
- Cotter suggests practicing this routine — drop, cover, and hold on — with your family so it becomes second nature. Check out [Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drills](#) for more ideas on how to prepare for an earthquake with your family.

## 2. Hurricane

- If you’re going to leave, leave early, Burdiss says. [When a hurricane is approaching](#), the people in its direct path are often all heading the opposite direction, which means the traffic to get out of town can be

extreme. Make sure you have enough fuel in your tank, he says, and get as much of a head start as you can.

- If you don't have a car, make plans to carpool with friends or family, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) suggests. Or you can call the authorities to get a ride, the agency recommends.
- Cotter stresses that it's crucial to heed all government warnings during and in advance of a hurricane, especially evacuation guidance.

### 3. Explosion

- Responding to an explosion is tricky when you don't know its cause, Burdiss says. It's best to assume there will be a secondary threat or hazard in the aftermath. For example, if a meth lab exploded, hazardous materials could be released; a natural gas leak explosion can create more threats, such as broken glass. First responders will assess these secondary risks, Burdiss says, so follow their guidance.
- If you need to evacuate, he advises grabbing your emergency kit, along with important paperwork (like identification documents) and some cash, and using your communication plan to inform your friends and family of your destination.
- Explosions are relatively uncommon in the United States, Cotter says; when they do happen, they're often caused by gas leaks. If you detect the smell of gas, leave home immediately and call 911 and your natural gas provider.
- Cotter keeps combination gas and carbon monoxide detectors near his gas oven range and gas washer and dryer, which will alert him if there are any leaks he might not smell immediately. Check the batteries regularly, he advises.

### 4. Fire

- People often run to the bathroom when their home is on fire because they think its water supply will be helpful, says [Wayne Struble](#), the director of emergency preparedness for the Florida-based hospital system Health First. But actually, it's common to get trapped inside there and not make it out. "You're better off going to a window," he says, and making sure you close every door as you move throughout the

space — it will help the fire take longer to reach you. If your window is aboveground, you need a means to climb down, like a collapsible ladder, [as \*The New York Times\*' product review website The Wirecutter recommended in July 2020](#).

- There are some “neat new gadgets” for better fire evacuation, Cotter says. Some detectors include a guiding voice along with an audible alarm; that voice can help you and your family take faster action without needing to determine what a plain alarm noise might mean, he says. One example is an [Alexa-enabled smoke and carbon monoxide detector by First Alert](#), which costs under \$200.
- Cotter suggests practicing fire drills regularly. Ensure that all family members know to leave the house immediately without pausing to collect belongings, and be sure to have an agreed common meeting point, he says.
- Of course, preventing a fire is better than having to respond to one. [FEMA encourages particular safety](#) in regards to cooking, and use of portable space heaters, fireplaces, and wood stoves.

## 5. Flood

- Preparing for a flood is similar to preparing for other emergencies, with one critical difference, Cotter says: flood insurance. Many common home and rental insurance policies do not cover flood damage, so check whether your plan has an exclusion. [FEMA maintains flood maps nationwide](#), so you can see if your home has a high flood risk.
- As with a hurricane, follow all evacuation guidance from local officials and have a plan for a safe destination, along with several days of supplies.
- Struble adds that, during a flood, it's best to seek refuge on a high floor, ideally near a window. Try to bring some water and food in case you need it, he says. If you live in a one-story home, he suggests stacking mattresses on top of a dining room table, which offers extra elevation in the event that water is rushing inside. But be careful about going inside an attic, says Struble: You may find that you don't have a way back out.

## 6. Terrorist Attack

- Stay at home and shelter in place, Struble says. Keep your windows and doors closed, and “don’t be nosy, trying to go outside and see what’s going on.” Doing so could endanger you, he notes. Turn on the news and listen for guidance from officials on what’s safe to do and when.
- Burdiss says that in the event of a terrorist attack, it’s particularly important to avoid crowds. That’s his “stock advice to family and friends.”
- The Red Cross has compiled a [terrorism safety checklist](#) you can download, with details on preparing for the unexpected and how to shelter in place.

## 7. Tornado

- Tornado alerts come in two forms: watches and warnings. Know the difference between the two, Cotter says. “A tornado watch means that conditions are favorable for severe weather like tornados, while a warning means that a tornado formation is likely or has already formed.”
- During a watch alert, review your shelter plan. If it's a warning, take shelter immediately. Always head for the lowest floor of your house — never go upstairs, Struble says. Many homes in Florida, where he lives, don’t have basements, so opt for an interior room with no windows. Bathrooms are a good choice, because if the house collapses, the sinks, shower, and toilet might create space for you to hide in, Struble says. And always keep a battery-powered radio with you to stay informed on official guidance. FEMA suggests tuning in to [NOAA Weather Radio](#).

## 8. Severe Winter Weather

- Winter weather like blizzards, extreme cold, high winds, and freezing rain, snow, and ice can all be serious enough to put your family’s emergency plan into action. [According to FEMA](#), winter storms create a higher risk of car accidents, hypothermia, frostbite, carbon monoxide poisoning, and heart attacks linked to overexertion. To help minimize your risk, they advise you stay off the roads, hole up indoors, dress warmly, prepare for power outages (but only use generators outdoors),

and keep an eye out for signs of hypothermia and frostbite. [Per the CDC](#), symptoms of hypothermia include shivering, exhaustion, and shaking hands. Symptoms of frostbite include red, white, or greyish-yellow skin, firm or waxy skin, numbness, and pain.

- If you have to venture outdoors, the goal is to stay warm and dry. Wear multiple layers of loose, sweat-wicking clothing made from materials like wool, Dri-Fit tech, or polyester, then cover as much skin as you can with hats, warm socks, waterproof boots, and mittens or gloves. (Mittens may keep hands warmer than gloves, according to a [study published in November 2016 in the \*International Journal of Circumpolar Health\*](#)). Avoid cotton if possible, since it retains moisture and does not hold heat as well as wool, silk or synthetic fabrics, [per Mayo Clinic](#).