

# Basic Preparedness

In this part of the guide, you will learn preparedness strategies that are common to all disasters. You plan only once, and are able to apply your plan to all types of hazards.

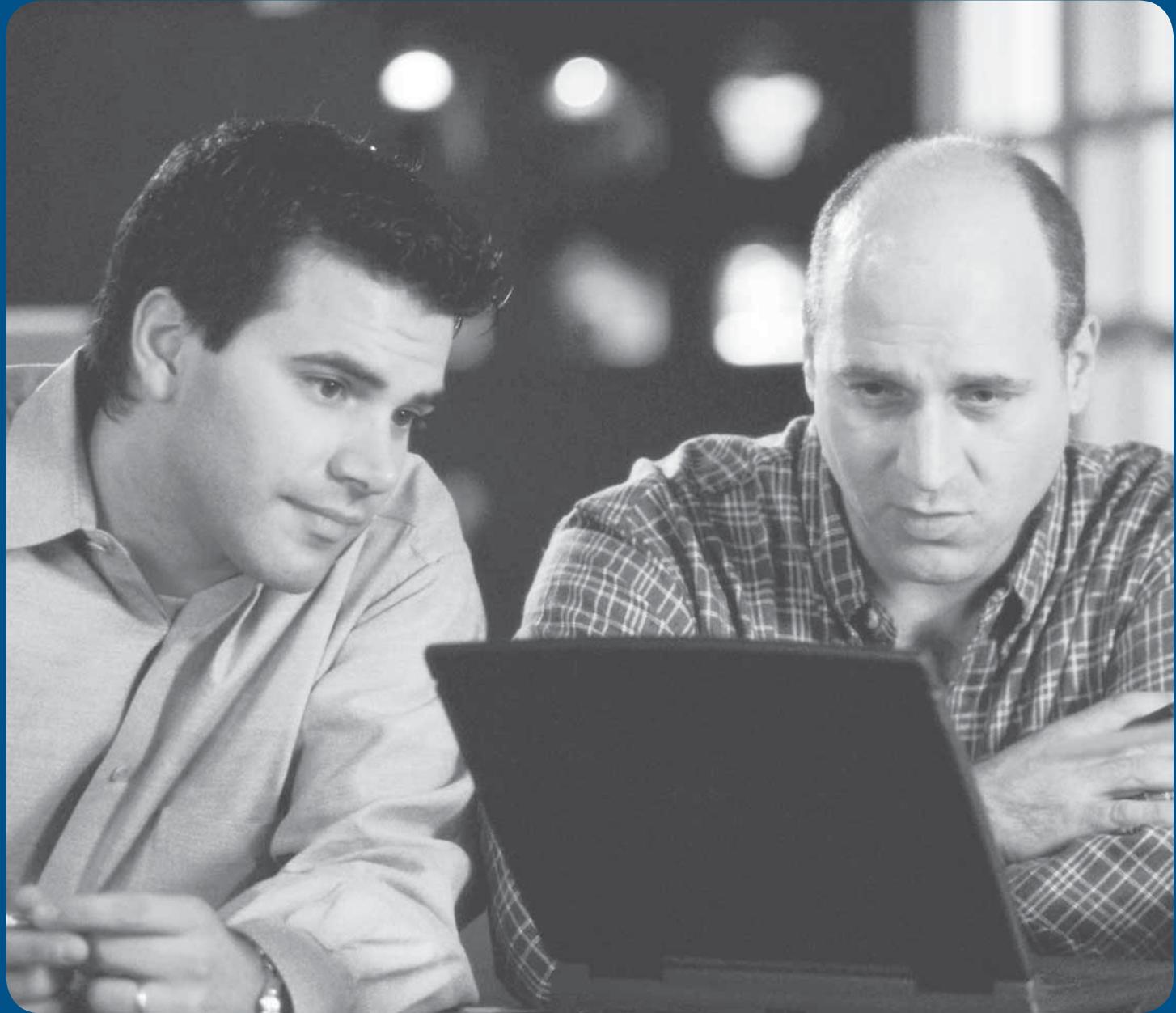
When you complete Part 1, you will be able to:

- Get informed about hazards and emergencies that may affect you and your family.
- Develop an emergency plan.
- Collect and assemble disaster supplies kit.
- Learn where to seek shelter from all types of hazards.
- Identify the community warning systems and evacuation routes.
- Include in your plan required information from community and school plans.
- Learn what to do for specific hazards.
- Practice and maintain your plan.



1.1

# Getting Informed



Learn about the hazards that may strike your community, the risks you face from these hazards, and your community's plans for warning and evacuation. You can obtain this information from your local emergency management office or your local chapter of the American Red Cross. Space has been provided here to record your answers.

## Hazards

Ask local authorities about each possible hazard or emergency and use the worksheet that follows to record your findings and suggestions for reducing your family's risk.

Possible Hazards and Emergencies	Risk Level (None, Low, Moderate, or High)	How can I reduce my risk?
<b>Natural Hazards</b>		
1. Floods		
2. Hurricanes		
3. Thunderstorms and Lightning		
4. Tornadoes		
5. Winter Storms and Extreme Cold		
6. Extreme Heat		
7. Earthquakes		
8. Volcanoes		
9. Landslides and Debris Flow		
10. Tsunamis		
11. Fires		
12. Wildfires		

Technological Hazards		
1. Hazardous Materials Incidents		
2. Nuclear Power Plants		
Terrorism		
1. Explosions		
2. Biological Threats		
3. Chemical Threats		
4. Nuclear Blasts		
5. Radiological Dispersion Device (RDD)		

You also can consult FEMA for hazard maps for your area. Go to [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), select maps, and follow the directions. National hazard maps have been included with each natural hazard in Part 2 of this guide.



# Warning Systems and Signals

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) can address the entire nation on very short notice in case of a grave threat or national emergency. Ask if your local radio and TV stations participate in the EAS.

National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from a nearby National Weather Service office to specially configured NOAA weather radio receivers. Determine if NOAA Weather Radio is available where you live. If so, consider purchasing a NOAA weather radio receiver.

Ask local authorities about methods used to warn your community.

Warning System	What should we do?
EAS	
NOAA Weather Radio	

# Evacuating Yourself and Your Family

When community evacuations become necessary, local officials provide information to the public through the media. In some circumstances, other warning methods, such as sirens or telephone calls, also are used. Additionally, there may be circumstances under which you and your family feel threatened or endangered and you need to leave your home, school, or workplace to avoid these situations.

The amount of time you have to leave will depend on the hazard. If the event is a weather condition, such as a hurricane that can be monitored, you might have a day or two to get ready. However, many disasters allow no time for people to gather even the most basic necessities, which is why planning ahead is essential.

## Evacuation: More Common than You Realize

Evacuations are more common than many people realize. Hundreds of times each year, transportation and industrial accidents release harmful substances, forcing thousands of people to leave their homes. Fires and floods cause evacuations even more frequently. Almost every year, people along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts evacuate in the face of approaching hurricanes.



Ask local authorities about emergency evacuation routes.

Record your specific evacuation route directions in the space provided.

Is there a map available with evacuation routes marked?

Yes

No

**Evacuation Guidelines**

<i>Always:</i>	<i>If time permits:</i>
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 or 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close and lock doors and windows.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
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.	



## Community and Other Plans

Ask local officials the following questions about your community's disaster/emergency plans.

Does my community have a plan?  Yes  No

Can I obtain a copy?  Yes  No

What does the plan contain?

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How often is it updated?

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What should I know about the plan?

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What hazards does it cover?

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In addition to finding out about your community's plan, it is important that you know what plans are in place for your workplace and your children's school or day care center.

1. Ask your employer about workplace policies regarding disasters and emergencies, including understanding how you will be provided emergency and warning information.
2. Contact your children's school or day care center to discuss their disaster procedures.

## School Emergency Plans

Know your children's school emergency plan:

Ask how the school will communicate with families during a crisis.

Ask if the school stores adequate food, water, and other basic supplies.

Find out if the school is prepared to shelter-in-place if need be, and where they plan to go if they must get away.

In cases where schools institute procedures to shelter-in-place, you may not be permitted to drive to the school to pick up your children. Even if you go to the school, the doors will likely be locked to keep your children safe. Monitor local media outlets for announcements about changes in school openings and closings, and follow the directions of local emergency officials.

For more information on developing emergency preparedness plans for schools, please log on to the U.S. Department of Education at [www.ed.gov/emergencyplan](http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan).

## Workplace Plans

If you are an employer, make sure your workplace has a building evacuation plan that is regularly practiced.

Take a critical look at your heating, ventilation and air conditioning system to determine if it is secure or if it could feasibly be upgraded to better filter potential contaminants, and be sure you know how to turn it off if you need to.

Think about what to do if your employees can't go home.

Make sure you have appropriate supplies on hand.

1.2

# Emergency Planning and Checklists



Now that you've learned about what can happen and how your community is prepared to respond to emergencies, prepare your family by creating a family disaster plan. You can begin this process by gathering family members and reviewing the information you obtained in Section 1.1 (hazards, warning systems, evacuation routes and community and other plans). Discuss with them what you would do if family members are not home when a warning is issued. Additionally, your family plan should address the following:

- Escape routes.
- Family communications.
- Utility shut-off and safety.
- Insurance and vital records.
- Special needs.
- Caring for animals.
- Safety Skills

Information on these family planning considerations are covered in the following sections.

## Escape 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.

### Where to Meet

Establish a place to meet in the event of an emergency, such as a fire. Record the locations below:

Where to meet...	
Near the home	For example, the next door neighbor's telephone pole
Outside the immediate area	For example, the neighborhood grocery store parking lot

# 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. Copies to fill out can be found in Appendix C. Also in Appendix C is a more detailed Family Communications Plan which should be completed and posted so the contact information is readily accessible to all family members. A copy should also be included in your family disaster supplies kit.

The form is a template for a 'Family Communications Plan'. It features a large dashed rectangular area at the top for writing. Below this is a solid black horizontal bar containing the title 'Family Communications Plan' in white, bold, sans-serif font. To the left of the title is a small circular logo featuring a stylized eagle. Underneath the title are four sets of input fields, each consisting of a label and a horizontal line for writing. The labels are: 'Contact Name:', 'Telephone:', 'Out-of-State Contact Name:', 'Telephone:', and 'Neighborhood Meeting Place:' followed by 'Meeting Place Telephone:'. At the bottom of the card, the text 'Dial 9-1-1 for Emergencies!' is printed in a bold, italicized font.

# Utility Shut-off and Safety

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

Below is some general guidance for shutting off utility service:

**Modify the information provided to reflect your shut off requirements as directed by your utility company(ies).**

## 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.

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 service to your home.

When you learn the proper shut-off procedure for your meter, share the information with everyone in your household. Be sure not to actually turn off the gas when practicing the proper gas shut-off procedure.

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.



**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 (not the street valve in the cement box at the curb—this valve is extremely difficult to turn and requires a special tool).



### Preparing to Shut Off Water

- Locate the shut-off valve for the water line that enters your house. It may look like this:
- 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 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.



**FOR YOUR SAFETY:** Always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit breaker.

## 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.

### Flood Insurance

If you live in a flood-prone area, consider purchasing flood insurance to reduce your 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)FLOOD29 to learn more about flood insurance.

**Inventory Home Possessions**

Make a record of your personal property, for insurance purposes. Take photos or a video of the interior and exterior of your home. Include personal belongings in your inventory.

You may also want to download the free Household and Personal Property Inventory Book from the University of Illinois at [www.ag.uiuc.edu/~vista/abstracts/ahouseinv.html](http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/~vista/abstracts/ahouseinv.html) to help you record your possessions.

**Important Documents**

Store important documents such as insurance policies, deeds, property records, and other important papers in a safe place, such as a safety deposit box away from your home. Make copies of important documents for your disaster supplies kit. (Information about the disaster supplies kit is covered later.)

**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.

## Special Needs

If you or someone close to you has a disability or a special need, you may have to take additional steps to protect yourself and your family in an emergency.

Disability/Special Need	Additional Steps
Hearing impaired	May need to make special arrangements to receive warnings.
Mobility impaired	May need special assistance to get to a shelter.
Single working parent	May need help to plan for disasters and emergencies.
Non-English speaking persons	May need assistance planning for and responding to emergencies. Community and cultural groups may be able to help keep people informed.
People without vehicles	May need to make arrangements for transportation.
People with special dietary needs	Should take special precautions to have an adequate emergency food supply.

**Planning for Special Needs**

If you have special needs:

- Find out about special assistance that may be available in your community. Register with the office of emergency services or the local fire department for assistance so needed help can be provided.

- Create a network of neighbors, relatives, friends, and coworkers to aid you in an emergency. Discuss your needs and make sure everyone knows how to operate necessary equipment.
- Discuss your needs with your employer.
- If you are mobility impaired and live or work in a high-rise building, have an escape chair.
- If you live in an apartment building, ask the management to mark accessible exits clearly and to make arrangements to help you leave the building.
- Keep specialized items ready, including extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, food for service animals, and any other items you might need.
- Be sure to make provisions for medications that require refrigeration.
- Keep a list of the type and model numbers of the medical devices you require.

## Caring for Animals

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

Plan for pet disaster needs by:

### Guidelines for Pets

- Identifying shelter.
- Gathering pet supplies.
- Ensuring your pet has proper ID and up-to-date veterinarian records.
- Providing 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.

**Guidelines for Large Animals**

If you have large animals such as horses, cattle, sheep, goats, or pigs on your property, be sure to prepare before a disaster.

Use the following guidelines:

1. Ensure all animals have some form of identification.
2. Evacuate animals whenever possible. Map out primary and secondary routes in advance.
3. Make available vehicles and trailers needed for transporting and supporting each type of animal. Also make available experienced handlers and drivers.  
**Note:** It is best to allow animals a chance to become accustomed to vehicular travel so they are less frightened and easier to move.
4. Ensure destinations have food, water, veterinary care, and handling equipment.
5. If evacuation is not possible, animal owners must decide whether to move large animals to shelter or turn them outside.

## Safety Skills

It is important that family members know how to administer first aid and CPR and how to use a fire extinguisher.

**Learn First Aid and CPR**

Take a first aid and CPR class. Local American Red Cross chapters can provide information about this type of training. Official certification by the American Red Cross provides, under the “good Samaritan” law, protection for those giving first aid.

**Learn How to Use a Fire Extinguisher**

Be sure everyone knows how to use your fire extinguisher(s) and where it is kept. You should have, at a minimum, an ABC type.

1.3

# Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit



You may need to survive on your own after a disaster. This means having your own food, water, and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least three days. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it might take days.

Basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment, and telephones may be cut off for days, or even a week or longer. Or, you may have to evacuate at a moment's notice and take essentials with you. You probably will not have the opportunity to shop or search for the supplies you need.

A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items that members of a household may need in the event of a disaster.

## Kit Locations

Since you do not know where you will be when an emergency occurs, prepare supplies for home, work, and vehicles.

Home	Work	Car
<p>Your disaster supplies kit should contain essential food, water, and supplies for at least three days.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Additionally, you may want to consider having supplies for sheltering for up to two weeks.</p>	<p>This kit should be in one container, and ready to "grab and go" in case you are evacuated from your workplace.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>In case you are stranded, keep a kit of emergency supplies in your car.</p> <p>This kit should contain food, water, first aid supplies, flares, jumper cables, and seasonal supplies.</p>



# Water

You should store at least one gallon of water per person per day. A normally active person needs at least one-half gallon of water daily just for drinking.

## How Much Water do I Need?

Additionally, in determining adequate quantities, take the following into account:

- Individual needs vary, depending on age, physical condition, activity, diet, and climate.
- Children, nursing mothers, and ill people need more water.
- Very hot temperatures can double the amount of water needed.
- A medical emergency might require additional water.

To prepare safest and most reliable emergency supply of water, it is recommended you purchase commercially bottled water. Keep bottled water in its original container and do not open it until you need to use it.

## How Should I Store Water?

Observe the expiration or “use by” date.

### If you are preparing your own containers of water

It is recommended you purchase food-grade water storage containers from surplus or camping supplies stores to use for water storage. Before filling with water, thoroughly clean the containers with dishwashing soap and water, and rinse completely so there is no residual soap. Follow directions below on filling the container with water.

If you choose to use your own storage containers, choose two-liter plastic soft drink bottles – not plastic jugs or cardboard containers that have had milk or fruit juice in them. Milk protein and fruit sugars cannot be adequately removed from these containers and provide an environment for bacterial growth when water is stored in them. Cardboard containers also leak easily and are not designed for long-term storage of liquids. Also, do not use glass containers, because they can break and are heavy.

### If storing water in plastic soda bottles, follow these steps

Thoroughly clean the bottles with dishwashing soap and water, and rinse completely so there is no residual soap.

Sanitize the bottles by adding a solution of 1 teaspoon of non-scented liquid household chlorine bleach to a quart of water. Swish the sanitizing solution in the bottle so that it touches all surfaces. After sanitizing the bottle, thoroughly rinse out the sanitizing solution with clean water.

Fill the bottle to the top with regular tap water. If the tap water has been commercially treated from a water utility with chlorine, you do not need to add anything else to the water to keep it clean. If the water you are using comes from a well or water source that is not treated with chlorine, add two drops of non-scented liquid household chlorine bleach to the water.

Tightly close the container using the original cap. Be careful not to contaminate the cap by touching the inside of it with your finger. Place a date on the outside of the container so that you know when you filled it. Store in a cool, dark place.

Replace the water every six months if not using commercially bottled water.

## Food

The following are things to consider when putting together your food supplies:

- Avoid foods that will make you thirsty. Choose salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals, and canned foods with high liquid content.
- Stock canned foods, dry mixes, and other staples that do not require refrigeration, cooking, water, or special preparation. You may already have many of these on hand. **Note:** Be sure to include a manual can opener.
- Include special dietary needs.



## Basic Disaster Supplies Kit

The following items are recommended for inclusion in your basic disaster supplies kit:

- Three-day supply of non-perishable food.
- Three-day supply of water – one gallon of water per person, per day.
- Portable, battery-powered radio or television and extra batteries.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- First aid kit and manual.
- Sanitation and hygiene items (moist towelettes and toilet paper).
- Matches and waterproof container.
- Whistle.
- Extra clothing.
- Kitchen accessories and cooking utensils, including a can opener.
- Photocopies of credit and identification cards.
- Cash and coins.
- Special needs items, such as prescription medications, eye glasses, contact lens solutions, and hearing aid batteries.
- Items for infants, such as formula, diapers, bottles, and pacifiers.
- Other items to meet your unique family needs.

If you live in a cold climate, you must think about warmth. It is possible that you will not have heat. Think about your clothing and bedding supplies. Be sure to include one complete change of clothing and shoes per person, including:

- Jacket or coat.
- Long pants.
- Long sleeve shirt.
- Sturdy shoes.
- Hat, mittens, and scarf.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket (per person).

Be sure to account for growing children and other family changes. See Appendix B for a detailed checklist of disaster supplies. You may want to add some of the items listed to your basic disaster supplies kit depending on the specific needs of your family.

# Maintaining Your Disaster Supplies Kit

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Just as important as putting your supplies together is maintaining them so they are safe to use when needed. Here are some tips to keep your supplies ready and in good condition:

- Keep canned foods in a dry place where the temperature is cool.
- Store boxed food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers to protect from pests and to extend its shelf life.
- Throw out any canned good that becomes swollen, dented, or corroded.
- Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies.
- Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in the front.
- Change stored food and water supplies every six months. Be sure to write the date you store it on all containers.
- Re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your family needs change.
- Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supplies kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers, such as an unused trashcan, camping backpack, or duffel bag.

1.4

## Shelter



Taking shelter is critical in times of disaster. Sheltering is appropriate when conditions require that you seek protection in your home, place of employment, or other location where you are when disaster strikes. Sheltering outside the hazard area would include staying with friends and relatives, seeking commercial lodging, or staying in a mass care facility operated by disaster relief groups in conjunction with local authorities.

To effectively shelter, you must first consider the hazard and then choose a place in your home or other building that is safe for that hazard. For example, for a tornado, a room should be selected that is in a basement or an interior room on the lowest level away from corners, windows, doors and outside walls. Because the safest locations to seek shelter vary by hazard, sheltering is discussed in the various hazard sections. These discussions include recommendations for sealing the shelter if the hazards warrants this type of protection.

Even though mass care shelters often provide water, food, medicine, and basic sanitary facilities, you should plan to take your disaster supplies kit with you so you will have the supplies you require. Mass care sheltering can involve living with many people in a confined space, which can be difficult and unpleasant. To avoid conflicts in this stressful situation, it is important to cooperate with shelter managers and others assisting them. Keep in mind that alcoholic beverages and weapons are forbidden in emergency shelters and smoking is restricted.

The length of time you are required to shelter may be short, such as during a tornado warning, or long, such as during a winter storm. It is important that you stay in shelter until local authorities say it is safe to leave. Additionally, you should take turns listening to radio broadcasts and maintain a 24-hour safety watch.

During extended periods of sheltering, you will need to manage water and food supplies to ensure you and your family have the required supplies and quantities. Guidance on how to accomplish this follows.



## Managing Water

### Essentials

- 1. Allow people to drink according to their needs.** Many people need even more than the average of one-half gallon, per day. The individual amount needed depends on age, physical activity, physical condition, and time of year.

- 2. Never ration water unless ordered to do so by authorities.** Drink the amount you need today and try to find more for tomorrow. Under no circumstances should a person drink less than one quart (four cups) of water each day. You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity and staying cool.
- 3. Drink water that you know is not contaminated first.** If necessary, suspicious water, such as cloudy water from regular faucets or water from streams or ponds, can be used after it has been treated. If water treatment is not possible, put off drinking suspicious water as long as possible, but do not become dehydrated.
- 4. Do not drink carbonated beverages instead of drinking water.** Carbonated beverages do not meet drinking-water requirements. Caffeinated drinks and alcohol dehydrate the body, which increases the need for drinking water.
- 5. Turn off the main water valves.** You will need to protect the water sources already in your home from contamination if you hear reports of broken water or sewage lines, or if local officials advise you of a problem. To close the incoming water source, locate the incoming valve and turn it to the closed position. Be sure you and other family members know how to perform this important procedure.
  - To use the water in your pipes, let air into the plumbing by turning on the faucet in your home at the highest level. A small amount of water will trickle out. Then obtain water from the lowest faucet in the home.
  - To use the water in your hot-water tank, be sure the electricity or gas is off, and open the drain at the bottom of the tank. Start the water flowing by turning off the water intake valve at the tank and turning on the hot-water faucet. Refill the tank before turning the gas or electricity back on. If the gas is turned off, a professional will be needed to turn it back on.



## Review

Section 1.2:  
Emergency  
Planning and  
Checklists

Safe Sources	Unsafe Sources	Water Sources
Melted ice cubes	Radiators	
Water drained from the water heater (if the water heater has not been damaged)	Hot water boilers (home heating system)	
Liquids from canned goods such as fruit or vegetable juices	Water beds (fungicides added to the water or chemicals in the vinyl may make water unsafe to use)	
Water drained from pipes	Water from the toilet bowl or flush tank  Swimming pools and spas (chemicals used to kill germs are too concentrated for safe drinking but can be used for personal hygiene, cleaning, and related uses)	

## Water Treatment

Treat all water of uncertain quality before using it for drinking, food washing or preparation, washing dishes, brushing teeth, or making ice. In addition to having a bad odor and taste, contaminated water can contain microorganisms (germs) that cause diseases such as dysentery, cholera, typhoid, and hepatitis.



### Review

How I Should Store Water, Section 1.3

There are many ways to treat water. None is perfect. Often the best solution is a combination of methods. Before treating, let any suspended particles settle to the bottom or strain them through coffee filters or layers of clean cloth.

Make sure you have the necessary materials in your disaster supplies kit for the chosen water treatment method.

There are three water treatment methods. They are as follows:

- Boiling
- Chlorination
- Distillation

These instructions are for treating water of uncertain quality in an emergency situation, when no other reliable clean water source is available, or you have used all of your stored water.

#### Boiling

Boiling is the safest method of treating water. In a large pot or kettle, bring water to a rolling boil for 1 full minute, keeping in mind that some water will evaporate. Let the water cool before drinking.

Boiled water will taste better if you put oxygen back into it by pouring the water back and forth between two clean containers. This also will improve the taste of stored water.

#### Chlorination

You can use household liquid bleach to kill microorganisms. Use only regular household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 to 6.0 percent sodium hypochlorite. Do not use scented bleaches, color safe bleaches, or bleaches with added cleaners. Because the potency of bleach diminishes with time, use bleach from a newly opened or unopened bottle.

Add 16 drops (1/8 teaspoon) of bleach per gallon of water, stir, and let stand for 30 minutes. The water should have a slight bleach odor. If it doesn't, then repeat the dosage and let stand another 15 minutes. If it still does not smell of chlorine, discard it and find another source of water.

Other chemicals, such as iodine or water treatment products sold in camping or surplus stores that do not contain 5.25 to 6.0 percent sodium hypochlorite as the only active ingredient, are not recommended and should not be used.

#### Distillation

While the two methods described above will kill most microbes in water, distillation will remove microbes (germs) that resist these methods, as well as heavy metals, salts, and most other chemicals.



Distillation involves boiling water and then collecting only the vapor that condenses. The condensed vapor will not include salt or most other impurities. To distill, fill a pot halfway with water. Tie a cup to the handle on the pot's lid so that the cup will hang right-side-up when the lid is upside-down (make sure the cup is not dangling into the water) and boil the water for 20 minutes. The water that drips from the lid into the cup is distilled.

### Effectiveness of Water Treatment Methods

Methods	Kills Microbes	Removes other contaminants (heavy metals, salts, and most other chemicals)
Boiling		
Chlorination		
Distillation		

## Managing Food Supplies

Do:	Don't:	Safety and Sanitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep food in covered containers</li> <li>Keep cooking and eating utensils clean</li> <li>Keep garbage in closed containers and dispose outside, burying garbage if necessary</li> <li>Keep your hands clean by washing them frequently with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected</li> <li>Use only pre-prepared canned baby formula for infants</li> <li>Discard any food that has come into contact with contaminated floodwater</li> <li>Discard any food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more</li> <li>Discard any food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eat foods from cans that are swollen, dented, or corroded, even though the product may look safe to eat</li> <li>Eat any food that looks or smells abnormal, even if the can looks normal</li> <li>Use powdered formulas with treated water</li> <li>Let garbage accumulate inside, both for fire and sanitation reasons</li> </ul>	

**Note:** Thawed food usually can be eaten if it is still “refrigerator cold.” It can be re-frozen if it still contains ice crystals. To be safe, remember, “When in doubt, throw it out.”

## Cooking

- Alternative cooking sources in times of emergency include candle warmers, chafing dishes, fondue pots, or a fireplace.
- Charcoal grills and camp stoves are for outdoor use only.
- Commercially canned food may be eaten out of the can without warming.
- To heat food in a can:
  1. Remove the label.
  2. Thoroughly wash and disinfect the can. (Use a diluted solution of one part bleach to ten parts water.)
  3. Open the can before heating.

## Managing without Power

Here are two options for keeping food safe if you are without power for a long period:

- Look for alternate storage space for your perishable food.
- Use dry ice. Twenty-five pounds of dry ice will keep a 10-cubic-foot freezer below freezing for 3-4 days. Use care when handling dry ice, and wear dry, heavy gloves to avoid injury.

1.5

# Hazard-Specific Preparedness



There are actions that should be taken before, during, and after an event that are unique to each hazard. For example:

- Seeking a safe shelter during a tornado.
- Reducing property loss from a hurricane.

Information about the specific hazards and what to do for each is provided in Parts 2, 3, and 4. Study the material for those hazards that you identified in Section 1.1 as the ones that have happened or could happen. Share the hazard-specific information with family members and include pertinent material from these parts in your family disaster plan.



1.6

# Practicing and Maintaining Your 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.

## For More Information

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If you require more information about any of these topics, the following are resources that may be helpful.

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### FEMA Publications

*Disaster Preparedness Coloring Book.* FEMA-243. Coloring book for ages 3-10. Also available in Spanish.

*Before Disaster Strikes.* FEMA A-291. Contains information about how to make sure you are financially prepared to deal with a natural disaster. Also available in Spanish.

*The Adventures of Julia and Robbie: Disaster Twins.* FEMA-344. A collection of disaster related stories. Includes information on preparedness and how to mitigate against disasters.

*FEMA for Kids.* L-229. Provides information about what FEMA (specifically [fema.gov](http://fema.gov)) has to offer children.

*Community Shelter.* FEMA 361. Contains guidelines for constructing mass shelters for public refuge in schools, hospitals, and other places.

*Food and Water in an Emergency.* L-210 If an earthquake, hurricane, winter storm, or other disaster strikes your community, you might not have access to food, water, and electricity for days, or even weeks. By taking some time now to store emergency food and water supplies, you can provide for your entire family. Also available online at [www.fema.gov/pdf/library/f&web.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/f&web.pdf).

*Helping Children Cope with Disaster.* FEMA L-196. Helps families understand how to help children cope with disaster and its aftermath.

*Assisting People with Disabilities in a Disaster.* Information about helping people with disabilities in a disaster and resources for individuals with disabilities. Available online at [www.fema.gov/rrr/assistf.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/rrr/assistf.shtm).

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### American Red Cross Publications

*Facing Fear: Helping Young People Deal with Terrorism and Tragic Events.* A school curriculum designed to help alleviate worries and clear up confusion about perceived and actual threats to safety. Available online at [www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/facingfear](http://www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/facingfear), or contact your local Red Cross chapter.