

Disaster Preparedness for People With Disabilities

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/dissup.html> accessed 11/10/04

Completing a Personal Assessment

You should decide what you will be able to do for yourself and what assistance you may need before, during, and after a disaster. This will be based on the environment after the disaster, your capabilities, and your limitations. To complete a personal assessment, make a list of your personal needs and your resources for meeting them in a disaster environment. Consider the following information as you make your personal assessment.

Think about the following questions and note your answers in writing or record them on a tape cassette that you will share with your network. These answers should describe both your physical capabilities right now and the assistance you will need during the time that the disaster disrupts your normal routine. Base your plan on your lowest anticipated level of functioning.

Daily Living

Personal Care

Do you need assistance with personal care, such as bathing and grooming? Do you use adaptive equipment to help you get dressed?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Water Service

What will you do if water service is cut off for several days, or if you are unable to heat water?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Personal Care Equipment

Do you use a shower chair, tub-transfer bench, or other similar equipment?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Adaptive Feeding Devices

Do you use special utensils that help you prepare or eat food independently?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Electricity-Dependent Equipment

How will you continue to use equipment that runs on electricity, such as dialysis, electrical lifts, etc. ?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Getting Around

Disaster Debris

How will you cope with the debris in your home following the disaster?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Transportation

Do you need a specially-equipped vehicle or accessible transportation?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Errands

Do you need to get groceries, medications, and medical supplies? Think about what you will do if you depend on only one person to shop or run errands for you. What if your assistant cannot reach you because roads are blocked or because the disaster has affected him or her as well?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Evacuating

Building Evacuation

Do you need help to leave your home or office?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Building Exits

If the elevator is not working or cannot be used, are there other exits? (Include using a window as an alternate escape.)

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Getting Help

How will you call for the help you will need to leave the building?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Mobility Aids

What will you do if you cannot find your mobility aids, or cannot find or use equipment necessary for your service animal?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Ramp Access

What will you do if your ramps are shaken loose or become separated from the building?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Service Animals/Pets

Will you be able to care for your animal (provide food, shelter, veterinary attention, etc.) during and after a disaster? Do you have another caregiver for your animal if you are unable to meet its needs?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Disaster Services - Disaster Supplies Kit

<http://www.fema.gov/rrr/supplies.shtm> Accessed 11/10/04

Disasters happen anytime and anywhere. And when disaster strikes, you may not have much time to respond. A highway spill or hazardous material could mean evacuation. A winter storm could confine your family at home. An earthquake, flood, tornado, or any other disaster could cut water, electricity, and telephones-for days.

After a disaster, local officials and relief workers will be on the scene, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it may take days. Would your family be prepared to cope with the emergency until help arrives?

Your family will cope best by preparing for disaster before it strikes. One way to prepare is by assembling a Disaster Supplies 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 endure an evacuation or home confinement.

Prepare Your Kit

- Review the checklist below.
- Gather the supplies that are listed. You may need them if your family is confined at home.
- Place the supplies you'd most likely need for an evacuation in an easy-to-carry container. These supplies are listed with an asterisk (*).
- There are six basics you should stock for your home: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies, and special items. Keep the items that you would most likely need during an evacuation in an easy-to carry container--suggested items are marked with an asterisk(*).

Possible Containers Include-

- A large, covered trash container,
- A camping backpack,
- A duffle bag or waterproof suitcase.

Water

- 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 two quarts of water each day. Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people will need more.
- Store one gallon of water per person per day.
- Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for each person in your household for food preparation/sanitation).

Food

- Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. 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. Include a selection of the following foods in your Disaster Supplies Kit:
- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables

First Aid Kit

Assemble a first aid kit for your home and one for each car. A first aid kit should include:

- Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- Assorted sizes of safety pins
- Cleansing agent/soap
- Latex gloves (2 pairs)

- Sunscreen
- 2-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- Triangular bandages (3)
- Non-prescription drugs
- 2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Needle
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Thermometer
- Tongue blades (2)
- Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant

Non-Prescription Drugs

- Aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid (for stomach upset)
- Syrup of Ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center)
- Laxative
- Activated charcoal (use if advised by the Poison Control Center)

Tools and Supplies

- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils
- Emergency preparedness manual
- Battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Non-electric can opener, utility knife
- Fire extinguisher: small canister ABC type
- Tube tent
- Pliers
- Tape
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Needles, thread
- Medicine dropper
- Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water
- Whistle
- Plastic sheeting
- Map of the area (for locating shelters)

Sanitation

- Toilet paper, towelettes
- Soap, liquid detergent
- Feminine supplies
- Personal hygiene items
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses)
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Disinfectant
- Household chlorine bleach

Clothing and Bedding

- Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person.
- Sturdy shoes or work boots
- Rain gear
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Hat and gloves
- Thermal underwear
- Sunglasses

Special Items

- Remember family members with special requirements, such as infants and elderly or disabled persons

For Baby

- Formula
- Diapers
- Bottles
- Powdered milk
- Medications

For Adults

- Heart and high blood pressure medication
- Insulin
- Prescription drugs
- Denture needs
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Extra eye glasses

Entertainment Games and books

Important Family Documents

- Keep these records in a waterproof, portable container:
- Will, military discharge papers, insurance policies, contract/ deeds, stocks and bonds, Passports, social security cards, immunization records, bank account numbers, style and serial number of medical devices including pacemakers, medical information including physician names and phone numbers, names, dosages, and schedules for medication, Credit card account numbers and companies; Inventory of valuable household goods, important telephone numbers; Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates).
- Store your kit in a convenient place known to all family members. Keep a smaller version of the Disaster Supplies Kit in the trunk of your car.
- Keep items in airtight plastic bags. Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh. Replace your stored food every six months. Re-think your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update clothes, etc.
- Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.

Last Updated: Friday, 22-Oct-2004 21:33:00 EDT



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<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/apendix b.html> accessed 11/10/04.

Appendix B: Disaster Supplies Calendar

This Disaster Supplies Calendar is intended to help you prepare for disasters before they happen. Using the calendar, you can assemble a disaster supplies kit in small steps over a five-month period. Check off items you gather each week. Remember to change and replace perishable supplies (such as food and

water) every six months.

WEEK 1

Grocery Store

- 1 gallon water*
- 1 jar peanut butter
- 1 large can juice*
- 1 can meat*
- Hand-operated can opener
- Permanent marking pen

Also, pet food, diapers, and baby food, if needed.

• To Do

- Find out what kinds of disasters can happen in your area.
- Date each perishable food item using marking pen.

WEEK 2

Hardware Store

- Heavy cotton or hemp rope
- Duct tape
- 2 flashlights with batteries
- Matches in waterproof container

Also, a leash or carrier for your pet.

• To Do

- Complete a personal assessment of your needs and your resources for meeting your needs in a changed disaster environment.

WEEK 3

Grocery Store

- 1 gallon water*
- 1 can meat*
- 1 can fruit*
- Feminine hygiene supplies
- Paper and pencil
- Map of the area
- Aspirin or nonaspirin pain reliever
- Laxative

Also, 1 gallon of water for each pet.

• To Do

- Create a personal support network who can help you identify and obtain the resources you will need to cope effectively with disaster.

WEEK 4

Hardware Store

- Patch kit and can of seal-in-air product for the tires of mobility aids
- Signal flare
- Compass

Also, extra medications or prescriptions marked "emergency use. "

- To Do
 - ___ Develop a personal disaster plan.
 - ___ Give copies of the following lists to your network: emergency information list, medical information list, disability-related supplies and special equipment list, and personal disaster plan.

WEEK 5

Grocery Store

- ___ 1 gallon water*
- ___ 1 can meat*
- ___ 1 can fruit*
- ___ 1 can vegetables*
- ___ 2 rolls toilet paper
- ___ Extra toothbrush
- ___ Travel size toothpaste

Also, special food for special diets, if needed.

- To Do
 - ___ Make a floor plan of your home including primary escape routes.
 - ___ Identify safe places to go to in case of fire, earthquake, tornado, hurricane, and flood.
 - ___ Practice a fire drill, tornado drill, and earthquake drill with your network.

WEEK 6

First Aid Supplies

- ___ Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- ___ Safety pins
- ___ Adhesive tape
- ___ Latex gloves
- ___ Sunscreen
- ___ Gauze pads
- ___ Sterile roller bandages

Also, extra hearing aid batteries, if needed.

- To Do
 - ___ Check with child's day care center or school to find out about their disaster plans.
 - ___ Ask your local emergency management office if emergency transportation services are available in case of evacuation.

WEEK 7

Grocery Store

- ___ 1 gallon water*
- ___ 1 can ready-to-eat soup (not concentrated)*
- ___ 1 can fruit*
- ___ 1 can vegetables*
- ___ Sewing kit
- ___ Disinfectant

Also, extra plastic baby bottles, formula, and diapers, if needed.

- To Do
 - ___ Establish an out-of-town contact to call in case of emergency.
 - ___ Share this information with your network so they know whom to call.
 - ___ Make arrangements for your network to check on you immediately after an evacuation order or a disaster.

WEEK 8

First Aid Supplies

- ___ Scissors
- ___ Tweezers
- ___ Thermometer
- ___ Liquid antibacterial hand soap
- ___ Disposable hand wipes
- ___ Needles
- ___ Petroleum jelly or other lubricant
- ___ 2 tongue blades

Also, extra eyeglasses, if needed. Put in first aid kit.

- To Do
 - Place a pair of sturdy shoes and a flashlight by your bed so they are handy in an emergency.
 - If Blind, store a talking clock and one or more extra white canes.
 - If Blind, mark your disaster supplies in braille or with fluorescent tape.

WEEK 9

Grocery Store

- 1 can ready-to-eat soup*
- Liquid dish soap
- Household chlorine bleach
- 1 box heavy-duty garbage bags with ties
- Antacid (for stomach upset)

Also, saline solution and a contact lens case, if needed.

- To Do
 - Familiarize your network with any areas on your body where you have reduced sensation.
 - Choose a signal with your network that indicates you are okay and have left the disaster site.
 - If you have a communication disability, store a word or letter board in your disaster supplies kit.

WEEK 10

Hardware Store

- Waterproof portable plastic container (with lid) for important papers
- Battery-powered radio
- Wrench(es) needed to turn off utilities

- To Do
 - Take your network on a field trip to the gas meter and water meter shutoffs. Discuss when it is appropriate to turn off utilities.
 - Attach a wrench next to the cutoff valve of each utility meter so it will be there when needed.
 - Make photocopies of important papers and store safely.

WEEK 11

Grocery Store

- 1 large can juice*
- Large plastic food bags
- 1 box quick energy snacks
- 3 rolls paper towels
- Medicine dropper

- To Do
 - Store a roll of quarters for emergency phone calls.
 - Go on a hunt with your family to find a pay phone that is close to your home.
 - Test your smoke detector(s). Replace the battery in each detector that does not work.

WEEK 12

Animal Care Store

- Extra harness, leash, ID tags, and food for your service animal and/or pets
- Litter/pan
- Extra water

Veterinarian

- Obtain current vaccinations and medical records of your animal(s)
- Medications

- To Do
 - Develop a pet care plan in case of disaster.
 - Make photocopies of all vaccination records and put them in your disaster supplies kit.
 - Put extra animal harness, leash, and identification tag(s) in your disaster supplies kit.

WEEK 13

Hardware Store

- Whistle
- Pliers

- Screwdriver
- Hammer
- Perforated metal tape (sometimes called plumber's tape or strap iron)
- Crow bar

- To Do
 - Take a first aid/CPR class from your local Red Cross.
 - Arrange to have your water heater strapped to wall studs using perforated metal tape.

WEEK 14

Grocery Store

- 1 can fruit*
- 1 can meat*
- 1 can vegetables*
- 1 package eating utensils
- 1 package paper
- Cups

- To Do
 - Make sure your network and neighbors know what help you may need in an emergency and how best to assist.
 - Practice using alternate methods of evacuation with your network.

WEEK 15

Hardware Store

- Extra flashlight batteries
- Extra battery for portable radio
- Assorted nails
- Wood screws
- Labels for your equipment and supplies

- To Do
 - Make arrangements to bolt bookcases and cabinets to wall studs.
 - Label equipment and attach instruction cards.

WEEK 16

Grocery Store

- 1 can meat*
- 1 can vegetables*
- 1 box facial tissue
- 1 box quick energy snacks
- Dried fruit/nuts

- To Do
 - Find out if you have a neighborhood safety organization and join it.
 - Develop a disaster supplies kit for your car or van.

WEEK 17

Grocery Store

- 1 box graham crackers
- Assorted plastic containers with lids
- Dry cereal

First Aid Supplies

- Antidiarrheal medication
- Rubbing alcohol
- Antiseptic
- Syrup of ipecac and activated charcoal

- To Do
 - Arrange for a friend or neighbor to help your children if you are not able to respond or are at work.

WEEK 18

Hardware Store

- "Child proof" latches or other fasteners for your cupboards
- Double-sided tape or hook-and-loop fasteners (such as Velcro®) to secure moveable objects
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Plastic sheeting

• To Do

- Arrange for someone to install latches on cupboards and secure moveable objects.
- Put away a blanket or sleeping bag for each household member.

WEEK 19

Grocery Store

- 1 box quick-energy snacks
 - Comfort foods (such as cookies, candy bars)
 - Plastic wrap
 - Aluminum foil
- Also denture care items, if needed.

• To Do

- Review your insurance coverages with your agent to be sure you are covered for the disasters that may occur in your area. Obtain additional coverage, as needed.
- Purchase and have installed an emergency escape ladder for upper story windows, if needed.

WEEK 20

Hardware Store

- Camping or utility knife
- Work gloves
- Safety goggles
- Disposable dust masks
- 2 blank videocassettes

Specialty Store

- Get an extra battery for motorized mobility aids

• To Do

- Use a video camera to tape the contents of your home for insurance purposes.
- Make a copy of the videotape and send to an out-of-town friend or family member.
- Find out about your workplace disaster plan.

* Purchase one for each member of the household.

For printed copies or an audiocassette version of this booklet, contact your local Red Cross chapter.
Original Material for Appendix B: Disaster Supplies Calendar supplied by Chevron Real Estate Management Company © 1994.

Disaster Preparedness for People With Disabilities

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/prep.html>. Accessed 11/10/04

Personal Disaster Preparation

How well you prepare and how much you practice before a disaster occurs will determine how successfully you deal with and recover from disasters. Your personal disaster preparation is a continuing process. It helps you and your network identify, get, develop, manage, and maintain the information and resources you will need to deal with a disaster when it happens.

Prepare yourself based on the capabilities and limitations you believe you will have after the disaster. Also keep in mind that your usual ways of support and assistance may not be available to you for some time during an evacuation and after the disaster has occurred.

Make a personal disaster plan. This will help you organize information you will need and activities you will do during and after a disaster. Key items in a personal disaster plan are described below. Keep copies of your disaster plan in your disaster supplies kit, car, wallet (behind driver's license or primary identification card), wheelchair pack or at work, etc. Also, share your disaster plan with your network.

Emergency Information List

Make an emergency information list that you and your network can use. This list will let others know whom to call if they find you unconscious, unable to speak, or if they need to help you evacuate quickly. Besides emergency out-of-town contacts, your list should include the names and numbers of everyone in your network.

Ask a relative or friend who lives more than 100 miles away from you to be your "contact person." Keep in mind that a caller is more likely to connect with a long-distance number outside the disaster area than with a local number within it. In fact, all family members in a disaster area should call the contact person and give their location and condition. Once this is done, have the contact person give messages to your other friends and relatives who live outside the disaster area. This will help reduce calling into and out of the affected area once the phones are working.

If you have a communication disability, make sure your emergency information list notes the best way to communicate with you. This may be by writing notes, pointing to letters, words, or pictures, or finding a quiet place.

Medical Information List

Complete a medical information list that you and your network can use. The list should have information about your medical providers. Also include the names of medications you take and their dosages, when you take a medication, the condition for which you take a medication, the name of the doctor who prescribed it, and the doctor's phone number. It is important to record any adaptive equipment you use, your allergies and sensitivities, and communication or cognitive difficulties you may have. Keep this list attached to your emergency information list (described above).

Attach copies of health insurance cards and related information to the medical information list. Keep at least a seven-day supply of essential medications with you at all times. Work with your doctor(s) to get extra supplies of medications and extra copies of prescriptions. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about what you should do if you do not have enough medicine after a disaster and cannot immediately get what you need. Be sure you ask about the shelf life of your medications and the temperatures at which they should be stored. Determine how often you should replace stored medication. This helps ensure that a medicine's effectiveness does not weaken because of long storage time.

Note: If you take medications (such as methadone, chemotherapy, or radiation therapy) administered to you by a clinic or hospital, ask your provider how you should prepare for a disruption caused by a disaster.

What You Can Do to Prepare for

a Disaster



If you are in a wheelchair when the earthquake begins, lock your wheels.

- Identify safe places to go to during a disaster.

During an earthquake, get under a desk or table or cover your head and neck with a sturdy object.



- *Earthquake:* Identify a sturdy table or desk to get under in each room. This is important because while the earth is shaking, the movement of the ground will probably make it difficult or impossible for you to move any distance. If you cannot safely get under a desk or table, move near an inside wall of the building and cover your head and neck as best you can. Decide how you will get there when the earthquake begins. Lock your wheels if you are in a wheelchair. In bed, pull the sheets and blankets over you and use your pillow to cover and protect your head and neck.
- *Tornado:* The lowest floor or below-ground area of your home or workplace is safest. If there is no basement or you cannot get there, choose a room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet. Identify where this safe place is and how you would get there.
- *Hurricane or flood:* If local officials have not told you to leave the area, stay upstairs and in the middle of the building, away from windows. Avoid going to the lowest floor because hurricanes often cause flooding. If you are Blind or visually impaired, use a long cane in areas where debris may have fallen or furniture may have shifted. This is recommended even if you do not usually use a cane indoors.
- For information about how to prepare for disasters that are specific to your area, contact your local Red Cross chapter.

- Keep your service animals with you in a safe place at home, or take them with you to a shelter.
- Install at least one smoke detector on each level of your home, outside sleeping areas. If you are Deaf or have hearing loss, install a system that has flashing strobe lights to get your attention. If you have battery-operated detectors, replace batteries at least once a year, such as on your birthday, New Year's Day, etc. Test smoke detectors once a month by pushing the test button.
- Find the location of main utility cutoff valves and switches in your home. Learn how and when to disconnect them during an emergency. Try to do this yourself (do not practice shutting off the gas). If you cannot practice alone, arrange for your network to help. Turnoff utilities only if local officials tell you to do so or if you believe there is an immediate threat to life. For example, if you smell gas, see or hear sparking wires, or see water gushing from broken pipes, you should turn off utilities immediately. If you turn gas off, only a professional should turn it back on. If you cannot use the proper tools to turn utilities off at the main valves or switches, turn off the valves under sinks and by the stove. Also turn off all electrical switches in every room. Be sure that the members of your network know the following information:
 - Where to find each utility shutoff valve.
 - How to turn off each utility.
 - Whether you have the proper tools and where they are located, or if your network members need to bring tools with them.
- Identify as many exits as possible from each room and from the building you are in. Be sure to include the windows as exits.
- Make a floor plan of your home. You may want your network to assist you with it. Include your primary escape routes. On the floor plan, mark the rooms where you spend a lot of time. Also, mark where your disaster supplies kit is located. Give a copy of the floor plan to your network. This will help them find you and your supplies, if necessary.
- When traveling, know the types of disasters that threaten the area you will be visiting. Let the hotel or motel front desk know of your possible needs in case of an emergency. Describe the type of help you may need. Remember to let your network members know your travel plans: when you will leave and when you will return.
- Prepare an evacuation plan before a disaster happens.
 - If you have to leave your home or workplace, you may need someone's help to evacuate safely, especially down stairwells. If you need assistance during an emergency and your network is not available, find helpers and tell them about your condition. Give them instructions on what you need and how they can help you evacuate.
 - Practice using different ways out of a building, especially if you are above the first floor in a building with many stories. Remember, the elevator may not work or should not be used. Decide what type of equipment you may need for assistance during an evacuation. If you cannot use stairs, talk with your network about how you should be evacuated. They may want to take the Red Cross First Responder course or other training. This can teach them the proper and safe way to lift and carry you without injuring you or themselves.
 - If you need devices for an emergency escape, think about your physical capabilities before making a purchase. Store devices nearby, where you can get to them easily. This may mean having more than one emergency escape device available.
 - Advocate for yourself. Practice how to quickly explain to people the best way to guide or move you and your adaptive equipment, safely and rapidly.

Be ready to give brief, clear, and specific instructions and directions to

rescue personnel, either orally or in writing. For example, say or write these instructions:

- "Please take my--
 - Oxygen tank.
 - Wheelchair.
 - Gamma globulin from the freezer.
 - Insulin from the refrigerator.
 - Communication device from under the bed. "
- "Please do not straighten my knees. They are fused in a bent position. "
- "I have had a brain injury. Please write down all important instructions and information. "
- "I am Blind/visually impaired. Please let me grasp your arm firmly. "
- "I am Deaf. Please write things down for me. "
- When needed, ask for an accommodation from disaster response personnel. For example, let a responder or relief worker know if you cannot wait in lines for long periods for items like water, food, and disaster relief assistance. Practice how to explain clearly and briefly why you need this assistance. You may also want to write the explanation down ahead of time.
- Keep your automobile fuel tank more than half full at all times. Also, stock your vehicle with a small [disaster supplies kit](#). If you do not drive, talk with your network about how you will leave the area if the authorities advise an evacuation. In some communities, local government agencies offer transportation for persons needing assistance during an evacuation. Ask your local emergency management office if these services are available in your area for persons with your disability.
- Become familiar with the emergency or disaster/evacuation plan for your office, school, or any other location where you spend a lot of time. If the current plan does not make arrangements for people with disabilities, make sure the management at these sites knows your needs. Be sure that you are included in the overall plan for safety and evacuation of the building.
- Choose an alternate place to stay, such as with friends, family, or at a hotel or motel outside your area if you have been told to leave your home. You may have enough early warning time (as with a slow-rising flood or hurricane) to leave before the disaster occurs. This is especially important if you live in a mobile home or trailer. Find out if there are predesignated shelters in your area and where they are.
- Have a care plan for your pet. Plan for the care of your pets if you have to evacuate your home. Pets, unlike service animals, will not be allowed into emergency shelters. So, it is best to decide now where you will take your pet if you must leave. Contact your local Red Cross chapter or Humane Society for more information.
- Have a care plan for your service animal. Service animals are allowed in hotels or motels and Red Cross shelters. However, these places cannot care for your animal. When you leave your home, remember to take a collar, harness, identification tags, records of vaccinations, medications, and food for your service animal with you.

Summary Checklist for Personal Disaster Preparation

There are many parts to a personal disaster plan. Fortunately, they do not have to be completed all at once. As you finish each part of your preparation, note the date in the space provided below. Review and update this plan regularly.

Date Completed

____ Make an emergency information list.

Include--

- Medical and emergency contact information.
- Emergency out-of-town contacts.
- Names and numbers of everyone in your network.
- Name and number of a relative or friend who lives more than 100 miles away from you.

If you have a communication disability, make sure your emergency information list notes the best way to communicate with you.

____ Fill out a medical information list.

Include information about--

- Medical providers.
- Medications you use.
- Adaptive equipment and/or body system support equipment you use.
- Allergies and sensitivities.
- Communication or cognitive difficulties.

____ Attach copies of health insurance cards and related information to your medical information list.

____ Keep at least a seven-day supply of essential medications with you at all times.

____ Have extra copies of prescriptions.

____ Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about what you should do if you do not have enough medicine after a disaster. Also, find out the shelf life of your medication and the storage temperature it needs.

Determine how often you should replace stored medication

____ Identify safe places to go to during an--

- Earthquake.
- Tornado.
- Hurricane.
- Flood.
- Fire.

____ Install at least one smoke detector on each level of your home, outside sleeping areas.

____ Find the location of utility cutoff valves and switches. Become familiar with how to operate them.

____ Identify as many exits as possible (but at least two) from each room and from the building you are in.

____ Make a floor plan of your home. You may want your network to help you do this. Include your primary escape routes.

____ Practice using different ways out of a building, especially if you are above the first floor in a building with many stories.

____ Decide what type of equipment you will need for assistance during an evacuation.

____ Be ready to give brief, clear, specific instructions and directions to rescue personnel.

____ If you do not drive, talk with your network about how you will leave the area if authorities advise an evacuation.

____ Ask your local emergency management office if transportation services are

available to persons with your disability during an emergency evacuation. Find out how to arrange to get this service.

Become familiar with the emergency or disaster evacuation plan for your office, school, or any other location where you spend a lot of time.

Choose an alternate place to stay.

Have a care plan for your pet.

Have a care plan for your service animal.

Generators

The following information, developed by the Red Cross with technical advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Fire Protection Association (publisher of the *National Electric Code*®) and the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, is provided to address questions about using a generator when disaster strikes.

Purchasing a Generator

If you choose to buy a generator, make sure you get one that is rated for the amount of power that you think you will need. Look at the labels on lighting, appliances, and equipment you plan to connect to the generator to determine the amount of power that will be needed to operate the equipment.

For lighting, the wattage of the light bulb indicates the power needed. Appliances and equipment usually have labels indicating power requirements on them. Choose a generator that produces more power than will be drawn by the combination of lighting, appliances, and equipment you plan to connect to the generator including the initial surge when it is turned on. If your generator does not produce adequate power for all your needs, plan to stagger the operating times for various equipment.

If you can not determine the amount of power that will be needed, ask an electrician to determine that for you. (If your equipment draws more power than the generator can produce, then you may blow a fuse on the generator or damage the connected equipment.)

Using a Generator

The primary hazards to avoid when using a generator are carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock or electrocution, and fire. Follow the directions supplied with the generator. Every year, people die in incidents related to portable generator use.

Under no circumstances should portable generators be used indoors, including inside a garage, carport, basement, crawlspace, or other enclosed or partially-enclosed area, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent CO buildup in the home. The CO from generators can rapidly lead to full incapacitation and death, but CO can't be seen or smelled. Even if you cannot smell exhaust fumes, you may still be exposed to CO. If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air RIGHT AWAY - DO NOT DELAY.

Because you may have windows open to get fresh air while the power is

out, be sure to place the generator away from windows, doors, and vents that could allow CO to come indoors. To avoid electrocution, keep the generator dry and do not use in rain or wet conditions. To protect the generator from moisture, operate it on a dry surface under an open canopy-like structure, such as under a tarp held up on poles. Dry your hands if wet before touching the generator.

It is a good idea to install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up in your home, according to the manufacturer's installation instructions. If CO gas from the generator enters your home and poses a health risk, the alarm will sound to warn you. Test the battery frequently and replace when needed.

Be sure to turn the generator off and let it cool down before refueling. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.

Store fuel for the generator in an approved safety can. Use the type of fuel recommended in the instructions or on the label on the generator. Local laws may restrict the amount of fuel you may store, or the storage location. Ask your local fire department for additional information about local regulations. Store the fuel outside of living areas in a locked shed or other protected area. Do not store it near a fuel-burning appliance, such as a natural gas water heater in a garage. If the fuel is spilled or the container is not sealed properly, invisible vapors from the fuel can travel along the ground and can be ignited by the appliance's pilot light or by arcs from electric switches in the appliance.

Plug appliances directly into the generator. Or, use a heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the entire cord is free of cuts or tears and that the plug has all three prongs, especially a grounding pin. Never try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as "backfeeding." This is an extremely dangerous practice that presents an electrocution risk to utility workers and neighbors served by the same utility transformer. It also bypasses some of the built-in household protection devices.

Future Considerations

The only recommended method to connect a generator to house wiring is by having a qualified electrician install a power transfer switch. This switch must be installed in accordance with the National Electrical Code® (NEC), which is published by the National Fire Protection Association, and all applicable state and local electrical codes. Call a qualified electrician or check with your utility company to see if they can install the appropriate equipment.

For power outages, permanently installed stationary generators are better

suitable for providing backup power to the home. Even a properly connected portable generator can become overloaded. This may result in overheating or stressing the generator components, possibly leading to a generator failure. Be sure to read instructions that come with the generator to make sure you operate it within its limitations for power output.

This information was developed by the American Red Cross with technical advice from the National Fire Protection Association (publisher of the National Electric Code®) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Revised and updated September 2004.

Terrorism—Preparing for the Unexpected.

http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_589_,00.html. Accessed 11/10/04

Devastating acts, such as the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, have left many concerned about the possibility of future incidents in the United States and their potential impact. They have raised uncertainty about what might happen next, increasing stress levels. Nevertheless, there are things you can do to prepare for the unexpected and reduce the stress that you may feel now and later should another emergency arise. Taking preparatory action can reassure you and your children that you can exert a measure of control even in the face of such events.

What You Can Do to Prepare

Finding out what can happen is the first step. Once you have determined the events possible and their potential in your community, it is important that you discuss them with your family or household. Develop a disaster plan together.

1. Create an emergency communications plan.

Choose an out-of-town contact your family or household will call or e-mail to check on each other should a disaster occur. Your selected contact should live far enough away that they would be unlikely to be directly affected by the same event, and they should know they are the chosen contact. Make sure every household member has that contact's, and each other's, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers (home, work, pager and cell). Leave these contact numbers at your children's schools, if you have children, and at your workplace. Your family should know that if telephones are not working, they need to be patient and try again later or try e-mail. Many people flood the telephone lines when emergencies happen but e-mail can sometimes get through when calls don't.

2. Establish a meeting place.

Having a predetermined meeting place away from your home will save time and minimize confusion should your home be affected or the area evacuated. You may even want to make arrangements to stay with a family member or friend in case of an emergency. Be sure to include any pets in these plans, since pets are not permitted in shelters and some hotels will not accept them.

3. Assemble a disaster supplies kit.

If you need to evacuate your home or are asked to "shelter in place," having some essential supplies on hand will make you and your family more comfortable. Prepare a disaster supplies kit in an easy-to-carry container such as a duffel bag or small plastic trash can. Include "special needs" items for any member of your household (infant formula or items for people with disabilities or older people), first aid supplies (including prescription medications), a change of clothing for each household member, a sleeping bag or bedroll for each, a battery powered radio or television and extra batteries, food, bottled water and tools. It is also a good idea to include some cash and copies of important family documents (birth certificates, passports and licenses) in your kit.

Copies of essential documents-like powers of attorney, birth and marriage certificates, insurance policies, life insurance beneficiary designations and a copy of your will-should also be kept in a safe location outside your home. A safe deposit box or the home of a friend or family member who lives out of town is a good choice.

For more complete instructions, ask your local Red Cross chapter for the brochure titled *Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit* (stock number A4463).

4. Check on the school emergency plan of any school-age children you may have.

You need to know if they will they keep children at school until a parent or designated adult can pick them up or send them home on their own. Be sure that the school has updated information about how to reach parents and responsible caregivers to arrange for pickup. And, ask what type of authorization the school may require to release a child to someone you designate, if you are not able to pick up your child. During times of emergency the school telephones may be overwhelmed with calls.

For more information on putting together a disaster plan, request a copy of the brochure titled [Your Family Disaster Plan \(A4466\)](#) from your local American Red Cross chapter. You may also want to request a copy of [Before Disaster Strikes . . . How to Make Sure You're Financially Prepared \(A5075\)](#) for specific information on what you can do now to protect your assets.

If Disaster Strikes

- Remain calm and be patient.
- Follow the advice of local emergency officials.
- Listen to your radio or television for news and instructions.
- If the disaster occurs near you, check for injuries. Give first aid and get help for seriously injured people.
- If the disaster occurs near your home while you are there, check for damage using a flashlight. Do not light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches. Check for fires, fire hazards and other household hazards. 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.
- 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 those who are elderly or disabled.

A Word on What Could Happen

As we learned from the events of September 11, 2001, the following things can happen after a terrorist attack:

- There can be significant numbers of casualties and/or damage to buildings and the infrastructure. So employers need up-to-date information about any medical needs you may have and on how to contact your designated beneficiaries.
- Heavy law enforcement involvement at local, state and federal levels follows a terrorist attack due to the event's criminal nature.
- Health and mental health resources in the affected communities can be strained to their limits, maybe even overwhelmed.
- Extensive media coverage, strong public fear and international implications and consequences can continue for a prolonged period.
- Workplaces and schools may be closed, and there may be restrictions on domestic and international travel.
- You and your family or household may have to evacuate an area, avoiding roads blocked for your safety.
- Clean-up may take many months.

Evacuation

If local authorities ask you to leave your home, they have a good reason to make this request, and you should heed the advice immediately. Listen to your radio or television and follow the instructions of local emergency officials and keep these simple tips in mind-

1. Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and sturdy shoes so you can be protected as much as possible.
2. Take your disaster supplies kit.
3. Take your pets with you; do not leave them behind. Because pets are not permitted in public shelters, follow your plan to go to a relative's or friend's home, or find a "pet-friendly" hotel.
4. Lock your home.
5. Use travel routes specified by local authorities—don't use shortcuts because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous.
6. Stay away from downed power lines.

Listen to local authorities.

Your local authorities will provide you with the most accurate information specific to an event in your area. Staying tuned to local radio and television, and following their instructions is your safest choice.

If you're sure you have time:

- Call your family contact to tell them where you are going and when you expect to arrive.
- Shut off water and electricity before leaving, if instructed to do so. Leave natural gas service ON unless local officials advise you otherwise. You may need gas for heating and cooking, and only a professional can restore gas service in your home once it's been turned off. In a disaster situation it could take weeks for a professional to respond.

Shelter-in-place Fact Sheet (Fact Sheet PDF file)

If you are advised by local officials to "shelter in place," what they mean is for you to remain inside your home or office and protect yourself there. Close and lock all windows and exterior doors. Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Close the fireplace damper. Get your disaster supplies kit, and make sure the radio is working. Go to an interior room without windows that's above ground level. In the case of a chemical threat, an above-ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air, and may seep into basements even if the windows are closed. Using duct tape, seal all cracks around the door and any vents into the room. Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

Additional Positive Steps You Can Take

Raw, unedited footage of terrorism events and people's reaction to those events can be very upsetting, especially to children. We do not recommend that children watch television news reports about such events, especially if the news reports show images over and over again about the same incident. Young children do not realize that it is repeated video footage, and think the event is happening again and again. Adults may also need to give themselves a break from watching disturbing footage. However, listening to local radio and television reports will provide you with the most accurate information from responsible governmental authorities on what's happening and what actions you will need to take. So you may want to make some arrangements to take turns listening to the news with other adult members of your household.

Another useful preparation includes learning some basic first aid. To enroll in a first aid and AED/CPR course, contact your local American Red Cross chapter. In an emergency situation, you need to tend to your own well-being first and then consider first aid for others immediately around you, including possibly assisting injured people to evacuate a building if necessary.

People who may have come into contact with a biological or chemical agent may need to go through a decontamination procedure and receive medical attention. Listen to the advice of local officials on the radio or television to determine what steps you will need to take to protect yourself and your family. As emergency services will likely be overwhelmed, only call 9-1-1 about life-threatening emergencies.

First Aid Primer

If you encounter someone who is injured, apply the emergency action steps: Check-Call-Care. **Check** the scene to make sure it is safe for you to approach. Then check the victim for unconsciousness and life-threatening conditions. Someone who has a life-threatening condition, such as not breathing or severe bleeding, requires immediate care by trained responders and may require treatment by medical professionals. **Call** out for help. There are some steps that you can take, however, to **care** for someone who is hurt, but whose injuries are not life threatening.

Control Bleeding

- Cover the wound with a dressing, and press firmly against the wound (direct pressure).
- Elevate the injured area above the level of the heart if you do not suspect that the victim has

- a broken bone.
- Cover the dressing with a roller bandage.
- If the bleeding does not stop:
 - Apply additional dressings and bandages.
 - Use a pressure point to squeeze the artery against the bone.
- Provide care for shock.

Care for Shock

- Keep the victim from getting chilled or overheated.
- Elevate the legs about 12 inches (if broken bones are not suspected).
- Do not give food or drink to the victim.

Tend Burns

- Stop the burning by cooling the burn with large amounts of water.
- Cover the burn with dry, clean dressings or cloth.

Care for Injuries to Muscles, Bones and Joints

- Rest the injured part.
- Apply ice or a cold pack to control swelling and reduce pain.
- Avoid any movement or activity that causes pain.
- If you must move the victim because the scene is becoming unsafe, try to immobilize the injured part to keep it from moving.

Be Aware of Biological/Radiological Exposure

- Listen to local radio and television reports for the most accurate information from responsible governmental and medical authorities on what's happening and what actions you will need to take. The Web sites referenced at the end of this brochure can give you more information on how to protect yourself from exposure to biological or radiological hazards.

Reduce Any Care Risks

The risk of getting a disease while giving first aid is extremely rare. However, to reduce the risk even further:

- Avoid direct contact with blood and other body fluids.
- Use protective equipment, such as disposable gloves and breathing barriers.
- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water immediately after giving care.

It is important to be prepared for an emergency and to know how to give emergency care.

More Information

All of these recommendations make good sense, regardless of the potential problem. For more information on how to get ready for disaster and be safe when disaster strikes, or to register for a first aid and AED/CPR course, please contact your local American Red Cross chapter. You can find it in your telephone directory under "American Red Cross" or through our home page at www.redcross.org under "your local chapter."

For information about your community's specific plans for response to disasters and other emergencies, contact your local office of emergency management.

For information on what a business can do to protect its employees and customers as well as develop business continuity plans, you may want to get a copy of the *Emergency Management Guide for*

Business and Industry and/or Preparing Your Business for the Unthinkable from your local American Red Cross chapter or see <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared>

For more information about the specific effects of chemical or biological agents, the following Web sites may be helpful:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.bt.cdc.gov

U.S. Department of Energy: www.energy.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: www.hhs.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.rris.fema.gov

Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/swercepp

Shelter-in-Place in an Emergency.

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/shelterinplace.html>

Accessed 11/10/04

What Shelter-in-Place Means:

One of the instructions you may be given in an emergency where hazardous materials may have been released into the atmosphere is to shelter-in-place. This is a precaution aimed to keep you safe while remaining indoors. (This is not the same thing as going to a shelter in case of a storm.) Shelter-in-place means selecting a small, interior room, with no or few windows, and taking refuge there. It does not mean sealing off your entire home or office building. If you are told to shelter-in-place, follow the instructions provided in this Fact Sheet.

Why You Might Need to Shelter-in-Place:

Chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants may be released accidentally or intentionally into the environment. Should this occur, information will be provided by local authorities on television and radio stations on how to protect you and your family. Because information will most likely be provided on television and radio, it is important to keep a TV or radio on, even during the workday. The important thing is for you to follow instructions of local authorities and know what to do if they advise you to shelter-in-place.

How to Shelter-in-Place

At Home:

- Close and lock all windows and exterior doors.
- If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains.
- Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.
- Close the fireplace damper.
- Get your family [disaster supplies kit](#) and make sure the radio is working.
- Go to an interior room without windows that's above ground level. In the case of a chemical threat, an above-ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air, and may seep into basements even if the windows are closed.
- Bring your pets with you, and be sure to bring additional food and water supplies for them.
- It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room you select. Call your emergency contact and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.
- Use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around the door and any vents into the room.
- Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

At Work:

- Close the business.
- If there are customers, clients, or visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay – not leave. When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps now, where they are, and not drive or walk outdoors.
- Unless there is an imminent threat, ask employees, customers, clients, and visitors to call their emergency contact to let them know where they are and that they are

safe.

- Turn on call-forwarding or alternative telephone answering systems or services. If the business has voice mail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the business is closed, and that staff and visitors are remaining in the building until authorities advise it is safe to leave.
- Close and lock all windows, exterior doors, and any other openings to the outside.
- If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains.
- Have employees familiar with your building's mechanical systems turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Some systems automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air – these systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed, or disabled.
- Gather essential disaster supplies, such as nonperishable food, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, duct tape, plastic sheeting, and plastic garbage bags.
- Select interior room(s) above the ground floor, with the fewest windows or vents. The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit in. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary. Large storage closets, utility rooms, pantries, copy and conference rooms without exterior windows will work well. Avoid selecting a room with mechanical equipment like ventilation blowers or pipes, because this equipment may not be able to be sealed from the outdoors.
- It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room(s) you select. Call emergency contacts and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.
- Use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around the door(s) and any vents into the room.
- Bring everyone into the room(s). Shut and lock the door(s).
- Write down the names of everyone in the room, and call your business' designated emergency contact to report who is in the room with you, and their affiliation with your business (employee, visitor, client, customer.)
- Keep listening to the radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

At School:

- Close the school. Activate the school's emergency plan. Follow reverse evacuation procedures to bring students, faculty, and staff indoors.
- If there are visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay – not leave. When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps now, where they are, and not drive or walk outdoors.
- Provide for answering telephone inquiries from concerned parents by having at least one telephone with the school's listed telephone number available in the room selected to provide shelter for the school secretary, or person designated to answer these calls. This room should also be sealed. There should be a way to communicate among all rooms where people are sheltering-in-place in the school.
- Ideally, provide for a way to make announcements over the school-wide public address system from the room where the top school official takes shelter.
- If children have cell phones, allow them to use them to call a parent or guardian to let them know that they have been asked to remain in school until further notice, and that they are safe.
- If the school has voice mail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the school is closed, students and staff are remaining in the building until authorities advise that it is safe to leave.
- Provide directions to close and lock all windows, exterior doors, and any other openings to the outside.

- If you are told there is danger of explosion, direct that window shades, blinds, or curtains be closed.
- Have employees familiar with your building's mechanical systems turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Some systems automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air – these systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed, or disabled.
- Gather essential disaster supplies, such as nonperishable food, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, duct tape, plastic sheeting, and plastic garbage bags.
- Select interior room(s) above the ground floor, with the fewest windows or vents. The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit in. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary. Classrooms may be used if there are no windows or the windows are sealed and can not be opened. Large storage closets, utility rooms, meeting rooms, and even a gymnasium without exterior windows will also work well.
- It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room(s) you select. Call emergency contacts and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.
- Bring everyone into the room. Shut and lock the door.
- Use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around the door(s) and any vents into the room.
- Write down the names of everyone in the room, and call your schools' designated emergency contact to report who is in the room with you.
- Listen for an official announcement from school officials via the public address system, and stay where you are until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

In Your Vehicle:

If you are driving a vehicle and hear advice to "shelter-in-place" on the radio, take these steps:

- If you are very close to home, your office, or a public building, go there immediately and go inside. Follow the shelter-in-place recommendations for the place you pick described above.
- If you are unable to get to a home or building quickly and safely, then pull over to the side of the road. Stop your vehicle in the safest place possible. If it is sunny outside, it is preferable to stop under a bridge or in a shady spot, to avoid being overheated.
- Turn off the engine. Close windows and vents.
- If possible, seal the heating/air conditioning vents with duct tape.
- Listen to the radio regularly for updated advice and instructions.
- Stay where you are until you are told it is safe to get back on the road. Be aware that some roads may be closed or traffic detoured. Follow the directions of law enforcement officials.

Local officials on the scene are the best source of information for your particular situation. Following their instructions during and after emergencies regarding sheltering, food, water, and clean up methods is your safest choice.

Remember that instructions to shelter-in-place are usually provided for durations of a few hours, not days or weeks. There is little danger that the room in which you are taking shelter will run out of oxygen and you will suffocate.

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services--water, gas, electricity or telephones--were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away.

Four Steps to Safety

1. Find Out What Could Happen to You

- Contact your local Red Cross chapter or emergency management office before a disaster occurs--be prepared to take notes.
- Ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen. Request information on how to prepare for each.
- Learn about your community's warning signals: what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
- Ask about [animal care after a disaster](#). Animals are not allowed inside emergency shelters because of health regulations.
- Find out [how to help elderly or disabled persons](#), if needed.
- Find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or day care center, and other places where your family spends time.

2. Create a Disaster Plan

- Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, severe weather, and earthquakes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.
- Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.
- Pick two places to meet:
 1. Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
 2. Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone must know the address and phone number.
- Ask an out-of-state friend 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.
- Discuss what to do in [an evacuation](#). Plan how to take care of your pets.

3. Complete This Checklist

Home Hazard Hunt

- In a disaster, ordinary items in the home can cause injury and damage. Anything that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire is a potential hazard.
- Repair defective electrical wiring and leaky gas connections.
- Fasten shelves securely.
- Place large, heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Hang pictures and mirrors away from beds.
- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Secure water heater. Strap

- Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.).
- 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.
- 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 them 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.
- Find the safe places in your home for each type of disaster.

- to wall studs.
- Repair cracks in ceilings or foundations.
- Store weed killers, pesticides, and flammable products away from heat sources.
- Place oily polishing rags or waste in covered metal cans.
- Clean and repair chimneys, flue pipes, vent connectors, and gas vents.

4. 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.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Working with neighbors can save lives and property. Meet with your neighbors to plan how the neighborhood could work together after a disaster until help arrives. If you're a member of a neighborhood organization, such as a home association or crime watch group, introduce disaster preparedness as a new activity. Know your neighbors' special skills (e.g., medical, technical) and consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as disabled and elderly persons. Make plans for child care in case parents can't get home.

If Disaster Strikes

Remain calm and patient. Put your plan into action.

Check for Injuries

Give first aid and get help for seriously injured people.

Listen to Your Battery-Powered 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.

- Stay away from downed power lines.

To get copies of American Red Cross community disaster education materials, contact [your local Red Cross](#) chapter.

The text on this page is in the public domain. We request that attribution to this information be given as follows: From "Family Disaster Plan." developed by the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) and the [American Red Cross](#).

Food and Water in an Emergency

http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_8_,00.html. Accessed 11/10/04

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. This brochure was developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in cooperation with the American Red Cross and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Having an ample supply of clean water is a top priority in an emergency. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers and ill people will need even more. You will also need water for food preparation and hygiene. Store a total of at least one gallon per person, per day. You should store at least a two-week supply of water for each member of your family.

If supplies run low, never ration water. Drink the amount you need today, and try to find more for tomorrow. You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity and staying cool.

Water Supplies

How to Store Water

Store your water in thoroughly washed plastic, glass, fiberglass or enamel-lined metal containers. Never use a container that has held toxic substances. Plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles, are best. You can also purchase food-grade plastic buckets or drums.

Seal water containers tightly, label them and store in a cool, dark place. Rotate water every six months.

Emergency Outdoor Water Sources

If you need to find water outside your home, you can use these sources. Be sure to treat the water according to the instructions on page 3 before drinking it.

- Rainwater
- Streams, rivers and other moving bodies of water
- Ponds and lakes
- Natural springs

Avoid water with floating material, an odor or dark color. Use saltwater only if you distill it first. You should not drink flood water.

Hidden Water Sources in Your Home

If a disaster catches you without a stored supply of clean water, you can use the water in your hot-water tank, pipes and ice cubes. As a last resort, you can use water in the reservoir tank of your toilet (not the bowl).

Do you know the location of your incoming water valve? You'll need to shut it off to stop contaminated water from entering your home if you hear reports of broken water or sewage lines.

To use the water in your pipes, let air into the plumbing by turning on the faucet in your house at the highest level. A small amount of water will trickle out. Then obtain water from the lowest faucet in the house.

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 and turning on a hot-water faucet. Do not turn on the gas or electricity when the tank is empty.

Three Ways to Treat Water

In addition to having a bad odor and taste, contaminated water can contain microorganisms that cause diseases such as dysentery, typhoid and hepatitis. You should treat all water of uncertain purity before using it for drinking, food preparation or hygiene.

There are many ways to treat water. None is perfect. Often the best solution is a combination of methods.

Two easy treatment methods are outlined below. These measures will kill most microbes but will not remove other contaminants such as heavy metals, salts and most other chemicals. Before treating, let any suspended particles settle to the bottom, or strain them through layers of paper towel or clean cloth.

Boiling: Boiling is the safest method of treating water. Bring water to a rolling boil for 3-5 minutes, 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 will also improve the taste of stored water.

Disinfection: You can use household liquid bleach to kill microorganisms. Use only regular household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite. Do not use scented bleaches, colorsafe bleaches or bleaches with added cleaners.

Add 16 drops of bleach per gallon of water, stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat the dosage and let stand another 15 minutes.

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

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

Distillation: Distillation involves boiling water and then collecting the vapor that condenses back to water. The condensed vapor will not include salt and 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.

Food Supplies

When Food Supplies Are Low

If activity is reduced, healthy people can survive on half their usual food intake for an extended period and without any food for many days. Food, unlike water, may be rationed safely, except for children and pregnant women.

If your water supply is limited, try to avoid foods that are high in fat and protein, and don't stock salty foods, since they will make you thirsty. Try to eat salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals and canned foods with high liquid content.

You don't need to go out and buy unfamiliar foods to prepare an emergency food supply. You can use the canned foods, dry mixes and other staples on your cupboard shelves. In fact, familiar foods are important. They can lift morale and give a feeling of security in time of stress. Also, canned foods won't require cooking, water or special preparation. Following are recommended short-term food

storage plans.

Special Considerations

As you stock food, take into account your family's unique needs and tastes. Try to include foods that they will enjoy and that are also high in calories and nutrition. Foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking are best.

Individuals with special diets and allergies will need particular attention, as will babies, toddlers and elderly people. Nursing mothers may need liquid formula, in case they are unable to nurse. Canned dietetic foods, juices and soups may be helpful for ill or elderly people.

Make sure you have a manual can opener and disposable utensils. And don't forget nonperishable foods for your pets.

How to Cook If the Power Goes Out

or emergency cooking you can use a fireplace, or a charcoal grill or camp stove can be used outdoors. You can also heat food with candle warmers, chafing dishes and fondue pots. Canned food can be eaten right out of the can. If you heat it in the can, be sure to open the can and remove the label first.

Short-Term Food Supplies

Even though it is unlikely that an emergency would cut off your food supply for two weeks, you should prepare a supply that will last that long.

The easiest way to develop a two-week stockpile is to increase the amount of basic foods you normally keep on your shelves.

Storage Tips

- Keep food in a dry, cool spot - a dark area if possible.
- Keep food covered at all times.
- Open food boxes or cans care-fully so that you can close them tightly after each use.
- Wrap cookies and crackers in plastic bags, and keep them in tight containers.
- Empty opened packages of sugar, dried fruits and nuts into screw-top jars or air-tight cans to protect them from pests.
- Inspect all food for signs of spoilage before use.
- Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies, dated with ink or marker. Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in front.

Nutrition Tips

- During and right after a disaster, it will be vital that you maintain your strength. So remember:
- Eat at least one well-balanced meal each day.
- Drink enough liquid to enable your body to function properly (two quarts a day).
- Take in enough calories to enable you to do any necessary work.
- Include vitamin, mineral and protein supplements in your stockpile to assure adequate nutrition.

Shelf-life of Foods for Storage

Here are some general guidelines for rotating common emergency foods.

Use within six months:

- Powdered milk (boxed)
- Dried fruit (in metal container)
- Dry, crisp crackers (in metal container)

- Potatoes

Use within one year:

- Canned condensed meat and vegetable soups
- Canned fruits, fruit juices and vegetables
- Ready-to-eat cereals and uncooked instant cereals (in metal containers)
- Peanut butter
- Jelly
- Hard candy and canned nuts
- Vitamin C

May be stored indefinitely (in proper containers and conditions):

- Wheat
- Vegetable oils
- Dried corn
- Baking powder
- Soybeans
- Instant coffee, tea and cocoa
- Salt
- Noncarbonated soft drinks
- White rice
- Bouillon products
- Dry pasta
- Powdered milk (in nitrogen-packed cans)

Disaster Supplies

It's 2:00 a.m. and a flash flood forces you to evacuate your home-fast. There's no time to gather food from the kitchen, fill bottles with water, grab a first-aid kit from the closet and snatch a flashlight and a portable radio from the bedroom. You need to have these items packed and ready in one place before disaster strikes.

Pack at least a three-day supply of food and water, and store it in a handy place. Choose foods that are easy to carry, nutritious and ready-to-eat. In addition, pack these emergency items:

- Medical supplies and first aid manual
- Hygiene supplies
- Portable radio, flashlights and extra batteries
- Shovel and other useful tools
- Household liquid bleach to treat drinking water § Money and matches in a waterproof container
- Fire extinguisher
- Blanket and extra clothing
- Infant and small children's needs (if appropriate)
- Manual can opener

If the Electricity Goes Off . . .

FIRST, use perishable food and foods from the refrigerator.

THEN, use the foods from the freezer. To minimize the number of times you open the freezer door, post a list of freezer contents on it. In a well-filled, well-insulated freezer, foods will usually still have ice crystals in their centers (meaning foods are safe to eat) for at least three days.

FINALLY, begin to use non-perishable foods and staples.

Your Evacuation Plan.

http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_6_,00.html Accessed 11/10/04

Local government officials, not the Red Cross, issue evacuation orders when disaster threatens. Listen to local radio and television reports when disaster threatens. If local officials ask you to leave, do so immediately!

If you have only moments before leaving, grab these things and go!

- Medical supplies: prescription medications and dentures.
- Disaster supplies: flashlight, batteries, radio, first aid kit, bottled water
- Clothing and bedding: a change of clothes and a sleeping bag or bedroll and pillow for each household member
- Car keys and keys to the place you may be going (friend's or relative's home)

If local officials haven't advised an immediate evacuation:

If there's a chance the weather may get worse or flooding may happen, take steps now to protect your home and belongings. Do this only if local officials have not asked you to leave.

Protect your home.

Bring things indoors. Lawn furniture, trash cans, children's toys, garden equipment, clotheslines, hanging plants, and any other objects that may fly around and damage property should be brought indoors.

Leave trees and shrubs alone. If you did not cut away dead or diseased branches or limbs from trees and shrubs, leave them alone. Local rubbish collection services will not have time before the storm to pick anything up.

Look for potential hazards. Look for coconuts, unripened fruit, and other objects in trees around your property that could blow or break off and fly around in high winds. Cut them off and store them indoors until the storm is over.

Turn off electricity and water. Turn off electricity at the main fuse or breaker, and turn off water at the main valve.

Leave natural gas on. Unless local officials advise otherwise, leave natural gas on because you will need it for heating and cooking when you return home. If you turn gas off, a licensed professional is required to turn it back on, and it may take weeks for a professional to respond.

Turn off propane gas service. Propane tanks often become dislodged in disasters.

If high winds are expected, cover the outside of all windows of your home. Use shutters that are rated to provide significant protection from windblown debris, or fit plywood coverings over all windows.

If flooding is expected, consider using sand bags to keep water away from your home. It takes two people about one hour to fill and place 100 sandbags, giving you a wall one foot high and 20 feet long. Make sure you have enough sand, burlap or plastic bags, shovels, strong helpers, and time to place them properly.

Remember. Houses do not explode due to air pressure differences. Damage happens when wind gets inside a home through a broken window, door, or damaged roof.

Cover the outside of windows with shutters or plywood. Tape does not prevent windows from breaking. All tape does is prevent windows from shattering. Using tape on windows is not recommended.

Protect your valuables.

Move objects that may get damaged by wind or water to safer areas of your home. Move television sets, computers, stereo and electronic equipment, and easily moveable appliances like a microwave oven to higher levels of your home and away from windows. Wrap them in sheets, blankets, or burlap.

Make a visual or written record of all of your household possessions. Record model and serial numbers. This list could help you prove the value of what you owned if those possessions are damaged or destroyed, and can assist you to claim deductions on taxes.

Do this for all items in your home, including expensive items such as sofas, chairs, tables, beds, chests, wall units, and any other furniture too heavy to move. Store a copy of the record somewhere away from home, such as in a safe deposit box.

If it's possible that your home may be significantly damaged by impending disaster, consider storing your household furnishings temporarily elsewhere.

Gather essential supplies and papers.

You will need the following supplies when you leave your home; put them all together in a duffle bag or other large container in advance:

- Flashlight with plenty of extra batteries
- Battery-powered radio with extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Prescription medications in their original bottle, plus copies of the prescriptions
- Eyeglasses (with a copy of the prescription)
- Water (at least one gallon per person is recommended; more is better)
- Foods that do not require refrigeration or cooking
- Items that infants and elderly household members may require
- Medical equipment and devices, such as dentures, crutches, prostheses, etc.
- Change of clothes for each household member
- Sleeping bag or bedroll and pillow for each household member
- Checkbook, cash, and credit cards
- Map of the area

Important papers to take with you:

- Driver's license or personal identification
- Social Security card
- Proof of residence (deed or lease)
- Insurance policies
- Birth and marriage certificates
- Stocks, bonds, and other negotiable certificates
- Wills, deeds, and copies of recent tax returns

All Red Cross assistance is given free of charge. This is made possible by the generous contribution of people's time, money, and skills. One of the best ways to help the Red Cross assist people affected by disasters is to make a financial contribution to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund. Call 1-800-HELP NOW or contact your local Red Cross chapter.