

Disaster strikes quickly—often without warning.

Do you know what to do in the event of a disaster? What happens when you lose basic services like electricity, gas, phone and water? Where will you stay if you lose your home?

Do you have what it takes to

# be prepared for a disaster?

## CAUTION CAUTION

### What is a disaster?

Large disruptions in our basic way of life come in many forms. Here are examples:

- Fire, flood, earthquake, volcano, tsunami
- Severe storm: snow/rain/thunder, hurricane/tornado
- Widespread utility outage
- Environmental accident: oil, chemical, hazmat spill (Hazardous Materials Spill)
- Military or terrorist attack

### Be Informed

Emergency information and plans are available from:

- Department of Homeland Security: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)
- American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

### Medical and Health and Safety Services

No matter how prepared you are, there will be confusion and questions. Here are places to seek help:

- Government Agencies: Homeland Security, FEMA
- Community Service Organizations: [www.citizencorps.gov](http://www.citizencorps.gov)
- Communications: National Weather Radio broadcasts forecasts and other hazard information 24/7. With an emergency radio, broadcasts are found in the VHF public service band at these seven frequencies (MHz):  
162.400 162.425 162.450 162.475  
162.500 162.525 162.550  
For more information, visit:  
[www.weather.gov/nwr](http://www.weather.gov/nwr)
- Medical Health and Safety Services:
  - American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)
  - National Health Information Center: [www.health.gov/nhic](http://www.health.gov/nhic)
  - Department of Health for your state, county and city

- Temporary Living Quarters: shelters organized by your city or locale, relatives or friends
- Your Place of Employment: If affected, attempt to maintain contact. Businesses resume operation as soon as possible.

### Personal Preparation

- Property documentation: Photo and document all personal property—home, cars, valuables. Keep originals, send one copy to insurance company and keep one copy offsite for safe keeping.
- Training: Learn First Aid and CPR. It is important to know for everyday life, but even more so in the event of a disaster.
- State of readiness: Replace/test smoke detectors and fire extinguishers regularly.
- Prepare an emergency plan: Shut off utilities, know how to reach family when away from home and have an evacuation plan (short-term and long-term) including alternate transportation routes.
- Prepare an emergency kit: See reverse side.
- Pets: Many pets were left behind during Hurricane Katrina. Keep a pet carrier and pet supplies with your emergency kit.

### Insurance, Insurance, Insurance

Most people do not have sufficient insurance coverage for disasters. Depending on locale, insurance companies have different policies for specific disasters, and insurance may be expensive or hard to get. Most people do not have the financial resources to recover adequately and look to insurance to cover restoration. Government agencies may help, but it will not be enough. Get as much insurance coverage as possible, document all your personal property and file insurance claims promptly.

### Complete this checklist:

- ✓ Post emergency phone numbers for fire, police and ambulance (teach children 911).
- ✓ Demonstrate to each family member how to shut off utilities (water, gas and main electrical switch).
- ✓ Check if you have adequate insurance coverage for the disaster most likely to occur in your local area.
- ✓ 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 first aid and CPR class.
- ✓ Determine the best escape route from your home. Find two ways out of each room in your house.
- ✓ Find the safest places in your home for each type of emergency.

### Practice and maintain your plan:

- ✓ Quiz children every 6 months
- ✓ Conduct fire and emergency evacuations
- ✓ Replace food and water in your kit every 6 months
- ✓ Test and recharge fire extinguishers
- ✓ Test smoke detectors and change the batteries every year

Most home fires are a result of an electrical problem or from an external source like dried brush around the home. Have an electrician check your outlets and junction boxes—especially the ones that are out of sight in the attic or under your home.

In a disaster, you are not likely to have Internet access. Do research and print it out now.

# Disaster Checklist



Call your local emergency management or planning and zoning office to find out if you live in an area that could flood during a hurricane or heavy rains.

Prepare an evacuation plan in case you must leave. Add a map to your Disaster Supplies Kit marked with two alternative routes to your destination.

Make a list of items to bring inside in the event of a storm. Keep this list in your Disaster Supplies Kit.

Buy any items needed to board up windows and protect your home well ahead of time. Precut plywood so that you can quickly cover windows. In addition, have sandbags on hand.

Have an engineer check your home and advise you about ways to make it more resistant to hurricane winds.



Determine whether you're in a flood area by contacting your local American Red Cross Chapter or local emergency management center or zoning department.

If in a flood area, is flooding covered under your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy? (Most insurance policies specifically exclude flooding from rising water.)

If flooding is not covered under your homeowner's or renter's policy, obtain separate flood insurance.

Keep current copies of all important papers or valuables in a safe-deposit box.

Decide where your family would go in case you must evacuate—or go to a American Red Cross shelter. Also, get an extra map and mark two alternate ways to reach that destination. Add the map to your Disaster Supplies Kit.



Install smoke alarms outside and inside each sleeping area and on each additional level of your residence. Keep new batteries on hand.

Test smoke alarms once a month. Start a chart and sign it after each round of tests.

Make sure you have a properly working fire extinguisher; in addition, get training on how to use a fire extinguisher from the fire department.

Draw a floor plan of your home; mark two fire escape routes for each room.

Pick a safe place outside to meet after escaping from a fire.

Practice a crawl-low escape from your bedroom. Try it with your eyes closed to see how well you could do in thick smoke.

Conduct a home fire drill at least twice a year with all members of your household.



Pick a safe place in your home where family members could gather during a tornado. (If you have a basement, make it your safe place. If you do not have a basement, consider an interior hallway or room on the lowest floor.) Make sure there are no windows or glass doors in the area. Keep this place uncluttered.

If you live in a mobile home, choose another safe place in a nearby sturdy building. (If your mobile home park has a designated shelter, make it your safe place.)

Write instructions on how to turn off your home's electricity, water and gas if advised to do so by local authorities. (A professional must turn gas service back on.)

Make sure all family members know the name of the county or parish where you live or are traveling because tornado WATCHES and WARNINGS are issued by county or parish.

## Check Your Disaster Supplies Kit to Make Sure it's Complete

- First aid kit and essential medications
- Canned food and can opener or canned food with pop tops
- At least 3 gallons of water per person
- Protective clothing, rainwear, and bedding or sleeping bags
- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries
- Special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members
- Written instructions for how to turn off electricity, gas, and water if authorities advise you to do so. (Remember, you'll need a professional to turn natural gas service back on.)

## Online Resources

American Red Cross— [www.redcross.org/services/prepare/0,1082,0\\_79\\_,00.html](http://www.redcross.org/services/prepare/0,1082,0_79_,00.html)  
Preparation and information for every type of disaster.

Local American Red Cross Chapter Finder— [www.redcross.org/where/where.html](http://www.redcross.org/where/where.html)  
Disaster, first aid and CPR products and reference materials— [www.redcross.org/store](http://www.redcross.org/store)

Life Kit— [www.lifekit.com](http://www.lifekit.com)  
Disaster information and disaster kit supplies for purchase.

QuakeKare— [www.quakekare.com](http://www.quakekare.com)  
Purchase survival kits, accessory kits and emergency supplies.

Ready America— [www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html](http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html)  
Disaster preparation information and supply kits for disaster available for purchase.

