

# How Safe Are You?



Preparing for and coping with a disaster  
— are YOU ready?

## “Is America Safe” Survival Guide



# How Safe Are You?

## Did You Know?

Every year, millions of people around the world lose their lives or have them seriously disrupted because of floods, tsunamis, wildfires, earthquakes, blizzards, hurricanes and so on.

## Preparing for and coping with a disaster — are you ready?

Every year, millions of people around the world lose their lives or have them seriously disrupted because of floods, tsunamis, wildfires, earthquakes, blizzards, hurricanes and so on. In today's troubled world, we face even greater threats from terrorism, civil unrest, explosions and the possibility of chemical, biological or even nuclear attack.

In the United States, the terrorist threat is not only from overseas groups; domestic terrorism has been with us for decades and violence in the workplace and schools is a serious area of concern. In the last 25 years, according to the FBI, there have been 327 domestic terrorist incidents — that averages out at more than one every month over this period. In the last eight years more than 40 students, teachers and custodians have been killed in schools. The threat is real and growing.



More than half the United States do not have an emergency plan — what an emergency - and not keep it up to date. Even fewer businesses and organizations have a physical security plan to protect the property and people who work in it.

businesses in the United States do not have a crisis management plan to do in the event of many that do, do date. Even fewer organizations have a physical security plan to protect the property and people who work in it.

In the United States there are more than 1,800 government-owned buildings and more than 6,200 leased locations throughout the 50 continental states and Washington D.C. They employ almost a million Federal workers and host tens of millions of visitors. There are 327,000 education buildings in the 50 states and D.C. There are 87,630 schools with 47 million children enrolled and employing around 3 million teachers.

There are 7,569 hospitals nationwide employing 2.4 million registered nurses, 1.8 million nursing aides, 819,000 physicians and surgeons, 350,000 therapists. On any given day there are 539,000 hospital inpatients plus visitors.

There are 127,000 additional health care facilities nationwide offering inpatient/outpatient treatment.

There are 133,000 malls and strip malls, 534,000 large stores, 349,000 food service facilities and 153,000 hotels and motels nationwide nationwide.

Throughout the U.S., there are more than one million office buildings, and 603,000 warehouses and storage facilities. There are more than 307,000 churches nationwide and more than 305,000 public assembly buildings. And, there are more than 110 million households.

### Inside this manual

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Some Basics                                | 4  |
| Disaster Supply Kits                       | 4  |
| Evacuation                                 | 10 |
| Animals in Disaster                        | 12 |
| Recovering from Disaster                   | 13 |
| Mitigation                                 | 16 |
| Emergency planning for people with special | 16 |

Terrorism is not a new challenge and it is not going to go away any time soon so we have a duty to our families, friends and loved ones to ensure that the places where we live, work, learn and play are secure and that the people using them are safe.

### How safe are you and your family at work, at school and at play?

The aim of this series of practical handbooks is not to alarm you but to prepare and protect you. In the event of a disaster or terrorist incident, first responders may not be able to get to you for some time.

Our goal is to give you the information you need so that you are aware of the various threats we face and how to recognize and respond to them. The handbook then spells out what you need to do to mitigate the effects and in so doing, protect your family, friends and loved ones.

***This handbook is a tool that will help protect lives and ensure the continuation of our way of life, businesses, institutions and critical infrastructures in the event of a terrorist attack or other major emergency. As a result it is a handbook that you cannot afford to be without.***

*“Terrorism is not a new challenge and it is not going to go away any time soon away any time soon”*



## Some Basics

One of the most important steps you can take in preparing for emergencies is to develop a household disaster plan.

1. Learn about the natural disasters that could occur in your community from your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter. Learn whether hazardous materials are produced, stored or transported near your area. Learn about possible consequences of deliberate acts of terror. Ask how to prepare for each potential emergency and how to respond.
2. Talk with employers and school officials about their emergency response plans.
3. Talk with your household about potential emergencies and how to respond to each. Talk about what you would need to do in an evacuation.
4. Plan how your household would stay in contact if you were separated. Identify two meeting places: the first should be near your home—in case of fire, perhaps a tree or a telephone pole; the second should be away from your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.
5. Pick a friend or relative who lives out of the area for household members to call to say they are okay.
6. Draw a floor plan of your home. Mark two escape routes from each room.
7. Post emergency telephone numbers by telephones. Teach children how and when to call 911.
8. Make sure everyone in your household knows how and when to shut off water, gas, and electricity at the main switches. Consult with your local utilities if you have questions.
9. Take a first aid and CPR class. Local American Red Cross chapters can provide information. Official certification by the American Red Cross provides "good Samaritan" law protection for those giving first aid.
10. Reduce the economic impact of disaster on your property and your household's health and financial well-being.
11. Review property insurance policies before disaster strikes—make sure policies are current and be certain they meet your needs (type of coverage, amount of coverage, and hazard covered—flood, earthquake)
12. Protect your household's financial well-being before a disaster strikes—review life insurance policies and consider saving money in an "emergency" savings account that could be used in any crisis. It is advisable to keep a small amount of cash or traveler's checks at home in a safe place where you can quickly gain access to it in case of an evacuation.
13. Be certain that health insurance policies are current and meet the needs of your household.
14. Consider ways to help neighbors who may need special assistance, such as the elderly or the disabled.
15. Make arrangements for pets. Pets are not allowed in public shelters. Service animals for those who depend on them are allowed.



*Learn about the natural disasters that could occur in your community from your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter*

## Disaster Supply Kits

You may need to survive on your own for three days or more. This means having your own water, food and emergency supplies. Try using backpacks or duffel bags to keep the supplies together. Assembling the supplies you might need following a disaster is an important part of your disaster plan. You should prepare emergency supplies for the following situations:

- A disaster supply kit with essential food, water, and supplies for at least three days—this kit should be kept in a designated place and be ready to "grab and go"



in case you have to leave your home quickly because of a disaster, such as a flash flood or major chemical emergency. Make sure all household members know where the kit is kept.

- Consider having additional supplies for sheltering or home confinement for up to two weeks.
- You should also have a disaster supply kit at work. This should be in one container, ready to "grab and go" in case you have to evacuate the building.
- A car kit of emergency supplies, including food and water, to keep stored in your car at all times. This kit would also include flares, jumper cables, and seasonal supplies.

The following checklists will help you assemble disaster supply kits that meet the needs of your household. The basic items that should be in a disaster supply kit are water, food, first-aid supplies, tools and emergency supplies, clothing and bedding, and specialty items. You will need to change the stored water and food supplies every six months, so be sure to write the date you store it on all containers. You should also re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your household changes. Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supply kit in one or two easy-to carry containers such as an unused trash can, camping backpack or duffel bag.

### **Water: the absolute necessity**

- Stocking water reserves should be a top priority. Drinking water in emergency situations should not be rationed. Therefore, it is critical to store adequate amounts of water for your household.
- Individual needs vary, depending on age, physical condition, activity, diet, and climate. A normally active person needs at least two quarts of water daily just for drinking. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people need more. Very hot temperatures can double the amount of water needed.
- Because you will also need water for sanitary purposes and, possibly, for cooking, you should store at least one gallon of water per person per day.
- Store water in thoroughly washed plastic, fiberglass or enamel-lined metal containers. Don't use containers that can break, such as glass bottles. Never use a container that has held toxic substances. Sound plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles, are best. You can also purchase food-grade plastic buckets or drums.
- Containers for water should be rinsed with a diluted bleach solution (one part bleach to ten parts water) before use. Previously used bottles or other containers may be contaminated with microbes or chemicals. Do not rely on untested devices for decontaminating water.
- If your water is treated commercially by a water utility, you do not need to treat water before storing it. Additional treatments of treated public water will not increase storage life.
- If you have a well or public water that has not been treated, follow the treatment instructions provided by your public health service or water provider.
- If you suspect that your well may be contaminated, contact your local or state health department or agriculture extension agent for specific advice.
- Seal your water containers tightly, label them and store them in a cool, dark place.
- It is important to change stored water every six months.

### **Managing water supplies**

Water is critical for survival. Plan to have about one gallon of water per person per day for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene. You may need more for medical emergencies.

1. Allow people to drink according to their need. The average person should drink between two and two-and-one-half quarts of water or other liquids per day, but many people need more. This will depend on age, physical activity, physical condition and time of year.
2. Never ration water unless ordered to do so by authorities. Drink the amount you need today and try to find more for tomorrow. Under no circumstances should a person drink less than one quart of water each day. You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity and staying cool.
3. Drink water that you know is not contaminated first. If necessary, suspicious water, such as cloudy water from regular faucets or muddy water from streams or ponds, can be used after it has been treated. If water treatment is not possible, put off drinking suspicious water as long as possible, but do not become dehydrated.



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

4. In addition to stored water, other sources include:

- Melted ice cubes.
- Water drained from the water heater faucet, if the water heater has not been damaged.
- Water dipped from the flush tanks (not the bowls) of home toilets. Bowlwater can be used for pets.
- Liquids from canned goods such as fruit and vegetable juices.

5. Carbonated beverages do not meet drinking-water requirements. Caffeinated drinks and alcohol dehydrate the body, which increases the need for drinking water.

6. If water pipes are damaged or if local authorities advise you, turn off the main water valves to prevent water from draining away in case the water main breaks. The pipes will be full of water when the main valve is closed. To use this water, turn on the faucet at the highest point in your house (which lets air into the system). Then draw water, as needed, from the lowest point in your house, either a faucet or the hot water tank.

7. Unsafe water sources include:

- Radiators. After each use, pour or sprinkle a small amount of regular household disinfectant, such as chlorine bleach, into the container to reduce odors and germs.
- Hot water boilers (home heating system).
- Water beds (fungicides added to the water or chemicals in the vinyl may make water unsafe to use).
- Swimming pools and spas (chemicals used in them to kill germs are too concentrated for safe drinking, but can be used for personal hygiene, cleaning and related uses).

#### **Water treatment**

Treat all water of uncertain purity before using it for drinking, food washing or preparation, washing dishes, brushing teeth or making ice. In addition to having a bad odor and taste, contaminated water can contain microorganisms that cause diseases such as dysentery, cholera, typhoid and hepatitis. There are many ways to treat water. None is perfect. Often the best solution is a combination of methods. Before treating, let any suspended particles settle to the bottom, or strain them through layers of clean cloth.

Following are four treatment methods. The first three methods—boiling, chlorination and water treatment tablets—will kill microbes but will not remove other contaminants such as heavy metals, salts, most other chemicals and radioactive fallout. The final method—distillation—will remove microbes as well as most other contaminants, including radioactive fallout.

- Boiling is the safest method of treating water. Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites. Bringing water to a rolling boil for 1 minute will kill most organisms. Let the water cool before drinking. Boiled water will taste better if you put oxygen back into it by pouring it back and forth between two containers. This will also improve the taste of stored water.
- Chlorination uses liquid chlorine bleach to kill microorganisms such as bacteria. Use regular household liquid bleach that contains no soap or scents. Some containers warn, "Not For Personal Use." You can disregard these warnings if the label states sodium hypochlorite as the only active ingredient and if you use only the small quantities mentioned in these instructions. Add 16 drops of unscented bleach per gallon of water, stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not taste and smell of chlorine at that point, add another dose and let stand another 15 minutes. This treatment will not kill parasitic organisms. If you do not have a dropper, use a spoon and a square-ended strip of paper or thin cloth about 1/4 inch by 2 inches. Put the strip in the spoon with an end hanging down about 1/2 inch below the scoop of the spoon. Place bleach in the

spoon and carefully tip it. Drops the size of those from a medicine dropper will drip off the end of the strip.

- Water treatment "purification" tablets release chlorine or iodine. They are inexpensive and available at most sporting goods stores and some drugstores. Follow the package directions carefully. NOTE: People with hidden or chronic liver or kidney disease may be adversely affected by iodized tablets and may experience worsened health problems as a result of ingestion. Iodized tablets are safe for healthy, physically fit adults and should be used only if you lack the supplies for boiling, chlorination and distillation.
- Distillation involves boiling water and collecting the vapor that condenses back to water. The condensed vapor may include salt or other impurities. Fill a pot halfway with water. Tie a cup to the handle on the pot's lid so that the cup hangs right side up when the lid is upside-down (make sure the cup is not dangling into the water). Boil for 20 minutes. The water that drips from the lid into the cup is distilled.

#### **Food: preparing an emergency supply.**

- If activity is reduced, healthy people can survive on half their usual food intake for an extended period or without any food for many days. Food, unlike water, may be rationed safely, except for children and pregnant women.
- 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. Canned foods do not require cooking, water or special preparation. Be sure to include a manual can opener.
- Keep canned foods in a dry place where the temperature is fairly cool. To protect boxed foods from pests and to extend their shelf life, store the food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers. Replace items in your food supply every six months. Throw out any canned good that becomes swollen, dented, or corroded. Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies. Date each food item with a marker. Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in front.
- Food items that you might consider including in your disaster supply kit include: ready-to-eat meats, fruits, and vegetables; canned or boxed juices, milk, and soup; high-energy foods like peanut butter, jelly, low-sodium crackers, granola bars, and trail mix; vitamins; foods for infants or persons on special diets; cookies, hard candy; instant coffee, cereals, and powdered milk.

#### **Managing food supplies**

It is important to be sanitary when storing, handling and eating food. Keep food in covered containers. Keep cooking and eating utensils clean. Keep garbage in closed containers and dispose outside. Bury garbage, if necessary. Avoid letting garbage accumulate inside, both for fire and sanitation reasons. Keep hands clean. Wash frequently with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected. Be sure to wash:

- Before preparing or eating food.
  - After toilet use.
  - After participating in flood cleanup activities. After handling articles contaminated with floodwater or sewage.
1. Carefully ration food for everyone except children and pregnant women. Most people can remain relatively healthy with about half as much food as usual and can survive without any food for several days.
  2. Try to avoid foods high in fat and protein, since they will make you thirsty. Try to eat salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals and canned foods with high liquid content.
  3. For emergency cooking, heat food with candle warmers, chafing dishes and fondue pots, or use a fireplace. Charcoal grills and camp stoves are for outdoor use only.
  4. Commercially canned food can be eaten out of the can without warming. Before heating food in a can, remove the label, thoroughly wash the can, and then disinfect them with a solution consisting of one cup of bleach in five gallons of water, and open before heating. Re-label your cans, including expiration date, with a marker.
  5. Do not eat foods from cans that are swollen, dented or corroded even though the product may look okay to eat.
  6. Do not eat any food that looks or smells abnormal, even if the can looks normal.
  7. Discard any food not in a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with contaminated floodwater.
  8. Food containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops, snap-open, and home canned foods should be discarded if they have come into contact with floodwater because they can-

not be disinfected. For infants, use only pre-prepared canned baby formula. Do not use powdered formulas with treated water.

9. Your refrigerator will keep foods cool for about four hours without power if it is left unopened. Add block or dry ice to your refrigerator if the electricity will be off longer than four hours. Thawed food usually can be eaten if it is still "refrigerator cold," or re-frozen if it still contains ice crystals. To be safe, remember, "When in doubt, throw it out." Discard any food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.
10. If you are without power for a long period ask friends to store your frozen foods in their freezers if they have electricity. Inquire if freezer space is available in a store, church, school, or commercial freezer that has electrical service. Use dry ice, if available. Twenty-five pounds of dry ice will keep a ten-cubic-foot freezer below freezing for 3-4 days. Use care when handling dry ice, and wear dry, heavy gloves to avoid injury.

You may need to survive on your own after a disaster. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it may take days. Basic services, such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment and telephones, may be cut off for days, even a week or longer. Or you may have to evacuate at a moment's notice and take essentials with you. You probably won't have the opportunity to shop or search for the supplies you'll need. Your household will cope best by preparing for disaster before it strikes.

### First aid supplies

Assemble a first aid kit for your home and for each vehicle:

The basics for your first aid kit should include:

- \_\_\_\_\_ First aid manual
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assorted sizes of safety pins
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cleansing agents (isopropyl alcohol, hydrogen peroxide)/soap/germicide
- \_\_\_\_\_ Antibiotic ointment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Latex gloves (2 pairs)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Petroleum jelly
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2-inch and 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6 each size)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Triangular bandages (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2-inch and 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls each)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cotton balls
- \_\_\_\_\_ Scissors
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tweezers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Needle
- \_\_\_\_\_ Moistened towels
- \_\_\_\_\_ Antiseptic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Thermometer
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tongue depressor blades (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sunscreen.

It may be difficult to obtain prescription medications during a disaster because stores may be closed or supplies may be limited. Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications. Be sure they are stored to meet instructions on the label and be mindful of expirations dates—be sure to keep your stored medication up to date.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Extra pair of prescription glasses or contact lens.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have the following nonprescription drugs in your disaster supply kit:

- Aspirin and non-aspirin pain reliever
- Antidiarrhea medication
- Antacid (for stomach upset)
- Syrup of ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the poison control cent)
- Laxative
- Vitamins

### Tools and emergency supplies

It will be important to assemble these items in a disaster supply kit in case you have to leave your home quickly. Even if you don't have to leave your home, if you lose power it will be easier to have these item already assembled and in one place.



Tools and other items:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Extra pair of prescription glasses or contact lens.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A portable, battery-powered radio or television and extra batteries (also have a NOAA weather radio, if appropriate for your area)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flashlight and extra batteries
- \_\_\_\_\_ Signal flare
- \_\_\_\_\_ Matches in a waterproof container (or waterproof matches)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shut-off wrench, pliers, shovel and other tools
- \_\_\_\_\_ Duct tape and scissors
- \_\_\_\_\_ Plastic sheeting
- \_\_\_\_\_ Small canister, A-B-C-type fire extinguisher
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tube tent
- \_\_\_\_\_ Compass
- \_\_\_\_\_ Work gloves
- \_\_\_\_\_ Paper, pens, and pencils
- \_\_\_\_\_ Needles and thread
- \_\_\_\_\_ Battery-operated travel alarm clock

Kitchen items:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Manual can opener
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mess kits or paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils
- \_\_\_\_\_ All-purpose knife
- \_\_\_\_\_ Household liquid bleach to treat drinking water
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sugar, salt, pepper
- \_\_\_\_\_ Aluminum foil and plastic wrap
- \_\_\_\_\_ Re-sealing plastic bags
- \_\_\_\_\_ If food must be cooked, small cooking stove and a can of cooking fuel



Sanitation, hygiene, and personal items:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Washcloth and towel
- \_\_\_\_\_ Towelettes, soap, hand sanitizer, liquid detergent
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tooth paste, toothbrushes, shampoo, deodorants, comb and brush, razor, shaving cream, lip balm, sunscreen, insect repellent, contact lens solutions, mirror, feminine supplies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Heavy-duty plastic garbage bags and ties—for personal sanitation uses—and toilet paper
- \_\_\_\_\_ Medium-sized plastic bucket with tight lid
- \_\_\_\_\_ Disinfectant and household chlorine bleach
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consider including a small shovel for digging a latrine
- \_\_\_\_\_ Household documents and contact numbers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Personal identification, cash (including change) or traveler's checks, and a credit card
- \_\_\_\_\_ Copies of important documents: birth certificate, marriage certificate, driver's license, social security cards, passport, wills, deeds, inventory of household goods, insurance papers, immunizations records, bank and credit card account numbers, stocks and bonds. Be sure to store these in a watertight container.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency contact list and phone numbers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Map of the area and phone numbers of places you could go
- \_\_\_\_\_ An extra set of car keys and house keys.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clothes and bedding
  - One complete change of clothing and footwear for each household member. Shoes should be sturdy work shoes or boots. Rain gear, hat and gloves, extra socks, extra underwear, thermal underwear, sunglasses.
  - Blankets or a sleeping bag for each household member, pillows.
  - Specialty items  
Remember to consider the needs of infants, elderly persons, disabled persons, and pets and to include entertainment and comfort items for children.

*“You may  
need to  
survive on  
your own after  
a disaster”*

For baby  
For the elderly  
For pets  
Entertainment: books, games, quiet toys and stuffed animals.

It is important for you to be ready, wherever you may be when disaster strikes. With the checklists above you can now put together an appropriate disaster supply kits for your household:

- A disaster supply kit kept in the home with supplies for at least three days; Although it is unlikely that food supplies would be cut off for as long as two weeks, consider storing additional water, food, clothing and bedding other supplies to expand your supply kit to last up to two weeks.
- A work place disaster supply kit. It is important to store a personal supply of water and food at work; you will not be able to rely on water fountains or coolers. Women who wear high-heels should be sure to have comfortable flat shoes at their workplace in case an evacuation requires walking long distances.
- A car disaster supply kit. Keep a smaller disaster supply kit in the trunk of you car. If you become stranded or are not able to return home, having these items will help you be more comfortable until help arrives. Add items for severe winter weather during months when heavy snow or icy roads are possible—salt, sand, shovels, and extra winter clothing, including hats and gloves.

## Evacuation

Evacuations are more common than many people realize. Hundreds of times each year, transportation and industrial accidents release harmful substances, forcing thousands of people to leave their homes. Fires and floods cause evacuations even more frequently. And almost every year, people along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts evacuate in the face of approaching hurricanes. When community evacuations become necessary, local officials provide information to the public through the media. In some circumstances other warning methods, such as sirens or telephone calls, are also used. Government agencies, the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other disaster relief organizations provide emergency shelter and supplies.

To be prepared for an emergency, you should have enough water, food, clothing and emergency supplies to last at least three days. In a catastrophic emergency, you might need to be self-sufficient for even longer. The amount of time you have to evacuate will depend on the disaster. If the event can be monitored, like a hurricane, you might have a day or two to get ready. However, many disasters allow no time for people to gather even the most basic necessities. This is why you should prepare now.

### Planning for evacuation

1. Ask your local emergency management office about community evacuation plans. Learn evacuation routes. If you do not own a car, make transportation arrangements with friends or your local government.
2. Talk with your household about the possibility of evacuation. Plan where you would go if you had to leave the community. Determine how you would get there. In your planning, consider different scales of evacuations. In a hurricane, for example, entire counties would evacuate, while much smaller area would be affected by a chemical release.
3. Plan a place to meet your household in case you are separated from one another in a disaster. Ask a friend outside your town to be the "checkpoint" so that everyone in the household can call that person to say they are safe.
4. Find out where children will be sent if schools are evacuated.
5. Assemble a disaster supplies kit. Include a battery-powered radio, flashlight, extra batteries, food, water and clothing. See the "Emergency Planning and Disaster Supplies" chapter for a complete list.
6. Keep fuel in your car if an evacuation seems likely. Gas stations may be closed during emergencies and unable to pump gas during power outages.
7. Know how to shut off your home's electricity, gas and water supplies at main switches and valves. Have the tools you would need to do this (usually adjustable pipe and crescent wrenches).

### What to do when you are told to evacuate

Listen to a battery-powered radio and follow local instructions. If the danger is a chemical release and you are instructed to evacuate immediately, gather your household and go. Take one car per household when evacuating.

This will keep your household together and reduce traffic congestion and delay. In other cases, you may have time to follow these steps:

1. Gather water, food, clothing, emergency supplies, and insurance and financial records.
2. Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and a cap.
3. Secure your home. Close and lock doors and windows. Unplug appliances. If a hard freeze is likely during your absence, take actions needed to prevent damage to water pipes by freezing weather, such as:
  4. Turn off water main.
  5. Drain faucets.
  6. Turn off inside valves for external faucets and open the outside faucets to drain.
  7. Turn off the main water valve and electricity, if instructed to do so.
  8. Let others know where you are going.
  9. Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather.
10. Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts. They may be blocked. Be alert for washed-out roads and bridges. Do not drive into flooded areas. Stay away from downed power lines.

Disaster situations can be intense, stressful, and confusing. Should an evacuation be necessary, local authorities will do their best to notify the public, but do not depend entirely on this. Often, a disaster can strike with little or no warning, providing local authorities scant time to issue an evacuation order.

Also, it is possible that you may not hear of an evacuation order due to communications or power failure or not listening to your battery-powered radio. Local authorities and meteorologists could also make mistakes, including underestimating an emergency or disaster situation. In the absence of evacuation instructions from local authorities, you should evacuate if you feel you and your household are threatened or endangered. Use pre-designated evacuation routes and let others know what you are doing and your destination.

## Shelter

Taking shelter is often a critical element in protecting yourself and your household in times of disaster. Sheltering can take several forms. In-place sheltering is appropriate when conditions require that you seek protection in your home, place of employment, or other location where you are located when disaster strikes.

In-place sheltering may either be short-term, such as going to a safe room for a fairly short period while a tornado warning is in effect or while a chemical cloud passes. It may also be longer-term, as when you stay in your home for several days without electricity or water services following a winter storm. We also use the term "shelter" for Mass Care facilities that provide a place to stay along with food and water to people who evacuate following a disaster.



The appropriate steps to take in preparing for and implementing short-term in-place sheltering depend entirely on the emergency situation. For instance, during a tornado warning you should go to an underground room, if such a room is available. During a chemical release, on the other hand, you should seek shelter in a room above ground level.

### Long-term in-place sheltering

Sometimes disasters make it unsafe for people to leave their residence for extended periods. Winter storms, floods, and landslides may isolate individual households and make it necessary for each household to take care of its own needs until the disaster abates, such as when snows melt and temperatures rise, or until rescue workers arrive. Your household should be prepared to be self-sufficient for three days when cut off from utilities and from outside supplies of food and water.

1. Stay in your shelter until local authorities say it's okay to leave. The length of your stay can range from a few hours to two weeks.
2. Maintain a 24-hour communications and safety watch. Take turns listening for radio broadcasts. Watch for fires.
3. Assemble an emergency toilet, if necessary. Use a garbage container, pail or bucket with a snug-fitting cover. If the container is small, use a larger container with a cover for waste disposal. Line both containers with plastic bags.

### Staying in a mass care shelter

The American Red Cross and Salvation Army, assisted by community and other disaster relief groups work with local authorities to set up public shelters in schools, municipal buildings and churches. While they often provide water, food, medicine and basic sanitary facilities, you should plan to have your own supplies as well—especially water. See the "Emergency Planning and Disaster Supplies" chapter for more details.

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1. Cooperate with shelter managers and others staying in the shelter. Living with many people in a confined space can be difficult and unpleasant.
2. Restrict smoking to designated areas that are well-ventilated. Ensure that smoking materials are disposed of safely.
3. If you go to an emergency shelter, remember that alcoholic beverages and weapons are prohibited in shelters. Pets, except for service animals, are also not allowed in public shelters.

For moderate degrees of flooding, incorporating flood-proofing techniques to meet National Flood Insurance Program criteria may be the most practical approach to flood damage reduction. These techniques include taking the following steps to protect your utilities from flood damages.

## **Animals in Disaster**

Disaster disrupts and affects everything in its path, including pets, livestock, and wildlife. The following section provides general guidelines for handling animals in emergency and disaster situations.

### **Pets in disaster**

Pets need to be included in your household disaster plan since they depend on you for their safety and well being. It is important to consider and prepare for your pets before disaster strikes. Consider the following preparedness measures:

1. If you must evacuate, do not leave pets behind—there is a chance they may not survive, or get lost before you return.
2. With the exception of service animals, pets are not typically permitted in emergency shelters for health reasons.
3. Find out before a disaster which local hotels and motels allow pets and where pet boarding facilities are located. Be sure to include some outside your local area in case local facilities have closed.
4. Know that most boarding facilities require veterinarian records to prove vaccinations are current.
5. Only some animal shelters will provide care for pets during emergency and disaster situations. They should be used as a last resort. Use friends and family or keep them with you.
6. Be sure your pet has proper identification tags securely fastened to the collar. A current photo of your pet will assist identification should it become necessary.
7. Make sure you have a secure pet carrier or leash for your pet—they may need to be restrained during tense emergency situations.
8. Assemble a disaster kit for your pet. Include pet food, water, medications, veterinary records, litter box, can opener, food dishes, first aid kit, other supplies that may not be available at a later time, and an information sheet with pet's name and such things as behavior problems. Provide the kit to whomever assumes responsibility for your pet during a disaster.
9. Call your local emergency management office or animal shelter for further information.

### **Large animals in disaster**

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

1. Evacuate animals whenever possible. Map out primary and secondary routes in advance.
2. Evacuation destinations should be prepared with, or ready to obtain, food, water, veterinary care, and handling equipment.
3. Vehicles and trailers needed for transporting and supporting each type of animal should be available along with experienced handlers and drivers. It is best to allow animals a chance to become accustomed to vehicular travel so they are less frightened and easier to move.

4. In case evacuation is not possible, animal owners must decide whether to move large animals to shelter or turn them outside. This decision should be based on the disaster type, quality and location of shelter, and the risks of turning them outside.
5. All animals should have some form of identification.

### **Wildlife in disaster**

Disaster and life threatening situations will exacerbate the unpredictable nature of wild animals. To protect yourself and your household, learn how to deal with wildlife.

1. Be cautious approaching wild animals during emergency situations. Do not corner them. Wild animals will likely feel threatened and may endanger themselves by dashing off into floodwaters, fire, etc.
2. If wild animals are trapped or no natural food source is available, you can leave food appropriate to individual animals (i.e., animals could become trapped on an "island" after seeking high ground as floodwaters rise).
3. Wild animals such as snakes, opossums, and raccoons often seek refuge from floodwaters on upper levels of homes and have been known to remain after water recedes. If you encounter animals in this situation—open a window or other escape route and the animal will likely leave on its own. Do not attempt to capture or handle the animal. Should the animal stay, call your local animal control office or animal shelter.
4. If you see an injured or stranded animal, do not approach or attempt to help. Call your local animal control office or animal shelter.
5. Animal carcasses can present serious health risks.
6. Contact your local emergency management office or health department for specific help and instructions.

### **Animals after disaster**

Wild or stray domestic animals can pose a danger during or after many types of disaster. Remember, most animals are disoriented and displaced, too. Do not corner an animal. If an animal must be removed, contact your local animal control authorities.

If any animal bites you, seek immediate medical attention. If a snake bites you, try to accurately identify the type of snake so that, if poisonous, the correct anti-venom can be administered. Do not cut the wound or attempt to suck the venom out.

Certain animals may carry rabies. Although the virus is rare, care should be taken to avoid contact with stray animals and rodents. Health departments can provide information on the types of animals that carry rabies in your area.

Rats may also be a problem during and after many types of disaster. Be sure to secure all food supplies and contact your local animal control authorities to remove any animal carcasses in the vicinity.

Contact your local emergency manager for more information on animals in disaster. The Humane Society of the United States can be reached at: 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20037, Attn: Disaster Services Program or by phone at 202-452-1100 or online at [www.hsus.org/disaster](http://www.hsus.org/disaster).

## **Recovering from Disaster**

Some general advice on steps to take after disaster strikes to begin putting your home, your community, and your life back to normal.

### **Health and safety**

Your first concern after a disaster is your household's health and safety.

1. Be aware of new hazards created by the disaster. Watch for washed out roads, contaminated buildings, contaminated water, gas leaks, broken glass, damaged wires and slippery floors.
2. Be aware of exhaustion. Don't try to do too much at once. Set priorities and pace yourself.
3. Drink plenty of clean water. Eat well and get enough rest.
4. Wear sturdy work boots and gloves. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water often when working in debris.
5. Inform local authorities about health and safety hazards, including chemical releases, downed power lines, washed out roads, smoldering insulation or dead animals.

### **Returning to a damaged home**

Returning to a damaged home can be both physically and mentally challenging. Above all, use caution.

1. Keep a battery-powered radio with you so you can listen for emergency updates.
2. Wear sturdy work boots and gloves.
3. Before going inside, walk carefully around the outside of your home and check for loose power lines, gas leaks and structural damage. If you smell gas, do not enter the home and leave immediately. Do not enter if floodwaters remain around the building. If you have any doubts about safety, have your home inspected by a professional before entering.
4. If your home was damaged by fire, do not enter until authorities say it is safe.
5. Check for cracks in the roof, foundation and chimneys. If it looks like the building may collapse, leave immediately.
6. A battery-powered flashlight is the best source of light for inspecting a damaged home. **CAUTION:** The flashlight should be turned on outside before entering a damaged home—the battery may produce a spark that could ignite leaking gas, if present.
7. Do not use oil, gas lanterns, candles or torches for lighting inside a damaged home. Leaking gas or other flammable materials may be present. Do not smoke. Do not turn on the lights until you're sure they're safe to use.
8. Enter the home carefully and check for damage. Be aware of loose boards and slippery floors.
9. Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes. Use a stick to poke through debris.
10. If you smell gas or hear a hissing or blowing sound, open a window and leave immediately. Turn off the main gas valve from the outside, if you can. Call the gas company from a neighbor's residence. If you shut off the gas supply at the main valve, you will need a professional to turn it back on.
11. Check the electrical system where visible and accessible. If you see sparks, broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If, however, you are wet, standing in water or unsure of your safety, do not touch anything electrical. Rather, leave the building and call for help.
12. Check appliances. If appliances are wet, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. Then unplug appliances and let them dry out. Have appliances checked by a professional before using them again. Also have the electrical system checked by an electrician before turning the power back on.
13. Check the water and sewage systems. If pipes are damaged, turn off the main water valve.
14. Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches and gasoline. Open cabinets carefully. Be aware of objects that may fall.
15. Try to protect your home from further damage. Open windows and doors to get air moving through.
16. Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left behind by floodwaters can contain sewage and chemicals.
17. If your basement has flooded, pump it out gradually (about one third of the water per day) to avoid damage. The walls may collapse and the floor may buckle if the basement is pumped out while the surrounding ground is still waterlogged.
18. Check with local authorities before using any water; it could be contaminated. Wells should be pumped out and the water tested by authorities before drinking.
19. Throw out fresh food, cosmetics, and medicines that have come into contact with floodwaters.
20. Check refrigerated food for spoilage—your power supply may have been disrupted during the emergency. Throw out all spoiled food and any food that you suspect might be spoiled.
21. Call your insurance agent. Take pictures of damages. Keep good records of repair and cleaning costs.

### **Getting disaster assistance**

Throughout the recovery period, it's important to monitor local radio or television reports and other media sources for information about where to get emergency housing, food, first aid, clothing and financial assistance. Following is general information about the kinds of assistance that may be available. Direct assistance to individuals and families may come from any number of organizations. The American Red Cross is often stationed right at the scene to help people with their most immediate medical, food and housing needs. Other voluntary organizations, such as the Salvation Army, may also provide food, shelter and supplies, and assist in cleanup efforts. Church groups and synagogues are often involved as well.

In addition, social service agencies from local or state governments may be available to help people in shelters or provide direct assistance to families. In the most severe disasters, the federal government is also called in to help individuals and families with temporary housing, counseling (for post-disaster trauma), low-interest loans and grants, and other assistance. Small businesses and farmers are also eligible.

Most federal assistance becomes available when the President of the U.S. declares a "Major Disaster" for the affected area at the request of a state governor. When this happens, FEMA may establish a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC). A DRC is a facility established in, or near to, the community affected by the disaster, where persons can meet face-to-face with represented federal, state, local, and volunteer agencies to:

- Discuss their disaster-related needs.
- Obtain information about disaster assistance programs.
- Teleregister for assistance..
- Update registration information.
- Learn about measures for rebuilding that can eliminate the risk of future loss.

Learn how to complete the Small Business Administration (SBA) loan application, which is also the form used to qualify all individuals for low cost loans or grants, including those for repair or replacement of damaged homes and furnishings. Request the status of their Disaster Housing Application.

Persons can apply for assistance by telephone without going to a DRC by dialing 1-800-621-FEMA (3362).



### **Helping children cope with disaster**

Disasters can leave children feeling frightened, confused and insecure. Whether a child has personally experienced trauma, has merely seen the event on television or heard it discussed by adults, it is important for parents and teachers to be informed and ready to help if reactions to stress begin to occur.

Children respond to trauma in many different ways. Some may have reactions very soon after the event; others may seem to be doing fine for weeks or months and then begin to show worrisome behavior. Knowing the signs that are common at different ages can help parents and teachers recognize problems and respond appropriately.

Reassurance is the key to helping children through a traumatic time. Very young children need a lot of cuddling, as well as verbal support. Answer questions about the disaster honestly, but don't dwell on frightening details or allow the subject to dominate family or classroom time indefinitely. Encourage children of all ages to express emotions through conversation, drawing or painting and to find a way to help others who were affected by the disaster. Also, limit the amount of disaster related material (television, etc.) your children are seeing or hearing and pay careful attention to how graphic it is.

Try to maintain a normal household or classroom routine and encourage children to participate in recreational activity. Reduce your expectations temporarily about performance in school or at home, perhaps by substituting less demanding responsibilities for normal chores.

Additional information about how to communicate with children can be found on the FEMA for Kids website at [www.fema.gov/kids](http://www.fema.gov/kids).



### **Helping others**

The compassion and generosity of the American people is never more evident than after a disaster. People want to help. Here are some general guidelines on helping others after a disaster.

1. In addition to the people you care for on a day-to-day basis, consider the needs of your neighbors and people with special needs.
2. If you want to volunteer, check with local organizations or listen to local news reports for information about where volunteers are needed. Until volunteers are specifically requested, stay away from disaster areas.
3. If you are needed in a disaster area, bring your own food, water and emergency supplies. This is especially important in cases where a large area has been affected and emergency items are in short supply.

*“Disaster situations can be intense, stressful, and confusing. Should an evacuation be necessary, local authorities will do their best to notify the public”*

4. Do not drop off food, clothing or any other item to a government agency or disaster relief organization unless a particular item has been requested. Normally these organizations do not have the resources to sort through the donated items.
5. You can give a check or money order to a recognized disaster relief organization. These groups are organized to process checks, purchase what is needed and get it to the people who need it most.
6. If your company wants to donate emergency supplies, donate a quantity of a given item or class of items (such as nonperishable food) rather than a mix of different items. Also, determine where your donation is going, how it's going to get there, who's going to unload it and how it's going to be distributed. Without sufficient planning, much needed supplies will be left unused.

## Mitigation

One of the most effective means of protection is to take steps to make your home and your household safe from the potential effects of disaster like floods, tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes. This is called mitigation. Ideally, mitigation measures are implemented before disaster strikes since they can help protect your household as well as your property. However, even after a disaster strikes, actions can be taken to avoid or reduce the impact of the next disaster.

1. If your home was damaged during the disaster, consider implementing mitigation measures while you repair your home.
2. Be sure that all upgrade construction projects comply with local building codes that pertain to seismic, flood, fire and wind hazards. Make sure your contractors follow the codes, including periodic building inspections of the construction.
3. If you live in a flood-prone area, consider purchasing flood insurance to reduce your risk to floods. Buying flood insurance to cover the value of a building and its contents will not only provide greater peace of mind, but will also speed recovery if a flood occurs. You can call #1-888-FLOOD29 to learn more about flood insurance.
4. Also consider options for reducing your future flood losses (see Homeowner's Guide to Retrofitting: Six Ways to Protect Your House From Flooding, FEMA Publication # 312). The appropriate flood mitigation measure will depend upon the degree of flood risk to which your home is subject.

## Emergency planning for people with special needs

If you have a disability or special need, you may have to take additional steps to protect yourself and your household in an emergency. If you know of friends or neighbors with special needs, help them with these extra precautions. Examples include:

- Hearing impaired may need to make special arrangements to receive a warning.
- Mobility impaired may need assistance in getting to a shelter.
- Households with a single working parent may need help from others both in planning for disasters and during an emergency.
- Non-English speaking people may need assistance planning for and responding to emergencies. Community and cultural groups may be able to help keep these populations informed.



- People without vehicles may need to make arrangements for transport.
- People with special dietary needs should have an adequate emergency food supply.

1. Find out about special assistance that may be available in your community. Register with the office of emergency services or fire department for assistance, so needed help can be provided quickly in an emergency.
2. Create a network of neighbors, relatives, friends and co-workers to aid you in an emergency. Discuss your needs and make sure they know how to operate necessary equipment.
3. Discuss your needs with your employer.



4. If you are mobility impaired and live or work in a high-rise building, have an escape chair.
5. If you live in an apartment building, ask the management to mark accessible exits clearly and to make arrangements to help you evacuate the building.
6. Keep extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, food for guide or hearing-ear dogs, or other items you might need. Also, keep a list of the type and serial numbers of medical devices you need.
7. Those who are not disabled should learn who in their neighborhood or building is disabled so that they may assist them during emergencies.
8. If you are a care-giver for a person with special needs, make sure you have a plan to communicate if an emergency occurs.