



Have a Family Disaster Plan

Disasters can force you out of your home, neighborhood, or city. They can trap you inside your home, making it hard for others to reach you. You might not have running water, gas, heat, or electricity. Phone service might be cut off.

When a disaster occurs, your family members might be in different places. You might not be able to be together for a long time. A disaster plan will help your family know what to do. You will have a better idea of how to find each other.

Decide How to Get in Touch



Discuss what to do if your family is separated during a disaster. Explain that even when the family is not together, it is still a team. Each member plays a role in keeping the family safe.

Talk about where family members might be if a disaster happens. Perhaps they might be at school, in daycare, at work, in the car, or at home.

Make a card for each family member that lists needed phone numbers. The card should fit easily into a wallet, purse, or backpack. If you can, protect the card by getting it coated in plastic.

On the card, list each family member's e-mail address, home phone number, cell phone number, and work number. Include the phone numbers of schools, daycare, doctors, and babysitters.

Also, list a contact person who lives outside your town. That person could be a friend or relative. Include the contact's phone number on the card. Make sure each of your family members can remember that number.

During a disaster, it might be easier to call long distance. Long distance lines are less likely than local lines to suffer damage or overload. Family members can call an out-of-town contact to explain where they are and if they are safe. Once you make that call, stay off the phone. Emergency workers will need the lines kept open.

Tell family members to carry their card and ID at all times. Each person should carry coins too. Service to pay phones will most likely be restored before service to home phones.

Decide on Safe Places

Decide on safe places to go during a disaster. Pick two outdoor places where your

family can meet. One should be in front of your home, in case of a fire. The other should be outside your neighborhood in case the area is not safe. Pick a place with landmarks that every family member knows and can find.

Plan What to Do if You Are Home

Some disasters can force you to stay home for a long stretch of time. Basic services like power

and water might be cut off. Be prepared for these events.

Make sure you have a phone in your home that connects to a phone jack. Cell phones and cordless phones might not work after a disaster. They can be affected when the power goes off. A regular phone might

not work either. But it's good to have one just in case.

If you lose power, do not use candles! They are a major cause of fires. People have died as a result of using candles during blackouts.

Instead, keep flashlights around your home. Keep fresh batteries with

You need to plan where to go depending on the disaster. Learn about warning signals that tell you danger is on the way. Make sure each family member knows how to cope with a wide range of dangers.

them. Use flashlights to guide you in low light.

Some families use portable generators to provide power during an outage. Never use these indoors, on a porch, or in any closed space! They can produce a buildup of a deadly poison gas. Follow the instructions exactly.

Plan to Get Away From Home

Sometimes a disaster forces people to leave an area. Learn several escape routes from home, school, and work in case you must evacuate.

In some places where dangers occur often, posted signs show routes people should take to leave town. Sometimes these routes are printed in the phone book.

At the time of a disaster, always listen to what officials say to do. Follow

the routes they tell you to take. They will advise you of the safest way to go. Don't take shortcuts, since roads might be blocked or flooded.

Never drive or walk on flooded roads! Even a small amount of water can be deadly. In fact, most people die in floods by trying to drive through flooded areas.

When leaving an area by car, try to carpool. Traffic jams can slow down attempts to leave.

If you don't have a car, you might be able to arrange a ride. Ask officials how to get one. Your town might



provide transportation. Find out ahead of time. You might have to sign up for that service if it exists in your area.

Find out where public shelters are in your area. Think of other places you

could stay if forced to leave home. Ask out-of-town friends or family if they could put you up "just in case." Locate hotels, motels, or campgrounds along several routes you would use to leave town.

Think of People's Special Needs

Be aware of people around you who have special needs. Ask

what help they'd need in a disaster. Would they need a ride? Help with a wheelchair? Someone to guide them out of their home? Special supplies?

If you have special needs, make sure your family, friends, and neighbors know. Find someone who will help you during a disaster.

Plan for Pets

If you have to leave your home, take your pets with you. Bring along a supply of pet food and a leash or carrier.

It may be hard to find a place where you can go together. Research your options in advance.

Your vet is a good resource for information.

Ask friends and family if they would house you and your pets during a disaster. Locate "pet-friendly" hotels and motels along the routes you might take.

If you can't stay with your pets, you will need to bring them somewhere safe. Public shelters cannot

accept pets unless they are service animals.

Make a plan to help your pets in case you aren't home when a disaster happens. Ask a trusted neighbor or friend to rescue your pets. Give the person the key to your home.

Make sure that your pets' ID tags and vaccinations are up-to-date. If you know

where you will take a pet, write the address on masking tape. Tape it to the back of the ID tag.

Try to transport animals in carriers — especially cats. Your pets will be scared. They might try to run away or hide. They might bite and scratch. Bring recent photos in case your pet escapes.

Prepare Supplies

Have emergency supplies ready before a disaster happens. You will need to make two disaster kits. One will be your "Ready-to-Go" kit. The other will be your "Ready-to-Stay" kit.

You probably have most of the supplies you need. You shouldn't have to buy very many items to make the kits.



READY-TO-GO KIT: A CHECKLIST

You might have to leave your home in a hurry. So you need to have some supplies ready to take with you.

A Ready-to-Go Kit contains only a few items so it's easy to carry. Each person needs to have his or her own kit. Store the supplies in an easy-to-carry bag or backpack.

A group leaving together will need only one can opener and one battery-powered radio. But each person's kit should have all the other things listed here:

- At least one gallon of water per person (in bottles)
- Food that doesn't have to be kept cold (such as granola bars or soup in cans)
- Can opener (hand-powered, not electric)
- Plastic or paper plates, cups, forks, spoons, and knives
- Battery-powered radio (with batteries)
- Flashlight (and extra batteries)
- Small first aid kit
- A change of clothes (including a jacket and pants)
- Wallet card with contact names and phone numbers (including the number of a person who lives outside your town)
- Copy of your ID (with your home address on it, in case you must show it to be let back into your neighborhood)
- Soap and hand sanitizer
- Personal hygiene items (such as shaving supplies and feminine products)
- Pet food and supplies for at least one day
- Most medicines cannot be stored for a long time. Doctors will not prescribe medicines for you to save. So you should not plan to store prescription medicines in this kit. Instead, keep all of them together someplace else. Try to pick a place near the kit. Then you can quickly grab all your medicines if you must leave in a hurry.

READY-TO-STAY KIT: A CHECKLIST

A disaster might force you to stay inside your home for a long time. You might not have running water or power. So you need to prepare some supplies for a Ready-to-Stay Kit. Keep these supplies in a large bag or a large plastic box.

- Three gallons of water for each family member (in bottles)
- Canned food for at least three days (or other foods that don't have to be kept cold)
- Toilet paper
- Blankets
- Books and games to keep you busy
- Paper and pencils
- Pet food and supplies for at least three days
- Small bottle of unscented liquid chlorine bleach for treating water
- First aid supplies
- When you have to stay home, you can use the things in your Ready-to-Go Kit too.
- You might also want to keep certain tools handy. They don't have to be stored in the kit. Tools to consider:
 - Hammer
 - Pliers
 - Screwdriver
 - Duct tape
 - Landline telephone (connected by a wire to a phone jack on the wall)