

— BE PREPARED. STAY INFORMED. PROTECT WHAT MATTERS. —

READY FOR ANYTHING

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS,
SURVIVING DISASTERS, AND BUILDING A **RESILIENT LIFE**



EMERGENCY
PLANNING



FOOD & WATER
STORAGE



FIRST AID &
MEDICAL



NATURAL
DISASTERS



POWER OUTAGES
& EQUIPMENT



SURVIVAL
SKILLS

PREPARE
SURVIVE
THRIVE

REAL-WORLD STRATEGIES | PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS | PEACE OF MIND

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CHAPTER ONE | Preparedness Is for Everyone

Emergencies rarely happen when they are convenient. A powerful storm can knock out electricity for days. A wildfire can spread. A chemical spill can force families to shelter indoors. A medical emergency, house fire, or extended power outage can occur. All with little warning or no notice at all.

Most people assume they will have plenty of time to react when disaster strikes. In reality, many emergencies unfold rapidly, leaving only minutes—or even seconds—to make important decisions.

Preparedness is not about expecting the worst. It is about reducing uncertainty, minimizing risk, and giving yourself and your family the knowledge and resources needed to respond confidently when unexpected events occur.

Prepared households are generally able to make better decisions under stress and evacuate quickly when necessary. They can shelter at home safely and recover more quickly after disasters.

Emergency preparedness is not reserved for survival enthusiasts or people living in remote areas. Every household, regardless of where it is located, benefits from having a plan.

Whether you live in a city apartment, suburban neighborhood, rural home, condominium, or mobile home, the basic principles remain the same:

Prepare before the emergency - not during it.

Why Every Household Needs a Plan

Most emergencies fall into one of three broad categories:

- **Natural disasters** - hurricanes, floods, storms, wildfires, earthquakes, extreme heat, landslides
- **Utility failures** - gas, electric, communications, clean water, sewer failures
- **Household emergencies** – fires, carbon monoxide incidents, burst pipes, electrical failures, medical emergencies, poisonings

After major disasters, many people report facing challenges they never anticipated.

- Running out of drinking water
- Emptied grocery shelves
- Fuel shortages
- Long gas station lines

- Loss of communication
- Cash shortages
- Prescription medication shortages
- Road closures
- Lack of temporary housing

Many of these problems can be reduced or avoided entirely. A small investment of time each month can save thousands of dollars and reduce significant stress when emergencies occur.

Often, emergencies provide no notice.

House fires, tornadoes, and earthquakes all come without warning and being prepared allows for immediate action rather than rushed decision making.

Police, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and utility crews perform extraordinary work during disasters. However, during widespread emergencies they may be responding to hundreds or thousands of calls simultaneously. Households should be prepared to remain self-sufficient for at least 72 hours, and preferably up to two weeks, depending on the event.

Preparedness is less about equipment and more about developing good habits. These habits become second nature over time.

A resilient household is built around five essential components.

- **Having information** – know the risks where you live and know where local help is available.
- **Planning ahead** – know where you will meet, how you will communicate, who is checking on elderly relatives and pets, and where important documents are located,
- **Having supplies on hand** – This allows your household to function when stores are closed or services are interrupted. Basic supplies include:
 - a. Water
 - b. Food
 - c. First Aid items
 - d. Flashlights
 - e. Batteries
 - f. Medications
 - g. Sanitation items
 - h. Communication equipment

EVERY COMMUNITY FACES RISKS

Every community faces risks. Even areas with few natural disasters can experience extended power outages, house fires, severe storms, medical emergencies, hazardous material accidents and flash flooding.



- **Learning skills ahead of time** – useful emergency skills include basic first aid, CPR, fire extinguisher operation, utility shut off practices, emergency communications, water purification, and basic home repairs.
- **Practicing your plan** – confidence comes through repetition, so be sure to practice fire evacuation procedures, shelter in place procedures, and family communication plans.

Many people postpone preparedness because they believe they must buy everything immediately. That isn't necessary. A practical approach is to improve your readiness gradually. For example:

Week 1: Build a basic first aid kit.

Week 2: Store extra drinking water.

Week 3: Purchase flashlights and batteries.

Week 4: Organize important documents.

Week 5: Assemble a 72-hour emergency kit.

By making small improvements over time, nearly any household can become significantly more prepared without straining its budget.

CHAPTER TWO | Assessing Your Household Risks

No two households face exactly the same emergency risks. A family living along the Gulf Coast will prepare differently than someone in the mountains, while an apartment dweller in a major city has different concerns than someone on a rural farm.

The goal of emergency preparedness is not to prepare for every imaginable event. Instead, it is to identify the emergencies most likely to affect your household and develop practical plans to reduce their impact.

Risk is a combination of two factors:

Likelihood – How likely is an emergency to occur?

Impact – How serious would the consequences be if it happened?

A severe thunderstorm may happen several times each year in your area. While most storms are minor, some may cause extended power outages or damage your home. An earthquake may be much less likely, but if you live near an active fault, the potential impact could be significant. Both deserve attention, but your level of preparation should reflect your local circumstances.

Step One: Identify Natural Hazards

Begin by making a list of the natural hazards that are common where you live. Possible hazards include:

- Hurricanes
- Tropical storms
- Flooding
- Flash floods
- Tornadoes
- Severe thunderstorms
- Lightning
- Hail
- Winter storms
- Ice storms
- Blizzards
- Extreme heat
- Extreme cold
- Drought
- Wildfires
- Earthquakes
- Landslides
- Coastal storm surge
- Tsunamis (coastal areas)

Research local history to determine which hazards occur most often. Past events often provide valuable insight into future risks. Questions to ask include:

- Has my neighborhood experienced flooding?
- Are wildfires common nearby?
- Is my area prone to tornadoes?
- Have hurricanes affected this region?
- Are extended winter power outages common?

Step Two: Evaluate Your Home

Walk through your property and ask yourself the following questions.

- Is my home built to current building standards?
- Is the roof in good condition?
- Are windows protected from severe weather?
- Are smoke alarms installed and working?

- Is there a carbon monoxide detector?
- Where is my electrical panel, water shutoff, gas shutoff, generator connections?
- Does my property have dead or dying trees – are trees leaning toward structures?
- Does my property have poor drainage?
- Is there outdoor furniture that could become airborne in high winds?

Step Three: Consider Household Members

Emergency planning should reflect the needs of everyone living in the home. Infants, young children, older adults, people with disabilities and pets all need special attention. There are separate chapters in this handbook addressing each of these groups.

Step Four: Review Financial Risks

Disasters often create financial emergencies as well. Consider these questions:

- Do I have adequate homeowners or renters insurance?
- Does my policy cover flooding?
- Do I have an inventory of valuable possessions?
- Are important documents backed up?
- Could I access emergency cash if electronic payment systems were unavailable?

Keeping copies of insurance policies, identification documents, and financial records in both physical and secure digital formats can simplify recovery.

Step Five: Evaluate Transportation

Transportation problems often complicate emergencies. Be sure your vehicle is properly maintained and you keep enough fuel in the tank. Carry an emergency vehicle kit at all times. And know about alternate evacuation routes in your area.

AN EMERGENCY PLAN DOESN'T NEED TO BE COMPLICATED

An emergency plan does not need to be complicated. The best plans are simple, practical, and easy for every family member to remember.

A written plan helps your household to react quickly and without panic during an emergency. It helps you stay connected if separated. And it allows you to protect children, older adults, and pets. A plan also allows you to recover more efficiently after the emergency has passed.



Households change over time. Children grow older. Pets are added. Vehicles are replaced, medical needs change. So set aside one day each year to review your emergency plans and update your emergency preparedness systems and supplies.

CHAPTER THREE | Creating Your Comprehensive Family Emergency Plan

Emergency supplies are important, but they are only part of being prepared. When an emergency occurs, confusion and stress can make even simple decisions difficult. A well-thought out emergency plan gives everyone in the household a clear understanding of what to do, where to go, and how to stay in contact.

Every member of the household should know the plan and participate in creating it. A sample meeting agenda would include the following:

1. **Assign responsibilities –**
 - a. Parents / Household leaders – monitor emergency information, decide to evacuate or shelter in place, shut off utilities (if necessary), gather important documents.
 - b. Second adult – collect emergency supplies, secure pets, check that all have appropriate clothing, confirm everyone has left the home safely.
 - c. Teenagers – help younger siblings, carry emergency kits, bring medications.
 - d. Younger children – meet outside, review full name|address|parents' phone number
2. **Establish meeting locations** - Families are often separated during the day because of work, school, errands, or recreational activities. Choose at least three meeting

locations. A place outside your home that you can go to after a fire or an emergency require evacuation. Also choose a place in your neighborhood that is accessible if your home is not. And choose the home of a relative or trusted friend in case your neighborhood is not accessible,

3. **Build a family communication plan** - Communication systems can become overloaded after major disasters. Develop multiple ways to stay in contact. All family members should have access to a printed and electronic version of your emergency contact list. **See Appendix A** at the end of this document for a sample contact list.
4. **Plan for children, pets, people with disabilities, etc.** – see individual chapters addressing each of these groups.
5. **Have a home evacuation plan on place** – Every household should have at least two escape routes from every occupied room. Ensure escape routes remain free of clutter.
6. **Shelter in place planning** - Some emergencies such as hazardous material releases, severe weather, or civil disturbances require remaining indoors rather than evacuating. Identify the safest room in your home.
7. **Utility shutoff procedures** - Know when - and when not - to shut off household utilities. Every adult should know the location of shutoff valves and breakers and water, electric, gas and propane. Never restore natural gas service yourself after it has been shut off unless instructed by your utility provider or qualified personnel.
8. **Protect important documents** - Store critical documents together in a waterproof and fire-resistant container. Consider maintaining encrypted digital backups stored securely online or on an external drive kept in a separate location.
 - a. Identification
 - b. Birth certificates
 - c. Passports
 - d. Insurance policies
 - e. Property deeds
 - f. Vehicle titles
 - g. Medical records
 - h. Vaccination records
 - i. Financial account information
 - j. Emergency contact lists

Practice makes the plan work. An emergency plan should never remain untested. Schedule practice sessions throughout the year. Regular practice builds confidence and helps identify weaknesses before a real emergency occurs. Suggested activities include:

Monthly

- Test flashlights.
- Check emergency radios.
- Verify phone numbers.

Every Six Months

- Practice fire evacuation.
- Review meeting locations.
- Inspect emergency kits.

Annually

- Update medical information.
- Review insurance documents.
- Replace expired supplies.
- Conduct a full household emergency drill.

CHAPTER FOUR | Building Your Emergency Supply Kits

When an emergency disrupts daily life, your ability to remain safe and comfortable often depends on the supplies you already have. Grocery stores can empty within hours, gas stations may run out of fuel, and utility services can be interrupted for days. An emergency supply kit bridges the gap between the start of an emergency and the return of normal services.

Your goal is not to prepare for every possible situation. Instead, you should assemble practical supplies that allow your household to remain self-sufficient for several days or longer. Rather than creating one large emergency kit, it is better to build several specialized kits designed for different situations.

This chapter explains how to assemble:

- A 72 Hour “Go Bag”
- A Two Week Home Emergency Kit
- A Vehicle Emergency Kit
- A Workplace Emergency Kit
- Pet Emergency Supplies
- Medical and First Aid Kits
- Important Document Kits

72 Hour “Go Bag”

Grab and go QUICKLY

Portable and Lightweight

Each person should have a separate bag

Food - Choose foods that require little or no preparation. Be sure to rotate the food packed in your kits every 6 – 12 months. Examples of appropriate foods include:

Bottled Water	Energy bars	Peanut butter
Crackers	Canned Meat	Canned Tuna
Dried Fruit	Nuts	Trail mix
Shelf stable milk		

Clothing - Keep clothing appropriate for your local climate and season appropriate.

Two changes of clothing	Underwear	Socks
Rain jacket	Hat	Gloves (seasonal)
Comfortable shoes		

Personal Hygiene

Toothbrush	Toothpaste	Soap
Hand sanitizer	Wet Wipes	Toilet paper
Feminine Hygiene	Small towel	Lip balm
Sunscreen	Contact solution and case	

Lighting

LED flashlight	Extra batteries	Headlamp
Glow sticks		

Communication

Battery powered radio	Charging cables	Portable power bank
Extra batteries	Emergency contact list	

First Aid

Adhesive bandages	Sterile gauze	Medical tape
Antiseptic wipes	Antibiotic ointment	Tweezers
Scissors	Disposable gloves	Masks
Pain relievers	Personal medications	

Tools

Multi-tool	Pocket knife	Duct tape
Zip ties	Cord	Work gloves
Waterproof matches	Lighter	

Pet items

Leash and harness	Food and Water bowls	Food
Medications	Waste clean-up bags	

Also grab your wallet, purse, cell phone, keys and necessary eyewear and hearing aids (if applicable) on the way out.

2 Week Home Emergency Kit (Shelter at Home)

Remain safely at home - Maintain living conditions - Larger quantities of supplies

Water - Plan for at least one gallon of water per person, per day for drinking, basic food preparation and limited sanitation. If you live in a hot climate, have special medical needs, have pets, or expect strenuous activity, you will need to increase your supply.

Food - Build a pantry around foods your family already enjoys. Follow the “first in, first out” method by using older products before newly purchased ones. The below items create a great starter pantry. For a full list and further instructions see **Chapter Six**.

Rice	Pasta	Beans
Canned vegetables	Canned fruit	Soup
Peanut butter	Oats	Cereal
Pasta sauce	Shelf stable milk	Powdered milk
Coffee	Tea	Drink mixes
Cooking oil	Flour	Sugar
Salt	Honey	

Emergency cooking - Power outages may prevent normal cooking. Consider a camp stove or charcoal grill (use only outdoors), a solar oven, a fireplace, or a propane stove. Never operate fuel-burning equipment inside a home, garage, or enclosed space because of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Backup power - Backup power can improve comfort during extended outages. Options include power banks, portable power stations, rechargeable battery systems, solar panels, and portable generators. Only operate generators outdoors and keep well away from doors and windows. Follow all manufacturer safety instructions.

Sanitation supplies - Loss of running water creates sanitation challenges. Maintain supplies such as:

Toilet paper	Trash bags	Disinfecting wipes
Bleach	Paper towels	Bucket with lid
Rubber gloves	Soap	Hand sanitizer

Medical supplies - Keep an expanded medical kit at home. Review medications regularly to replace expired items.

Prescription medications	Thermometer	Blood Pressure monitor
Medical reference guide	Extra eyeglasses	Hearing aid batteries
Medical gloves	Cold packs	Burn dressings
Oral rehydration solutions		

Vehicle Emergency Kit

In winter, add extra clothing and traction materials such as sand or cat litter

Flashlight	Jumper cables	Tire inflator
Tire repair kit	Spare tire	Reflective triangles
Blanket	Water	Energy snacks
Small first aid kit	Rain poncho	Ice scraper
Folding shovel	Phone charger	Multi-tool
Candle and tin can	Lighter	

Workplace Emergency Kit

Water	Snacks	Flashlight
Walking shoes	Phone charger	Medications
Small first aid kit	Cash	Emergency contact list

Pet Supplies

7 days of food	Water	Bowls
Medications	Leash / Harness	Carrier
Waste bags	Cat litter	Vaccination records
Recent photos	Favorite toy	Blanket

Important Documents - Protect essential records by storing copies in a waterproof, fire-resistant container. Also maintain encrypted digital backups in a secure cloud service or on an external drive stored separately from your home.

Drivers licenses	Passports	Birth certificates
Social security cards	Insurance policies	Property records
Vehicle titles	Vaccinations records	Bank account info
Emergency contact list		

All emergency supplies should be inspected twice each year and rotated to insure safety. Be sure to replace expired food, rotate stored water, test flashlights, recharge power banks, replace batteries, check medications, inspect first aid supplies and update contact

information. **A good way to remember when it is time to do this is to schedule it for the 2 times per year that clocks are moved forward to back.**

BUILD YOUR KIT ON A BUDGET

Preparedness does not have to be expensive. Make 1-2 purchases a week. Soon you will have a well-stocked kit.

Week 1 – flashlights and batteries

Week 2 – bottled water

Week 3 – canned food

Week 4 – first aid supplies

Week 5 – portable radio

Week 6 – hygiene products



CHAPTER FIVE | Water Security

If there is one resource that determines whether a family can safely endure an emergency, it is clean drinking water. Food shortages can be uncomfortable, but the lack of safe water quickly becomes life-threatening. Municipal water systems may fail after hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, winter storms, infrastructure failures, or contamination events. Even when water continues to flow from the tap, it may not be safe to drink without treatment.

A common guideline is to store **at least one gallon of water per person per day**. This amount covers drinking and minimal food preparation, but it is only a starting point. Your household may require significantly more water depending on:

- Hot weather
- High levels of physical activity
- Pregnancy or breastfeeding
- Medical conditions
- Infants requiring formula
- Elderly family members
- Large pets
- Basic sanitation needs

WATER IS ESSENTIAL

*Water is essential for far more than drinking. Your household also depends on it for cooking, personal hygiene, sanitation, cleaning wounds, washing dishes, preparing infant formula, caring for pets, and maintaining health. Without a reliable supply, routine tasks become difficult and the risk of illness increases. For these reasons, water should be the **first priority** of every household preparedness plan.*



Water Storage

Whenever storage space allows, plan for **two gallons per person per day**. This provides a more comfortable margin during extended emergencies.

The quality of your stored water depends greatly on the containers you use. Good options include:

- Commercially bottled drinking water
- Food-grade plastic containers
- Purpose-built emergency water containers
- Stainless steel containers designed for potable water

Choosing Water Containers

Avoid using containers that previously held chemicals, fuel, pesticides, or other hazardous materials. Even thorough cleaning may not remove harmful residues. Label every container with the date it was filled or purchased.

Water Storage

Store water in a cool, dark location away from direct sunlight and sources of heat. Excessive heat can weaken plastic containers and encourage algae growth. Good storage locations include:

- Interior closets
- Basement shelving
- Utility rooms
- Climate-controlled garages
- Under sturdy shelving

Avoid placing containers directly on concrete floors for extended periods if the manufacturer advises against it. Use pallets or shelves when appropriate.

Commercially bottled water often has long shelf lives, though replacing it every one to two years is a sensible practice. If you fill your own food-grade containers, rotate the water approximately every six months unless the container manufacturer recommends otherwise. Use a permanent marker or label maker to record the fill date.

Emergency Sources of Water

If your stored supply becomes depleted, additional sources may be available. Potential emergency sources include:

Household water heater - A typical residential water heater may contain 30 to 80 gallons of potable water. Shut off power or fuel to the heater before draining it, and ensure the water has not been contaminated by floodwater or other hazards.

Toilet tank - The clean water stored in the tank (not the bowl) may be safe if no chemical cleaning products have been added.

Ice cubes - Frozen ice can provide drinking water as it melts.

Canned foods - Many canned fruits and vegetables contain liquid that contributes to hydration.

Rain water - Rainwater can be collected for emergency use, but it should generally be filtered and disinfected before drinking.

Natural sources - Streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, and springs may provide water during emergencies, but untreated surface water should always be considered contaminated until properly purified.

Water Sources to Avoid

Not all water is safe, even during an emergency. Avoid using water from:

- Decorative fountains
- Swimming pools
- Hot tubs
- Irrigation canals
- Floodwater
- Water contaminated by chemicals, fuel, or sewage

Saltwater should never be consumed. Drinking seawater accelerates dehydration and can quickly become life-threatening.

Purifying Water

When the safety of water is uncertain, purification is essential. Using more than one treatment method, when practical, provides additional protection.

1. **Boiling** - Boiling is one of the most reliable methods for killing disease-causing microorganisms. First filter out any sediment then bring to a vigorous boil and maintain the boil for 1 minutes (longer at higher elevations may be appropriate). Allow water to cool naturally. Boiling kills bacteria, viruses, and parasites but does not remove chemical contaminants.
2. **Chemical disinfection** - Water purification tablets or unscented household bleach can disinfect many biological contaminants when used correctly. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions or current public health guidance regarding dosage and contact time. Using too little disinfectant may not make the water safe, while excessive amounts can create additional health concerns.
3. **Filtration** - Portable water filters are valuable additions to emergency kits. Some filters remove sediment, bacteria and protozoa while others reduce viruses, heavy metals and chemical contaminants. Read your product specifications and instructions thoroughly.
4. **Uv purifiers** - Portable ultraviolet devices can disinfect clear water by damaging the DNA of microorganisms. However, UV treatment is less effective if the water is cloudy. Filter visibly dirty water before using a UV purifier.

Collecting Rainwater

Rainwater collection systems can supplement emergency water supplies where permitted by local regulations. Collected rainwater intended for drinking should be filtered and disinfected before use.

Simple collection methods include:

- Rain barrels connected to downspouts
- Temporary collection containers
- Clean tarps directing water into storage vessels

Conserving Water During Emergencies

Once an emergency begins, careful water management becomes essential. Every gallon conserved extends your emergency supply.

Ways to reduce consumption include:

- Use disposable plates and utensils when practical.
- Wash dishes in batches rather than continuously.
- Take sponge baths instead of showers.

- Reuse lightly used water for cleaning where appropriate.
- Repair leaking faucets promptly.
- Delay nonessential laundry.

Water for Hygiene

Even when drinking water is limited, maintaining basic hygiene remains important. Good hygiene helps prevent illness by reducing the spread of bacteria and viruses.

Prioritize water for:

- Handwashing before eating
- Cleaning wounds
- Food preparation
- Infant care
- Medical needs

When water is scarce, alcohol-based hand sanitizer can supplement—but not completely replace—proper handwashing when hands are visibly dirty.

Water for Pets

Pets require clean drinking water just as people do.

General guidelines include:

- Store additional water specifically for pets.
- Clean water bowls regularly.
- Avoid allowing pets to drink from floodwater, puddles, or stagnant ponds.

Large dogs, livestock, and multiple animals can substantially increase household water requirements.

CHAPTER SIX | Building an Emergency Pantry

While clean water is your most critical emergency resource, food provides the energy, nutrients, and comfort needed to endure both short-term emergencies and prolonged disruptions. During stressful situations, proper nutrition helps maintain physical strength, supports the immune system, and improves mental clarity—qualities that become especially valuable when making important decisions or performing physically demanding tasks.

Food also provides a sense of normalcy. Sharing familiar meals with family members during an emergency can reduce anxiety, particularly for children, and create moments of comfort during uncertain times.

A well-stocked emergency pantry is not about hoarding or purchasing expensive survival products. It is about building a practical reserve of foods your family already enjoys and regularly eats.

Emergency food storage should be approached in stages.

1. **STAGE 1** - Begin with enough food for every household member for at least 72 hours. This provides a foundation for short-term emergencies such as severe storms or localized power outages.
2. **STAGE 2** - Expand your pantry to support your household for approximately fourteen days. This is a realistic goal for most families and provides a comfortable buffer during many emergencies.
3. **STAGE 3** - Households with adequate storage space may choose to maintain one to three months of food or more. Long-term reserves are particularly valuable in regions prone to hurricanes, blizzards, or other disasters that may interrupt supply chains.

One of the biggest mistakes new preppers make is purchasing unfamiliar foods simply because they have long shelf lives.

Instead, focus on foods your family already enjoys. This approach allows for less waste, easier meal preparation, greater acceptance by children and more balanced nutrition.



The Core Emergency Pantry

Grains	Protein Sources	Fruits & Veggies
<i>Store grains in airtight containers whenever possible to extend freshness</i>	<i>For long-term storage, consider dried beans which remain usable for years when properly stored</i>	<i>Choose varieties packed in water or natural juice when possible</i>
Rice	Canned tuna	Canned veggies
Pasta	Canned chicken	Canned fruits
Oats	Peanut butter	Applesauce
Quinoa	Beans	Dried fruit
Barley	Lentils	Freeze dried veggies
Instant Potatoes	Chickpeas	Tomato products
Crackers	Shelf stable tofu	
Breakfast Cereals	Nuts and seeds	
Instant Oatmeal	Mixed nut butters	

Dairy Alternatives	Pantry Items	Ready-to-Eat Foods
<i>Shelf stable options work well for emergency storage</i>	<i>Store oils in cool, dark locations to slow oxidation</i>	<i>These items are particularly useful during evacuations or power outages</i>
Shelf stable milk	Olive oil	Jerky
Powdered milk	Vegetable oil	Canned soups
Evaporated milk	Coconut oil	Crackers
Plant based boxed milk	Flour	Fruit cups
Shelf stable cheese items	Sugar	Nut butter packets
	Salt	Shelf stable meal pouches
	Spices	
	Honey	

Don't forget drinks such as coffee, tea, powdered drink mixes and rehydration water additives.

Cooking Without Electricity

Power failures often require alternative cooking methods. Never use charcoal grills, propane stoves, or other fuel-burning equipment inside a home, garage, tent, or enclosed area due to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Safe options include:

- Portable camp stoves (outdoors only)
- Propane camp stoves
- Charcoal grills (outdoors only)
- Solar ovens
- Rocket stoves
- Wood-burning stoves
- Fire pits where permitted

Manual Kitchen Tools

When electricity is unavailable, simple hand tools become invaluable.

Include:

- Manual can opener
- Hand-powered whisk
- Measuring cups
- Mixing bowls
- Cutting board
- Sharp kitchen knife
- Vegetable peeler
- Manual coffee grinder
- Bottle opener

REMEMBER THE CAN OPENER

A manual can opener is one of the most overlooked items in emergency kits.



Meal Planning During Emergencies

Planning meals before an emergency reduces stress and minimizes waste. A simple emergency meal plan might include:

Breakfast

- Instant oatmeal
- Shelf-stable milk
- Dried fruit

Lunch

- Canned soup
- Crackers
- Peanut butter

Dinner

- Rice
- Canned chicken
- Mixed vegetables

Snacks

- Trail mix
- Granola bars
- Fruit cups

Food Rotation

Use the **First In, First Out (FIFO)** method. When purchasing new groceries:

1. Place new items behind older ones.
2. Use older products first.
3. Replace used emergency items during routine shopping.

This system minimizes waste while keeping supplies fresh.

Label Everything

Even commercially packaged food benefits from clear labeling.

Consider marking:

- Purchase date
- Expiration date
- Rotation date

Organized storage saves time during emergencies.

Special Dietary Needs

Every household is different. Do not assume these specialty items will remain available after a disaster.

Plan for:

- Food allergies
- Diabetes
- Gluten-free diets
- Low-sodium diets
- Infant formula
- Baby food
- Nutritional supplements

Food Safety During Power Outages

When electricity fails:

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- Use refrigerated foods first.
- Consume frozen foods before shelf-stable supplies if safe to do so.
- When in doubt about food safety, discard questionable items.

Never taste food to determine whether it is safe.

Emergency Food for Pets

Remember that pets require their own food reserves. Rotate pet food just as you would human food.

Store:

- At least two weeks of pet food.
- Manual can opener if using canned food.
- Treats.
- Feeding bowls.
- Special dietary foods if required.

CHAPTER SEVEN | First Aid and Medical Preparedness

In most emergencies, professional medical care is only a phone call away. However, during widespread disasters, emergency responders may be overwhelmed, roads may be blocked, and hospitals may be operating under difficult conditions. In these situations, your ability to provide basic first aid can make a significant difference until trained medical personnel arrive.

Medical preparedness is about more than owning a first aid kit. It includes understanding how to respond to common injuries, maintaining an adequate supply of medications, knowing the medical needs of your household, and recognizing when a condition requires immediate emergency care. Learning a few basic skills and keeping the right supplies on hand can increase your family's safety and confidence during any emergency.

STABILIZATION IS KEY

Remember that first aid is not a substitute for professional medical treatment. It is intended to stabilize a situation until additional help can be obtained.



First aid is the immediate care given to someone who is injured or suddenly becomes ill. The primary goals are to preserve life, prevent a condition from becoming worse, and to keep an injured person comfortable until professional care is available.

Building a Comprehensive First Aid Kit

A basic store-bought first aid kit is a good starting point, but most households benefit from expanding it to meet their specific needs.

Wound Care	Infection Prevention	Basic Supplies
Adhesive bandages	Antiseptic wipes	Digital thermometer
Sterile gauze pads	Saline solution	Instant cold packs
Rolled gauze	Antibiotic ointment	Tweezers
Compression bandages	Alcohol prep pads	Trauma sheers
Butterfly wound closures	Disposable gloves	Small flashlight
Sterile eye pads	Hand sanitizer	CPR face shield
		Safety pins
OTC Medications		Splinting material
Pain relievers		Cotton swabs
Fever reducers		
Antihistamines		
Anti-diarrheal medicine		
Antacid tablets	Cough drops	
Oral rehydration solution	Cortisone cream	

Prescription Medications

If someone in your household relies on prescription medication, emergency planning becomes even more important. Work with your healthcare provider and pharmacy to maintain an emergency supply whenever possible.

Keep an updated medication list with dosage instructions and prescribing doctor contact information readily available.

Important Medical Information

Create a medical information sheet for every household member. **See Appendix A** at the end of this document for a sample medical information sheet. Keep printed copies in your emergency kit and maintain secure digital backups.

Recognizing Medical Emergencies

Certain situations require immediate emergency medical assistance. Call emergency services promptly if someone experiences:

- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain
- Sudden confusion
- Loss of consciousness
- Severe bleeding
- Signs of stroke
- Seizures lasting several minutes
- Serious burns
- Suspected poisoning
- Severe allergic reactions
- Major head injuries

Do not delay seeking professional care if you believe a condition may be life-threatening.

Controlling Bleeding

Severe bleeding is one of the most urgent first aid situations. General principles include:

- Protect yourself with disposable gloves if available.
- Apply firm, direct pressure using clean gauze or cloth.
- Maintain steady pressure without repeatedly lifting the dressing.
- Elevate the injured area if appropriate and it does not cause additional injury.
- Seek emergency medical care for severe bleeding.

If blood soaks through the dressing, place additional material on top rather than removing the original dressing.

Treating Minor Cuts and Scrapes

Most small wounds can be managed at home.

General steps include:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Rinse the wound with clean water.
3. Remove visible dirt gently.
4. Apply antibiotic ointment if appropriate.
5. Cover with a clean bandage.
6. Change the dressing daily or whenever it becomes wet or dirty.

Watch for signs of infection such as increasing redness, swelling, warmth, pus, or fever.

Burns

Burns vary from minor to life-threatening.

For minor burns:

- Cool the area with cool (not ice-cold) running water for several minutes.
- Remove jewelry before swelling occurs.
- Cover loosely with a clean, non-stick dressing.

Do not apply butter, toothpaste, or other home remedies. Seek emergency care for burns that are large, deep, involve the face, hands, feet, or genitals, or are caused by electricity or chemicals.

Sprains and Strains

Minor muscle and joint injuries are common during disasters. General care often includes:

- Rest the injured area.
- Apply a cold pack wrapped in cloth for short intervals.
- Use compression if appropriate.
- Elevate the injured limb when possible.

Persistent pain, inability to bear weight, or deformity should be evaluated by a healthcare professional.

Fractures

A broken bone may be suspected when there is:

- Severe pain
- Swelling

- Deformity
- Inability to move the limb
- A snapping sensation at the time of injury

Do not attempt to straighten a suspected fracture. Immobilize the injured area and seek medical care promptly.

Heat-Related Illness

High temperatures can quickly become dangerous. Signs of heat exhaustion include:

- Heavy sweating
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Muscle cramps

Move the person to a cool location, encourage fluids if they are alert, and loosen tight clothing. Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Symptoms may include confusion, loss of consciousness, or very high body temperature. Call emergency services immediately and begin cooling measures while awaiting help.

Cold-Related Injuries

Cold weather emergencies include:

Hypothermia

Warning signs include:

- Shivering
- Slurred speech
- Confusion
- Fatigue
- Poor coordination

Move the person to a warm location and gradually warm them with dry clothing and blankets.

Frostbite

Commonly affects:

- Fingers
- Toes
- Nose
- Ears

Protect the affected area from further cold exposure and seek medical evaluation.

Allergic Reactions

People with known severe allergies should carry prescribed emergency medication and follow their healthcare provider's instructions. Call emergency services immediately if anaphylaxis is suspected.

Mild allergic reactions may cause:

- Rash
- Itching
- Hives

Severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can involve:

- Difficulty breathing
- Swelling of the throat or tongue
- Wheezing
- Dizziness
- Collapse

Choking

A choking emergency requires immediate action. Encourage a person who is coughing to continue coughing if they can still breathe.

If they cannot breathe, speak, or cough effectively, begin appropriate first aid and call emergency services immediately.

Taking a certified first aid course is the best way to learn proper choking response techniques for adults, children, and infants.

CPR and AED Awareness

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillators (AEDs) save lives. Every adult should consider completing a certified CPR and first aid course. These skills are invaluable in homes, workplaces, and public settings.

Training provides:

- Hands-on practice
- Confidence during emergencies
- Recognition of cardiac arrest
- Proper AED use

CHAPTER EIGHT | Household Fire Safety and Fire Prevention

While natural disasters often dominate headlines, house fires remain one of the most frequent and devastating emergencies families face. A fire can spread through a home in just a few minutes, filling rooms with toxic smoke long before flames reach every area. Modern furnishings, many made from synthetic materials, burn faster than those produced decades ago, reducing the amount of time occupants have to escape safely.

The good news is that many residential fires are preventable. Regular maintenance, safe habits, early detection, and a practiced escape plan dramatically improve the chances of surviving a fire and minimizing property damage.

Every fire requires three elements:

- Heat – A source of ignition such as an open flame, overheated appliance, electrical fault, or lightning strike.
- Fuel – Anything that burns, including wood, paper, fabric, furniture, cooking oil, and gasoline.
- Oxygen – The air that supports combustion.

Removing any one of these elements can stop a fire or prevent it from starting.

Understanding this simple principle helps explain why fire extinguishers work, why oxygen should be limited when safe to do so, and why combustible materials should be stored carefully.

FIRE SAFETY

Fire safety should be a year-round priority for every household.



Many home fires result from everyday activities. The most common causes include unattended cooking, heating equipment too close to combustible materials candles, overloaded outlets and extension cords, clothes dryer lint buildup, fireplaces and woodstoves, and children playing with fire.

Small daily habits have a significant impact on fire safety. Most residential fires begin with preventable mistakes.

Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms are your first line of defense. Install them inside every bedroom, outside sleeping areas, on every level of a home (including basements) and near stairways. Avoid placing them directly next to kitchens or bathrooms where steam or cooking vapors may trigger false alarms.

Smoke alarms require regular attention. Follow these guidelines:

- Test alarms monthly using the test button.
- Replace batteries as recommended by the manufacturer unless using sealed long-life models.
- Vacuum dust from alarms periodically.
- Replace the entire unit according to the manufacturer's service-life recommendations, commonly around ten years.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas produced by the incomplete burning of fuels. Potential sources include:

- Furnaces
- Fireplaces
- Portable generators
- Gas stoves
- Water heaters
- Vehicles left running in attached garages

Install carbon monoxide detectors:

- Outside sleeping areas
- On each level of the home
- Near fuel-burning appliances, following manufacturer guidance

If a carbon monoxide alarm activates:

- Move everyone outdoors or to fresh air immediately.
- Call emergency services or your utility provider if appropriate.
- Do not re-enter until authorities determine it is safe.

Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are designed to control **small, contained fires** during their earliest stages. Every home should have extinguishers located near:

- The kitchen
- The garage
- Workshops
- Utility rooms
- Outdoor grilling areas

Choose extinguishers appropriate for household use and ensure every adult knows where they are located. Only attempt to extinguish a fire if it is small, you have a clear escape route, you have already alerted others and the fire is not spreading rapidly.

If there is any doubt, evacuate immediately and call emergency services.

HOW TO USE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER

A simple memory aid is **PASS**:

P — PULL the safety pin.

A — AIM at the base of the fire.

S — SQUEEZE the handle.

S — SWEEP from side to side while maintaining a safe distance.



Kitchen Fire Safety

Cooking is the leading cause of home fires. Reduce risk by staying in the kitchen while frying or broiling, keeping combustibles away from stove, turning pot handles inward, and keeping children away from hot cooking surfaces. If a pan containing great catches fire turn off the heat if it is safe to do so. Then carefully cover the pan with a metal lid to smother the flames. Never pour water onto burning grease.

Electrical Fire Prevention

Electrical problems account for many residential fires. Inspect your home regularly for frayed cords, loose outlets, flickering lights, frequently tripped breakers, warm electrical plugs and damaged extension cords. When in doubt, contact a qualified electrician.

Heating Equipment Safety

Portable heaters require special attention. Maintain at least a three-foot (one-meter) clearance between heaters and curtains, bedding, furniture, clothing and paper products. Place heaters on stable, nonflammable surfaces and turn them off whenever you leave the room or go to sleep.

CLOTHING FIRES

If clothing catches fire, remember:

STOP. DROP. AND ROLL.

- *Stop moving.*
- *Drop to the ground.*
- *Cover your face with your hands.*
- *Roll until the flames are extinguished.*

Cool burns with cool running water after the flames are out and seek medical attention when appropriate.



Fireplace and Wood Stove Safety

Before each heating season:

- Have chimneys inspected and cleaned if needed.
- Check fireplace screens.
- Remove excess ash safely.
- Burn only appropriate fuel.
- Keep combustible decorations away from fireplaces.

Dispose of fireplace ashes only after they have cooled completely, using a metal container placed away from combustible materials.

Candle Safety

Candles should be used cautiously. Always place them on stable surfaces, keep them away from curtains and paper, never leave them unattended and extinguish them before leaving a room or going to bed.

Developing a Plan

Every household should have a home fire escape plan and chosen meeting places (see previous chapters). Practice your drill at least twice a year using different exits, practicing in the dark, including children and reviewing any difficulties encountered.

Evacuation

If smoke fills a room, stay low to the ground where air is generally cleaner. Feel the door before opening them and if it feels hot, use another exit if possible. Close doors behind you as you leave to help slow the spread of the fire. Never use elevators during a fire. If you become trapped close any door between yourself and the fire. Seal gaps around the door, if practical. Call emergency services and signal from a window. Stay low to reduce smoke exposure. Remain calm and conserve your energy.

CHAPTER NINE | Power Outages – Preparing for Life without Electricity

Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life. From lighting and refrigeration to communications, heating, air conditioning, medical equipment, and banking systems, most households depend on a reliable electrical grid every day. When that grid fails, even for a few hours, daily routines can quickly become challenging.

Power outages may last only minutes, but major storms, ice events, wildfires, cyber incidents, equipment failures, or natural disasters can leave communities without electricity for days or even weeks. The longer an outage lasts, the greater its impact on health, safety, food supplies, and household comfort.

Preparing for a power outage is one of the most practical steps any family can take. Many of the supplies and skills discussed in previous chapters—water, food, first aid, and emergency kits—become especially valuable when electricity is unavailable.

Power outages occur due to severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes, ice storms, heavy snow, flooding. Lightning strikes, fallen trees, equipment failures, high energy demand, and more.

Preparation begins long before severe weather arrives. Maintain:

- Flashlights in easily accessible locations
- Fully stocked emergency kits
- Backup batteries
- Portable power banks
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- Manual can opener
- Extra drinking water
- Shelf-stable food
- Basic tools

Lighting <i>Safe options include:</i>	Backup Batteries <i>Useful for:</i>	Portable Power <i>Can operate:</i>
LED flashlights	Mobile phones	Medical equipment
Rechargeable lanterns	Tablets	Laptops
Headlamps	Small electronics	Small appliances
Solar powered lights	Flashlights	Communication devices
		LED lighting
Standby Generators <i>On permanent standby</i>	Portable Generators <i>Provide temporary power for:</i>	
Automatic operation	Refrigerators & freezers	
Some with continuous fuel	Heating systems	
Some whole home coverage	Sump pumps and Well pumps	
	Battery chargers	

Generator Safety

Improper generator use causes serious injuries and deaths every year. Carbon monoxide is invisible and odorless. Proper generator placement is essential. Follow these safety principles:

- Operate generators outdoors only.
- Keep generators well away from doors, windows, and vents.
- Never use a generator inside a garage, even with the door open.
- Allow generators to cool before refueling.
- Store fuel safely in approved containers.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors inside the home.

STAYING WARM WITHOUT ELECTRICITY

Cold weather power outages present additional challenges. Improve safety by:

- Wearing multiple loose-fitting layers.
- Closing unused rooms.
- Using blankets and sleeping bags.
- Covering windows to reduce heat loss.
- Gathering household members into one heated area when appropriate.

If using alternative heating equipment, follow all manufacturer safety instructions and ensure adequate ventilation where required.

Never use ovens or outdoor grills to heat your home.

STAYING COOL WITHOUT AIR CONDITIONING

Hot-weather outages can become dangerous, especially for older adults, young children, and individuals with chronic health conditions.

Reduce heat stress by:

- Closing curtains and blinds during the day.
- Opening windows when outdoor temperatures are cooler and conditions are safe.
- Wearing lightweight clothing.
- Staying hydrated.
- Limiting strenuous activity during the hottest hours.
- Using battery-powered fans if available.

Know the location of community cooling centers if extreme heat is expected.

PREPARING FOR LONG-TERM OUTAGES

If electricity may be unavailable for a week or more, begin conserving resources immediately. Postpone nonessential electricity use until power has been restored.

Prioritize:

- *Drinking water*
- *Food preservation*
- *Battery power*
- *Fuel*
- *Medical supplies*
- *Communications*



Water Considerations

Homes served by private wells often lose running water during electrical outages because the pump requires electricity. Municipal water systems may also experience interruptions during widespread outages. If your household relies on a well:

- Store additional drinking water.
- Fill bathtubs and containers before severe weather if practical.
- Consider backup power options for essential water systems.

Communication

Information becomes especially important during extended outages. Limit unnecessary phone use to conserve battery power. Remember, text messaging often requires less network capacity than voice calls.

Keep available:

- Battery-powered radio
- Hand-crank radio
- Fully charged phones
- Portable chargers
- Printed emergency contact lists

Medical Equipment

Some medical devices require continuous electricity.

Examples include:

- Oxygen concentrators
- CPAP machines
- Home dialysis equipment
- Refrigerated medications
- Mobility device chargers

Develop a backup power plan in consultation with your healthcare provider and equipment supplier. Keep emergency contact information for your utility provider if medical priority programs are available in your area.

Vehicle Fuel

Fuel shortages sometimes accompany widespread outages. Maintain:

- Vehicle fuel above half a tank during storm seasons.
- Generator fuel stored safely.
- Propane supplies where appropriate.
- Fuel stabilizer if storing gasoline long term.

Security During Extended Outages

Dark neighborhoods may increase concerns about personal security. Community awareness often improves safety during prolonged outages.

Practical steps include:

- Lock doors and windows.
- Use battery-powered exterior lighting.
- Avoid advertising valuable backup equipment.
- Know your neighbors.
- Keep emergency contact numbers accessible.

CHAPTER TEN | Sheltering in Place

Sometimes the safest place is home. Many people assume that every emergency requires evacuation. In reality, there are situations where leaving your home may place you in greater danger than remaining inside. During hazardous material incidents, severe weather, poor air quality events, or civil disturbances, emergency officials may instruct residents to **shelter in place** until conditions improve.

Sheltering in place means remaining indoors in a safe location while taking steps to reduce your exposure to outside hazards. Depending on the situation, this may involve closing windows and doors, turning off ventilation systems, monitoring official information, and limiting movement outside until authorities announce that it is safe. A well-prepared household can remain safely sheltered for several hours or even several days if necessary.

Sheltering in place simply means staying inside a building because it offers better protection than being outdoors. The level of protection required depends on the emergency. For example:

- A tornado may require sheltering in the lowest interior room.
- A hazardous chemical release may require sealing a room from outside air.
- Dangerous air pollution may require remaining indoors with windows closed.
- Civil unrest may require staying inside and avoiding unnecessary travel.

Unlike evacuation, sheltering in place keeps you where you already have access to food, water, medical supplies, and other necessities.

Emergency officials may issue shelter-in-place instructions during events such as hazardous material spills, chemical releases, industrial accidents, wildfire smoke, dust storms, severe thunderstorms, extreme cold, civil unrest, and air quality emergencies

Your Safe Room

Every household should identify a room that can serve as a temporary shelter. The ideal room depends on the emergency. Identify these locations before they are needed.

For airborne hazards, choose a room that is:

- Above ground level unless officials advise otherwise.
- Near the center of the home.
- As small as practical.
- Equipped with few windows.
- Easy to seal if necessary.

For tornadoes or high winds, the safest location is generally:

- A basement.
- A storm shelter.
- A small interior room on the lowest floor away from windows.

Keep essential supplies stored nearby. Recommended items include:

- Drinking water
- Shelf-stable snacks
- Flashlights
- Extra batteries
- Battery-powered weather radio
- First aid kit
- Prescription medications
- Mobile phone chargers
- Blankets
- N95 or similar masks when appropriate
- Hand sanitizer
- Wet wipes
- Plastic sheeting
- Duct tape
- Notepad and pen

Sealing the Room

Some airborne hazards may require reducing the amount of outside air entering the shelter room. These measures are temporary and should only be used when appropriate for the emergency. If instructed:

- Close doors tightly.
- Seal gaps around doors and windows using plastic sheeting and tape if available.
- Cover vents if directed by emergency officials.
- Limit unnecessary movement in and out of the room.

Monitoring Emergency Information

Reliable information is essential during any emergency. Avoid relying solely on social media, where inaccurate information can spread rapidly. Monitor:

- Battery-powered weather radios
- Official emergency alert systems
- Local government announcements
- Trusted television or radio broadcasts if available

Communication with Family Members

If family members are away from home:

- Send brief text messages.

- Confirm everyone's location.
- Avoid repeated phone calls that may overload networks.
- Follow your household communication plan established in Chapter 3.

Do not leave your shelter to search for family members unless authorities determine it is safe to travel.

WHEN OFFICIALS ISSUE A SHELTER-IN-PLACE ORDER

Act quickly but calmly.

1. *Bring everyone (including pets) indoors immediately.*
2. *Close and lock all exterior doors.*
3. *Close all windows.*
4. *Close fireplace dampers.*
5. *Turn off heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems if instructed.*
6. *Shut off window air conditioners and exhaust fans if appropriate.*
7. *Move to your designated shelter area.*
8. *Monitor official emergency information.*



Sheltering During Severe Weather

Not every shelter-in-place event involves hazardous materials.

Tornadoes <i>Move to:</i>	Severe Thunderstorm <i>Remain indoors & avoid:</i>	Extreme Cold <i>Remain indoors:</i>
Basement	Corded phones	Wear layers
Storm Shelter	Plumbing fixtures	Monitor indoor temps
Interior room on lowest floor	Electrical appliances	Close curtains to maintain heat
Avoid windows	Windows	
Extreme Heat <i>Remain indoors:</i>		
Close blinds during the day		
Stay hydrated		
Use battery powered fans		

Move to cooling center if indoor temps are dangerous		
--	--	--

CHAPTER ELEVEN | Evacuation Planning

One of the most difficult decisions during an emergency is determining whether to stay or evacuate. Leaving too early may seem unnecessary, while waiting too long can place you and your family in significant danger. Roads can become congested, weather conditions may deteriorate rapidly, and emergency services may no longer be able to assist those who remain behind.

The purpose of an evacuation plan is to eliminate uncertainty. When every household member understands what to do, where to go, and what to bring, decisions become faster and safer. Evacuation planning should be completed well before an emergency develops. The time to decide where you will go is not when evacuation orders have already been issued.

Emergency officials issue evacuation orders when remaining in an area presents an unacceptable risk to life or safety. **Voluntary evacuation** is when officials advise residents that leaving is the safest course of action, but it is not yet legally required. A voluntary evacuation often provides the best opportunity to leave before roads become congested.

Mandatory evacuation indicates that conditions are expected to become dangerous or life-threatening.

Examples include:

- Fast-moving wildfires
- Major hurricanes
- Dam failures
- Hazardous material releases
- Flooding
- Gas leaks affecting neighborhoods

If a mandatory evacuation is issued, leave as soon as possible unless emergency officials provide different instructions.

Building an Evacuation Plan

Every household should have a written evacuation plan.

Your plan should answer five essential questions:

1. **Where will we go?**
2. **How will we get there?**
3. **What will we take?**
4. **Who is responsible for each task?**
5. **How will we communicate if separated?**

Review and update this plan at least once each year. **See Appendix C for a full printable plan.**

If you become trapped and evacuation becomes impossible, move to the safest available location and contact emergency services. Inform family members of your location and continue monitoring official information.

CHAPTER TWELVE | Storms

WHEN SHOULD YOU LEAVE?

Even before official evacuation orders are issued, certain situations may justify leaving early. Leaving early often provides a safer and less stressful journey. Consider evacuating if:

- *Floodwaters are approaching.*
- *Wildfires are nearby.*
- *Utilities have failed for an extended period.*
- *Medical equipment cannot operate safely.*
- *Your home has become structurally unsafe.*
- *Severe weather is expected to worsen.*
- *Family members have special medical needs.*



Thunderstorms

Thunderstorms and lightning are nature's most common dangerous storm. Every year, severe thunderstorms affect millions of people across the United States and around the

world. Although many storms produce only rain and thunder, some generate destructive winds, large hail, flash flooding, frequent lightning, and tornadoes. These storms can develop rapidly, often with only minutes of warning, making preparation and situational awareness essential.

What's the Difference Between a Storm Watch and a Storm Warning?



Watch – atmospheric conditions are favorable for severe storms

Warning – a storm is occurring or is expected soon

Lightning <i>Bolts may:</i>	Winds <i>Strong winds may:</i>	Hail <i>Large hail can:</i>
Cause cardiac arrest	Down trees	Damage roofs
Damage nervous system	Break windows	Break car windows
Start fires	Destroy power lines	Destroy crops
Destroy electronics	Throw outdoor items	Damage solar panels

Lightning Safety	Outdoor Safety	Driving In A Storm
Go indoors immediately	See shelter immediately	Slow down
Stay away from windows	Avoid isolated trees	Turn on headlights
Avoid plumbing fixtures	Stay away from open fields	Increase following distance
Avoid corded phones	Leave elevated areas	Avoid flooded roads
Keep away from concrete floors that may contain metal reinforcement	Stay away from metal fences and poles	Pull over safely if visibility becomes extremely poor
Remain indoors at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder	Avoid bodies of water	New drive through floodwater

Tornadoes

Few natural disasters strike with the speed and destructive force of a tornado. While hurricanes may provide days of advance warning, tornadoes can form within minutes, leaving little time to react. Their winds are capable of destroying well-built homes, overturning vehicles, uprooting massive trees, and turning everyday objects into deadly projectiles.

Although tornadoes occur most frequently in the central United States, they have been recorded in every state and in many countries around the world. They can develop at any time of year and often accompany severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, and tropical storms. Because warning times are often short, advance planning is essential. Knowing where to seek shelter and recognizing the signs of an approaching tornado can save lives.

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground. Most tornadoes are visible because they pull dust, dirt, debris, or condensation into a funnel-shaped cloud. Tornadoes vary greatly in size and strength. Some remain only a few dozen yards wide and last a few minutes. Others can exceed one mile in width, travel for dozens of miles, and remain on the ground for over an hour. No matter their size, every tornado should be treated as life-threatening.

Meteorologists classify tornadoes using the **Enhanced Fujita (EF) Scale**, which estimates wind speed based on observed damage.

EF1	EF2	EF3	EF4	EF5
86-110 mph	111-135 mph	136-165 mph	166-200 mph	200+ mph

When there is a tornado watch stay informed and review your shelter plan. When there is a warning it means a tornado has been sighted or detected by weather radar. This requires **immediate action**. Go to your designated shelter without delay. Do not wait to see the tornado.

The safest place in your home during a tornado is a basement in a corner away from windows. If you do not have a basement then a small interior room like a bathroom, closet or hallway. If you live in an apartment on an upper floor, know where designated shelter areas are located.

Floods and Flash Floods

Flooding is one of the costliest natural disasters affecting households around the world. Every year, heavy rainfall, overflowing rivers, coastal storm surge, rapid snowmelt, and dam failures cause billions of dollars in property damage while disrupting the lives of millions of people.

Unlike many disasters, flooding can occur almost anywhere. A neighborhood that has never experienced flooding before may suddenly find itself underwater after an unusually intense storm or a blocked drainage system. Urban areas with extensive pavement are particularly vulnerable because rainwater cannot easily soak into the ground. Flash floods present an even greater danger. They develop rapidly, often with little or no warning, and moving water can become powerful enough to sweep away vehicles, destroy buildings, and

carry away debris. Preparation, early action, and understanding flood hazards are the keys to protecting your family.

Understanding different types of flooding helps you prepare appropriately.

River floods often develop over hours or days, allowing more time for preparation. Flash floods develop quickly, sometimes within minutes after intense rainfall. Cities experience flooding when storm drains cannot handle heavy rainfall. Coastal flooding may continue for several tidal cycles after a storm passes.

Many homeowners assume flood damage is covered by standard homeowners insurance. In many cases, it is **not**. Review your policies carefully and consider separate flood insurance if your property is at risk. Understand waiting periods, coverage limits, deductibles, and documentation requirements.

Avoid wading through floodwater. Even relatively shallow water may hide sharp debris, contain sewage, carry chemicals and conceal open manholes.

After floodwaters recede, remain cautious. Watch for:

- Downed power lines
- Damaged roads
- Contaminated water
- Unstable structures
- Sinkholes
- Mold growth

Flood cleanup requires protective equipment such as rubber boots, waterproof gloves, eye protection and respiratory protection if mold is present. Do not turn on electrical equipment while standing in water and do not use appliances that have been submerged.

KNOW YOUR FLOOD RISK

Before disaster strikes, determine whether your home is located in a flood-prone area.

- *Nearby rivers or streams*
- *Historical flooding*
- *Elevation*
- *Drainage systems*
- *Local flood maps*
-

Even homes outside mapped flood zones can experience flooding during extreme weather.



Mold can begin growing within 1-2 days after water damage. Reduce mold by:

- Removing wet materials promptly.
- Increasing ventilation when conditions are safe.
- Using fans and dehumidifiers after electricity is restored.
- Cleaning hard surfaces thoroughly.
- Dispose of materials that cannot be safely cleaned.

Hurricanes and Tropical Storms

Hurricanes are among the most destructive natural disasters on Earth. These massive storm systems can stretch hundreds of miles across, bringing destructive winds, torrential rainfall, storm surge, tornadoes, inland flooding, and prolonged power outages. Even tropical storms that never reach hurricane strength can cause extensive damage and threaten lives. One advantage hurricanes offer over many other disasters is that they are usually tracked days before landfall. This advance notice provides valuable time to prepare your home, gather supplies, protect property, and evacuate if necessary. Families who act early often experience less stress and are better positioned to recover after the storm. Preparation should begin long before hurricane season starts. Waiting until a storm is approaching often means facing crowded stores, fuel shortages, and heavy traffic.

Meteorologists classify hurricanes using the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale measuring **sustained** winds.

CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3	CATEGORY 4	CATEGORY 5
75-94 mph	96-110 mph	111-129 mph	130-156 mph	157+ mph

A little preparation each year can significantly reduce storm-related losses. Annual preparation should include:

- Reviewing insurance coverage.
- Photographing household belongings.
- Trimming trees.
- Cleaning gutters.
- Inspecting the roof.
- Testing generators.
- Replenishing emergency supplies.
- Reviewing evacuation routes.

Be sure to maintain two week supplies (**see Chapter 4** for more information on how to build your emergency supply kit).

Improve your home's resistance to storm damage by inspecting roof shingles, reinforcing garage doors, installing storm shutters where appropriate, securing outdoor storage buildings, anchoring propane tanks, repairing loose siding and removing dead tree limbs. Routine maintenance is one of the most effective forms of disaster mitigation.

Prepare to evacuation but if not necessary, be sure to remain indoors away from windows and continue to monitor official information. During the storm, remain calm and monitor emergency alerts and official local information. Avoid opening exterior doors until conditions are safe.

Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

Winter weather can be both beautiful and dangerous. Snow-covered landscapes often hide serious hazards including dangerous roads, prolonged power outages, frozen water pipes, roof collapses, frostbite, and hypothermia. While many winter storms are minor inconveniences, severe winter weather can isolate entire communities for days or even weeks.

Unlike many natural disasters, winter storms frequently affect large geographic areas simultaneously. Emergency services may be delayed, grocery stores can quickly empty, and travel may become impossible. Families that prepare before winter arrives are far more likely to remain safe, comfortable, and self-sufficient. Preparation begins well before the first snowfall.

Winter weather includes several different types of events, each presenting unique risks. These include:

Snowstorms <i>Snowfall can become dangerous when combined with high winds or freezing temperatures – hazards include:</i>	Blizzards <i>Staying indoors is often the safest choice – It combines:</i>	Ice Storms <i>Ice is more disruptive than snow because of the widespread damage it causes – accumulating ice can:</i>
Road closures	Strong winds	Snap tree branches
Fallen trees	Blowing snow	Bring down power lines
Roof damage	Severely reduced visibility	Damage roofs
Power outages	Dangerous wind chills	Make roads extremely slippery
Delayed emergency response		

Emergency Supplies for Winter

Expand your household emergency kit to include:

- Extra blankets
- Sleeping bags
- Warm clothing
- Gloves
- Hats
- Waterproof boots
- Hand warmers
- Flashlights
- Batteries
- Portable chargers
- Snow shovel
- Ice melt
- Sand or traction material

Keep these supplies together where they are easy to access.

Preparing Your Vehicle

Winter driving requires additional preparation. Carry:

- Ice scraper
- Snow brush
- Blanket
- Flashlight
- Jumper cables
- Tire inflator
- Folding shovel
- Traction aids
- Bottled water
- Energy snacks
- Phone charger
- Reflective vest

Keep your fuel tank at least half full throughout winter. A fuller fuel tank reduces the risk of fuel line freeze-up and provides additional flexibility if travel becomes necessary.

Staying Warm During Power Outages

Winter power outages can quickly become dangerous. If electricity is lost:

- Dress in layers.
- Close unused rooms.
- Use blankets and sleeping bags.
- Gather family members into one room to conserve heat.
- Close curtains after dark to reduce heat loss.

If alternative heating equipment is used, follow all manufacturer safety instructions.

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Carbon monoxide poisoning increases during winter because homes remain tightly sealed and heating equipment operates more frequently. Reduce risk by installing carbon monoxide detectors and testing them monthly.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure may include headache, dizziness, nausea, weakness and confusion. Move to fresh air immediately if carbon monoxide is suspected and contact emergency services.

Preventing Frozen Pipes

Frozen plumbing can cause expensive water damage. Protect pipes by:

- Insulating exposed plumbing.
- Keeping cabinet doors open beneath sinks during very cold weather.
- Allowing faucets to drip slightly when temperatures become extremely low.
- Maintaining indoor temperatures even when away from home.

If pipes freeze shut off the water if a pipe bursts and thaw pipes gradually using safe methods. Never use open flames to thaw plumbing.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN | Extreme Heat

Unlike hurricanes, tornadoes, or blizzards, extreme heat often arrives quietly. There are no dramatic winds or heavy snowfall to warn people of the danger. Yet heat waves consistently rank among the deadliest weather events in many parts of the world, causing more fatalities than many other natural hazards combined.

High temperatures place tremendous stress on the human body. Extended periods of excessive heat can lead to dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, worsening of chronic medical conditions, and increased risk of power outages due to heavy electrical demand.

HEAT ALERTS

Heat advisory:

A heat advisory indicates conditions that may become hazardous, particularly for vulnerable individuals. During an advisory:

- *Limit strenuous outdoor activity.*
- *Increase fluid intake.*
- *Monitor weather forecasts.*
- *Check on vulnerable family members and neighbors.*

Excessive heat warning:

An excessive heat warning indicates dangerous heat conditions are expected or occurring. Take immediate protective measures by:

- *Staying in air-conditioned spaces whenever possible.*
- *Avoiding outdoor work during peak heat.*
- *Drinking water regularly.*
- *Monitoring family members for signs of heat illness.*



Heat-related emergencies affect everyone, but older adults, infants, young children, outdoor workers, athletes, and people with chronic medical conditions face significantly greater risks. Fortunately, with planning and awareness, most heat-related illnesses are preventable.

A heat wave is an extended period of unusually hot weather, often accompanied by high humidity. The exact definition varies by region because communities adapt to their normal climate. What is considered dangerously hot in one location may be common in another. Heat waves become especially dangerous when:

- High temperatures continue for several days.
- Nighttime temperatures remain elevated.
- Humidity is high.
- Air quality deteriorates.
- Electrical outages limit cooling.

The body needs time to recover between periods of intense heat. Warm nights reduce that opportunity.

Preparation should begin before the hottest months arrive. Tasks include servicing air conditioning systems, cleaning or replacing HVAC filters, testing portable fans. And stocking bottled water.

Keep your home cool by closing blinds and curtains during the day, installing reflective window coverings where appropriate, using weather stripping, sealing attic openings and improving insulation. Ventilating the home during cooler nighttime hours also helps.

Air conditioning remains the most effective protection during extreme heat.

Stay hydrated increasing your fluid intake during physical activity and dress for hot weather wearing lightweight fabrics and loose fitting clothing. Whenever possible, remain in shaded areas during the hottest part of the day.

Know the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

HEAT EXHAUSTION	HEAT STROKE
Heavy sweating	Confusion
Weakness	Loss of consciousness
Fatigue	Hot skin
Dizziness	Very high body temperature
Nausea	Seizures
Muscle cramps	Rapid pulse
Headache	
Cool, moist skin	

If there is a power outage during extreme heat, close blinds and curtains, minimize physical activity, drink water regularly, use battery operated fans or move to a community cooling center.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN | Wildfires

Wildfires have become more frequent and more destructive in many parts of the world. Longer fire seasons, prolonged drought, changing weather patterns, and expanding residential development into forested areas have increased the number of people at risk. Even households located many miles from active fires may experience hazardous smoke, power outages, road closures, and mandatory evacuations.

Wildfires often move unpredictably. Wind direction, terrain, vegetation, and weather conditions can cause a small fire to grow rapidly and change direction with little warning. A fire that appears distant in the morning can threaten a community by afternoon.

Fortunately, many losses can be reduced through planning, property maintenance, and early evacuation. The goal is not only to survive a wildfire but also to improve your home's ability to withstand one.

A wildfire is an uncontrolled fire that burns through natural vegetation such as forests, grasslands, shrublands, or brush. Wildfires spread based on three primary factors:

- **Fuel** – Dry vegetation, trees, brush, leaves, and structures.
- **Weather** – Wind, humidity, and temperature.
- **Topography** – Hills, valleys, and slopes that influence fire behavior.

Steep slopes often allow fires to spread more rapidly uphill, while strong winds can carry burning embers miles ahead of the main fire.

Wildfires can begin from natural or human-caused sources. Many wildfire starts are preventable through responsible outdoor practices. Natural causes include lightning strikes or volcanic activity (rare). Human-caused fires include:

- Unattended campfires
- Equipment sparks
- Burning debris
- Discarded smoking materials
- Fireworks
- Vehicle exhaust contacting dry vegetation
- Downed power lines
- Electrical equipment failures

Wildfires threaten more than homes. Even if flames never reach your property, smoke alone can create serious health risks. Potential hazards include:

- Extreme heat
- Fast-moving flames
- Flying embers
- Dense smoke
- Falling trees
- Power outages
- Road closures
- Poor visibility
- Hazardous air quality
- Limited emergency response

Even if flames never reach your property, smoke alone can create serious health risks.

One of the most effective ways to protect your home is by creating **defensible space**—an area around your home where vegetation and combustible materials are managed to reduce fire intensity. Think of your property in three zones.

ZONE 1 (0-5 Feet)	ZONE 2 (5-30 Feet)	ZONE 3 (30-100 Feet+)
<i>This is the most critical area – keep it free from combustible materials</i>	<i>Reduce the amount of vegetation and crease separation between plants</i>	<i>Manage vegetation to reduce fuel loads</i>
Remove dead leaves	Trim shrubs	Remove dead trees
Remove pine needles	Space trees appropriately	Prune lower tree branches
Keep gutters clean	Remove dead branches	Clear brush
Avoid storing firewood against the home	Mow grass regularly	Remove fallen tree limbs
Keep decks free of debris	Store outdoor furniture away from home	Create access for emergency responders
Store propane cylinders away from structure		

When an Evacuation Order Is Issued

Do not wait to see flames.

Leave early.

Before leaving, if time allows:

- Close windows and doors.
- Remove flammable curtains from open windows if practical.

- Move combustible outdoor furniture away from the home or indoors.
- Shut garage doors.
- Turn on exterior lights to improve visibility in smoke.
- Leave gates unlocked if emergency responders may need access.

Take only essential belongings. Lives are more valuable than property.

Smoke Safety

Wildfire smoke contains tiny particles and gases that can irritate the lungs and worsen existing medical conditions. Symptoms may include:

- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Burning eyes
- Difficulty breathing
- Headache

People at higher risk include:

- Children
- Older adults
- Pregnant individuals
- People with asthma, COPD, or heart disease

When outdoor smoke cannot be avoided, a properly fitted respirator designed to filter fine particles may reduce exposure. Keep in mind facial hair may reduce the effectiveness of a tight-fitting respirator and children require appropriately sized protection when recommended by public health authorities. Masks intended primarily for dust or fashion may not provide adequate filtration for wildfire smoke. Always follow manufacturer instructions for proper use.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN | Earthquakes

Unlike hurricanes, floods, or winter storms, earthquakes usually provide no advance notice. They can occur in seconds, transforming a normal day into a life-threatening emergency. Buildings may shake violently, utilities can fail, roads may become impassable, and aftershocks can continue for days or even weeks.

Although some regions experience earthquakes more frequently than others, damaging earthquakes have occurred in many parts of the world, including areas not traditionally considered high-risk. Every household should understand the basic principles of

earthquake preparedness, particularly if they live near known fault lines or in regions with historical seismic activity.

The key to earthquake survival is preparation. Because there is little or no warning, the actions you take before an earthquake often determine how well you and your family fare during and after the event.

Scientists describe earthquakes using two primary measurements; magnitude and intensity. Magnitude measures the amount of energy released by the earthquake. Larger magnitude earthquakes generally affect larger areas and produce stronger shaking. Intensity describes how strongly the earthquake is felt and the amount of damage observed at a specific location. Local geology, building construction, and distance from the epicenter all influence intensity.

Ground shaking is only one of several dangers associated with earthquakes. Additional hazards include:

- Falling debris
- Structural collapse
- Gas leaks
- Fires
- Broken water lines
- Downed power lines
- Landslides
- Liquefaction
- Tsunamis in coastal regions
- Hazardous material releases
- Long-term utility failures

Small home improvements can greatly reduce injuries. Preventing falling objects is one of the most effective earthquake safety measures. Consider anchoring tall furniture to wall studs, installing cabinet latches to prevent contents from spilling, securing water heaters with approved straps, placing heavy objects on lower shelves, hanging artwork away from beds and seating areas, and using flexible gas connectors where appropriate and permitted.

If you are indoors during an earthquake stay inside and stay away from windows and glass doors. Do not run outside while the ground is shaking and stay clear of large furniture that could fall. If you are in bed stay where you are and protect your head with a pillow. Move only if you are directly beneath a heavy object that could fall. If you are in a tall building, you may experience longer periods of movement. Remember, do not use elevators. Fire alarms and sprinkler systems may activate automatically.

The “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” Technique

If you are indoors when shaking begins, remember the three-step response:

Drop

Drop to your hands and knees before the shaking knocks you down.

Cover

Take cover beneath a sturdy table or desk if one is nearby. If no shelter is available, move next to an interior wall away from windows and protect your head and neck with your arms.

Hold on

Hold onto your shelter until the shaking stops.

Be prepared for furniture to move during the earthquake.

If you are outdoors move away from buildings, utility poles, trees, streetlights, bridges and power lines. Remain in an open area until shaking stops. If you are driving, pull over safely.

Avoid stopping beneath bridges, overpasses, power lines or trees. Remain inside the vehicle.

Aftershocks are smaller quakes that follow the main event. They can continue for days or weeks and may cause additional damage to weakened structures.

If you are in a coastal area and experience a strong earthquake that makes it difficult to stand, immediately move to higher ground after the shaking stops if tsunami risk exists.

Do not wait for an official warning if natural warning signs indicate a possible tsunami. Remain away from the shoreline until authorities announce it is safe to return.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN | Hazardous Materials and Chemical Emergencies

Not every emergency is caused by severe weather or natural disasters. Every day, hazardous chemicals are transported on highways, railroads, waterways, and through pipelines. Industrial facilities, manufacturing plants, agricultural operations, laboratories, and even ordinary households use chemicals that can become dangerous if they are accidentally released.

Unlike fires or floods, hazardous materials may be invisible. Some chemicals have no odor or color, while others may spread rapidly through the air or contaminate water supplies. In many cases, the greatest danger comes from exposure before people realize an incident

has occurred. Preparation begins with understanding the risks in your community and knowing how to respond quickly when a hazardous materials emergency develops.

Hazardous materials, often called **hazmat**, are substances capable of causing harm to people, animals, property, or the environment. These materials may be:

- Toxic
- Corrosive
- Flammable
- Explosive
- Radioactive
- Reactive
- Biologically hazardous

Many hazardous materials serve valuable purposes in industry, agriculture, healthcare, and transportation. Problems arise when they are released unintentionally or handled improperly.

Chemical emergencies can happen almost anywhere and potential sources include manufacturing facilities, chemical processing plants, oil refineries, railroad accidents, highway tanker crashes, pipelines, warehouses, agricultural operations, laboratories and household chemical storage.

Common household hazardous materials include bleach, ammonia-based cleaners, paint thinners, solvents, pesticides and herbicides, pool chemicals, gasoline and propane automotive fluids and batteries. These products are generally safe but improper storage or accident mixing can create dangerous situations.

The warning signs of a chemical emergency may involve unusual odors, visible vapor clouds, dead vegetation, dead fish or wildlife, eye irritations, difficulty breathing, burning sensations, sudden headaches, multiple people becoming ill simultaneously and emergency responders wearing protective suits.

Emergency notifications may arrive through:

- Wireless emergency alerts
- Weather radios
- Outdoor warning sirens
- Television and radio broadcasts
- Local emergency management agencies
- Law enforcement
- Fire departments
- Community notification systems

Pay close attention to instructions, as they may advise either evacuation or sheltering in place.

Evacuation or Shelter in Place?

Your response depends on the nature of the incident. Leave immediately if officials determine that remaining in the area is unsafe. Remain indoors if officials advise that going out would increase exposure. If you must evacuate leave quickly but calmly taking your go bags and other important items. If you shelter in place bring everyone inside including pets. Close and lock all windows and doors turning off heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems if directed.

If You Have Been Exposed

If you believe you have been exposed to a hazardous chemical:

- *Leave the contaminated area immediately if it is safe to do so.*
- *Follow instructions from emergency responders.*
- *Remove contaminated clothing if directed.*
- *Avoid spreading contamination to others.*
- *Wash exposed skin with large amounts of clean water unless emergency officials advise otherwise for a specific substance.*
- *Seek medical evaluation when appropriate.*

Do not attempt home treatment for unknown chemicals without guidance from emergency personnel or medical professionals.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN | Pandemic and Infectious Diseases

Unlike hurricanes, earthquakes, or wildfires, infectious disease outbreaks often develop gradually. A single illness may spread quietly before public health officials recognize its full impact. Within weeks, hospitals may become overwhelmed, supply chains disrupted, schools closed, and normal routines dramatically altered.

Public health emergencies challenge more than healthcare systems. They affect families, businesses, transportation, education, and essential services. Everyday items such as medications, groceries, and household supplies may become difficult to obtain, while misinformation can spread almost as quickly as the disease itself.

The lessons learned from recent global health emergencies demonstrate that preparation, reliable information, and household resilience are just as important as medical care. Families who plan ahead are better equipped to protect their health, reduce stress, and maintain stability during prolonged outbreaks.

Infectious diseases are caused by microorganisms such as viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites. Some illnesses spread easily from person to person, while others require contact with contaminated food, water, insects, animals, or environmental sources. Outbreaks can vary in size (Localized outbreaks vs. regional epidemics vs. national emergencies vs. global pandemics) but preparedness strategies remain similar regardless of the scale.

Understanding transmission helps reduce risk. Common methods include:

Respiratory Transmission	Direct Contact	Contaminated Surfaces
Cough	Handshakes	Door handles
Sneeze	Physical contact	Countertops
Breath	Caring for sick individuals	Shared equipment
Food And Water	Animal And Insects	
Food	Mosquitos	
Water	Ticks	
Food preparation surfaces	Rodents	
	Wildlife	
	Domestic animals	

Develop a household health preparedness plan that includes emergency contact information, medical provider contact information, and contingency plans.

A well-stocked medical kit supports your household during periods when pharmacies or healthcare services may be difficult to access. Consider including:

- Prescription medications
- Fever-reducing medication
- Pain relievers
- Oral rehydration solution
- Digital thermometer
- Disposable gloves

- Hand sanitizer
- Soap
- Tissues
- Cleaning supplies
- Basic first aid materials

Check expiration dates regularly and replace items as needed.

Routine cleaning of door handles, light switches, phones, keyboards, bathroom fixtures, kitchen counters and remote controls help to reduce disease-causing organisms. Always follow product directions and never mix incompatible cleaning chemicals.

If a family member becomes ill encourage rest and hydration, follow guidance from their healthcare provider and limit close contact. Clean commonly touched surfaces and wash hands after providing care.

HYGIENE IS YOUR FIRST LINE DEFENSE

- *Wash hands frequently and thoroughly*
- *Clean frequently touched surfaces*
- *Covers coughs and sneezes*
- *Stay home with ill if possible*
- *Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands*

During any major health emergency, rely on local public health agencies and national health authorities for accurate information. Check on neighbors, help older adults obtain supplies and share accurate information. Prepared communities help one another.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN | Cyber Emergencies and Critical Infrastructure Failures

Modern life depends on an invisible network of digital systems. Electricity, water treatment, banking, transportation, healthcare, emergency communications, and food distribution all rely on computers and interconnected infrastructure. While these systems make daily life more convenient, they also create new vulnerabilities.

Cyberattacks, software failures, communication outages, and infrastructure disruptions can affect communities with little warning. A failure in one system often creates problems in others. For example, a widespread power outage may interrupt internet service, disable fuel pumps, prevent electronic payments, and disrupt water treatment facilities.

Most households cannot prevent these events, but they can prepare for them. Building resilience means developing the ability to function when digital services become unreliable or unavailable.

Critical infrastructure includes the essential systems that support daily life. Disruptions to one system often affect many others. Examples of systems include:

ASK YOURSELF...

- *Could I buy food if electronic payment systems failed?*
- *Could I contact family if cellular networks became overloaded?*
- *Could I navigate without GPS?*
- *Could I obtain information if the internet became unavailable?*



- Electrical power grids
- Water treatment and distribution
- Natural gas systems
- Telecommunications networks
- Internet services
- Transportation systems
- Banking and payment networks
- Healthcare facilities
- Emergency services
- Food distribution systems

A prolonged disruption may affect banking, credit card payments, fuel availability, cellular service, internet

access, GPS navigation, retail operations, ATMs, healthcare records, and emergency communications. Because many systems depend on electricity, even a localized outage can trigger cascading disruptions.

A cyber emergency involves the disruption, compromise, or failure of digital systems. Whether intentional or accidental, the results can interrupt essential services for individuals and entire communities. Possible causes include:

- Cyberattacks
- Ransomware
- Software failures
- Hardware failures
- Data corruption
- Human error
- Equipment damage
- Natural disasters affecting technology infrastructure

Remember to maintain both physical and digital copies of essential records such as ID, passports, birth certificates, insurance policies, medical information, financial account information and emergency contacts.

Maintain a reasonable amount of emergency cash in small denominations for essential purchases. And be able to refer to a printed contact list ([see Appendix A](#)) if systems are down.

Your digital information should be protected using strong passwords, enabling multi-factor authentication, keeping devices updated, installed software updates promptly and backing up important files regularly.

Refer to [Chapter Nine](#) regarding power outage preparedness.

Community Resilience

Communities recover more quickly when neighbors help one another. Consider sharing verified information, checking on vulnerable residents offering assistance when appropriate and participating in neighborhood preparedness groups. Strong communities improve everyone's safety.

CHAPTER NINETEEN | Infants and Young Children

Children often become anxious during emergencies. Your behavior strongly influences how children respond to emergencies. Help them by:

- Remaining calm.
- Speaking clearly.
- Explaining the situation honestly using age-appropriate language.
- Keeping routines as normal as possible.
- Reading books.
- Playing quiet games.
- Limiting exposure to distressing news coverage.
- Reuniting as quickly as possible after the shaking ends.
- Providing reassurance and honest information.
- Practicing drills

Routine and familiarity reduce anxiety.

Supplies

When building evacuation kits or at shelter in place supplies for infants, be sure to remember:

- Formula
- Diapers
- Baby food
- Bottles
- Medications

Children often require additional emotional support during emergencies. Include age-appropriate emergency discussions so children understand what to expect without becoming frightened.

Keep comfort items available such as:

- Favorite blankets
- Small toys
- Books
- Games

School Procedures

Parents should understand their children's school emergency procedures. Be familiar with:

- School reunification locations.
- Authorized pickup procedures.
- Emergency contact requirements.
- Transportation plans.

Never assume schools will dismiss children immediately after an emergency.

Fire Safety

Teach children:

- The sound of smoke alarms.
- How to recognize exits.
- Never to hide during a fire.
- The family meeting location.
- How to call emergency services.

Children should understand that firefighters wearing protective gear may look unfamiliar but are there to help.

Floods

Children may not recognize flood dangers. Teach them to never play in flood waters and to stay away from drainage ditches and storm drains. Be sure to keep children close during evacuations.

Cold Weather

Children lose body heat more quickly than adults. Protect them by dressing them in multiple layers, keeping clothing dry, limiting outdoor exposure and watching for signs of frostbite. Teach children never to play on frozen ponds or lakes unless authorities have declared them safe.

Extreme Heat

Children are especially vulnerable because they produce more body heat during activity, depend on adults for hydration and may not recognize early symptoms of heat illness. Never leave children unattended in a parked vehicle. Ensure children:

- Drink water frequently.
- Take breaks.
- Wear appropriate clothing.
- Avoid prolonged outdoor play during peak heat.

Poor Air Quality Situations

Children breathe more rapidly than adults and may be more affected by smoke. Reduce exposure by:

- Keeping children indoors when air quality is poor.
- Limiting outdoor play.
- Monitoring for coughing or breathing difficulty.
- Following healthcare provider recommendations for children with asthma or other respiratory conditions.

Technology Outages

Children accustomed to constant connectivity may become anxious during prolonged outages. Prepare by keeping books, board games, playing cards, art supplies and outdoor recreation equipment. Family activities strengthen resilience and reduce stress.

CHAPTER TWENTY | Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities

Older family members may require extra supplies such as prescription medications, medical equipment, mobility aids, hearing aids, extra lighting, and backup power for medical devices. Develop evacuation plans that account for mobility limitations.

Fire Safety

Older adults may require additional planning. Consider bedrooms on lower floors when possible. Keep mobility aids nearby, keep flashlights and medical alert devices within reach. Practice evacuation procedures regularly.

Sheltering in Place

Older adults may require additional assistance while sheltering. Check on them regularly throughout the emergency. Ensure they have:

- Prescription medications
- Mobility aids
- Hearing aids
- Eyeglasses
- Water
- Comfortable seating
- Blankets
- Supplies for service animals

Evacuations

Older adults may require additional planning. Allow extra time for loading vehicles and traveling. Consider if you have accessible transportation and if service animals will be involved. Ensure access to:

- Medications
- Medical records
- Mobility aids (wheelchairs, walkers, etc.)
- Oxygen Supplies (with battery backups)
- Hearing aids
- Eyeglasses
- Extra clothing
- Blankets

Cold Weather

Older adults are more vulnerable to cold-related illness. Check on family members and neighbors regularly during severe weather. Community support saves lives during winter emergencies. Ensure they have:

- Reliable heat
- Adequate medications
- Food
- Water
- Backup lighting
- Emergency contacts

Older adults may experience reduced ability to regulate body temperature. Risk increases with chronic medical conditions, certain medications, limited mobility, and living alone. Check on older family members and neighbors daily during prolonged heat events. Ensure they have working cooling equipment, drinking water, necessary medications, emergency contact information.

Extreme Heat

Older adults are more susceptible to heat and smoke. Ensure they have adequate medications, clean indoor air when possible, drinking water, working cooling equipment, transportation if evacuation becomes necessary. Check on neighbors who may need assistance.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE | Pets

Pets depend entirely on their owners during emergencies. Prepare supplies including:

- Food
- Water
- Medications
- Leashes
- Carriers
- Vaccination records
- Identification tags
- Waste bags

Never assume emergency shelters will accept pets. Know your options before disaster strikes.

Research pet-friendly hotels and boarding facilities before an emergency occurs.

Never leave pets behind unless instructed to do so by emergency responders because conditions make rescue impossible.

Pets require clean drinking water just as people do. Large dogs, livestock, and multiple animals can substantially increase household water requirements.

Remember that pets require their own food reserves. Store at least two weeks of pet food, manual can opener if using canned food, treats, feeding bowls, and special dietary foods if required. Rotate pet food just as you would human food.

Thunderstorms

Many pets become frightened during storms. Help reduce stress by bringing pets indoors, providing a quiet room, keeping identification tags attached, ensuring access to water, and avoiding leaving animals tied outdoors. Remain calm, as pets often respond to your behavior.

Flooding

Bring pets indoors early. Never leave pets behind during an evacuation unless directed otherwise by emergency responders.

Cold Weather

Provide pets with warm shelter, unfrozen drinking water, adequate food and dry bedding. Limit outdoor time during extreme cold, particularly for short-haired or elderly animals. After walks, wipe paws to remove ice, salt, and chemical deicers.

Extreme Heat

Never leave pets inside parked vehicles. Even with partially open windows, temperatures inside vehicles can become fatal within minutes. Protect pets by:

- Providing constant access to fresh water.
- Keeping them indoors during extreme heat whenever practical.
- Walking dogs during cooler morning or evening hours.
- Providing shaded outdoor areas if pets must be outside.

APPENDIX A | Emergency Contact List

You should keep an emergency contact list where all family members can access it. In an emergency,, numbers committed to memory can often be forgotten. This list will also help child care givers or others access to possibly needed numbers.

Make sure all family members know where to find the list and be sure to update it as needed. It is good to keep it in more than one locations. Suggested locations include the side of the refrigerator, inside a kitchen cabinet door, and in a bulletin board in a home office.

It is suggested that a copy also be placed it each family member's go-bag.

Remember that text messages often succeed when voice calls fail because they require less network capacity. If safe to do so:

- Send brief updates.
- Include your location.
- State whether you need assistance.

Example: "I'm safe. At school. Waiting for pickup."

Complete the numbers in the attached "blank" sheet using the sample sheet as a guideline for what to include.

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST:

Emergency	911
Local Police	
Local Fire Department	
Local Hospital	
Traffic and Transportation	511
Community, Human Services & Emergency Management	211
Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	988
Poison Control	800-222-1222
Utility (Gas)	
Utility (Electric)	
Town Municipal Office	

SAMPLE EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST:

Emergency	911
Local Police	
Local Fire Department	
Local Hospital	
Traffic and Transportation	511
Community, Human Services & Emergency Management	211
Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	988
Poison Control	800-222-1222
Utility (Gas)	
Utility (Electric)	
Town Municipal Office	

Mom - mobile	
Mom - work	
Dad - mobile	
Dad - work	
Grandma A - mobile	
Grandpa A - mobile	
Grandma and Grandpa A - home	
Grandma B - mobile	
Grandpa B - mobile	
Grandma and Grandpa B - home	
Sibling A - mobile	
Sibling B - mobile	
Sibling C - mobile	

Elementary School	
Middle School	
High School	

Dr. A	
Dr. B	
Dr. C	
Veterinarian	
Pet Smart Tag Provider	
Pet Smart Tag ID Number	

Auto Insurance Company	
Auto Insurance Policy Number	
Homeowner's Insurance Company	
Homeowner's Insurance Policy Number	

APPENDIX B | Medical Information Sheet

Complete a section for each family member. If your pet has medical conditions or takes medication on a regular basis, you may want to complete a section for them as well. Keep completed forms in a central location at home, in your emergency kit, and in each family member's go bag. Be sure to maintain secure digital backups.

SKIP TO NEXT PAGE FOR PRINTABLE INFORMATION SHEETS

NAME:		
DATE OF BIRTH:		
BLOOD TYPE:		
PHARMACY PHONE #:		
MEDICAL INSURANCE PHONE #:		
MEDICAL INSURANCE POLICY #:		
ALLERGIES	CHRONIC CONDITIONS	DOCTOR/PHONE #
CURRENT MEDICATION	DOSAGE INSTRUCTIONS	STORAGE INSTRUCTIONS

NAME:		
DATE OF BIRTH:		
BLOOD TYPE:		
PHARMACY PHONE #:		
MEDICAL INSURANCE PHONE #:		
MEDICAL INSURANCE POLICY #:		
ALLERGIES	CHRONIC CONDITIONS	DOCTOR/PHONE #
CURRENT MEDICATION	DOSAGE INSTRUCTIONS	STORAGE INSTRUCTIONS

APPENDIX C | Evacuation Procedures

Your evacuation plan should be reviewed regularly with your family. As well as identifying evacuation routes from each room in your home (in case of fire), you should have an overreaching plan that addresses small and large scale emergencies.

You may want to keep the checklist in a central location at home, in your emergency kit, and in each family member's go bag.

Your evacuation plan should answer five essential questions:

1. **Where will we go?**
2. **How will we get there?**
3. **What will we take?**
4. **Who is responsible for each task?**
5. **How will we communicate if separated?**

Where will we go?

Choose multiple destinations and identify at least three options.

- Family or Friends - staying with trusted friends or relatives may provide the most comfortable solution. Choose someone who lives outside your immediate hazard area.
- Hotels – research hotels outside likely evacuation zones and keep a list of their phone numbers, addresses and pet policies. Reservations may become difficult during large-scale disasters, so leaving early increases your chances of finding accommodations.
- Public Shelters – emergency shelters provide temporary housing. Learn their locations, understand registration policies, determine if pets are accepted and what supplies you should bring.

How will we get there?

Always identify more than one route away from your home as roads may become blocked. Keep both printed maps and digital navigation available.

Prepare your vehicle by maintaining half a tank of fuel during disaster seasons, making sure windshield wipers are working and that you have appropriate auto supplies such as jumper cables, tire repair equipment, a spare tire and a flashlight.

What will we take?

Attempting to pack everything usually wastes valuable time. Focus on essentials:

- Go Bags
- Prescription medications
- Important documents
- Wallet and identification
- Cell phones and chargers
- Water
- Food
- Clothing
- First aid kit
- Glasses
- Hearing aids
- Medical equipment
- Pet supplies

If additional time is available, consider bringing sentimental items that cannot be replaced.

Before you leave, lock all windows and doors, secure outdoor items, unplug unnecessary electronics, turn off propane tanks and adjust thermostats.

EVACUATION SHEET:

If neighborhood is safe, meet here:		
If neighborhood is not safe, meet here:		
TAKE WITH YOU ONLY WHAT IS SAFE TO GRAB		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Go Bag	Go Bag	All of the above + Sentimental Items
	Prescription Medications	
	Important Documents	
	Wallet and ID	
	Cell Phones and Chargers	
	Water	
	Food	
	Clothing	
	First Aid Kit	
	Glasses	
	Hearing Aids and Charger/Batteries	
	Medical Equipment	
	Pet Supplies	

Refer to emergency contact list and medical information sheet inside Go Bag for important information.