

The Daily Parent

A NEWSLETTER FOR WORKING PARENTS

ISSUE NO. 42

BEFORE THE UNTHINKABLE HAPPENS: Preparing Your Family for Disasters

No one wants to think the worst or have to plan for the “WHAT IFs” of life. “What if there were a tornado, what would I do? “What if my town has to be evacuated? Is my family prepared?” Unfortunately, these are questions we all must ask ourselves to be prepared for the facts of life as we now know them.

There are three types of disasters: (1) weather-related disasters, (2) acts of terrorism, or (3) technological hazards. Every region of the country has a history of potential weather-related problems. They could be floods, hurricanes, wild fires, tornadoes, or some act of Mother Nature that has caused great damage. Other types of disasters than we could hardly imagine just a few years ago, such as chemical spills and terrorist attacks, are now real threats as well.

You should become aware of all the possible types of emergency situations that can result under each of these disaster categories so that you can be as informed as possible. All of these disaster types are scary. However, being prepared as much as possible ahead of time can help.

Safety is a top concern. As the old saying goes, “hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.” This is what disaster preparedness is all about. It’s time to



think about and prepare for the *what*, *how*, and *where* of what you and your family will need should any disaster take place.

Here are the essentials of what your plan will need to have and how to get started.

Making a Plan

You will need to develop a family emergency/disaster plan. Involve all of your family members (who are able) and other persons directly involved in your plan. In your plan, you will need to cover the following issues:

Questions to Ask Yourself and Answer for Your Plan

- What disasters or emergencies are most likely?
- Which agencies are responsible for your local disaster or emergency plans?
- Who will you need to call; do you have those numbers?
- What are your escape routes?
- If separated, where will you meet?
- Do you have your and your family’s vital information and records together?
- Does everyone in your family know what to do?
- What supplies do you need? Do you have a supply kit ready?

Carrying Out the Plan

- Develop a checklist
- Make the supply kit
- Prepare an emergency phone list
- Learn how to turn off home utilities if needed
- Practice drills or meetings


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Question to Consider	What It Involves	Actions to Take	Also...
<p>Which agencies are responsible for my local disaster or emergency plans?</p>	<p>Locate your state and local emergency management agency and get important phone numbers to call for emergency situations (search online, find out from your state homeland security office).</p>	<p>Get information and resources on their web-site. Learn what your particular state's plan is for disasters and evacuation.</p>	
<p>What disasters or emergencies are "most likely" in my area?</p>	<p>Find out if your area is prone to: floods, earthquakes, electrical black-outs, tornadoes, wild fires, extreme heat, blizzards. (Each of these situations will require different supplies, and differing plans to respond).</p>	<p>Contact your state or local emergency management office or contact the American Red Cross to find out which natural disasters are likely for your area and how to prepare and respond to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get information and be prepared for home fire safety and procedures. • Get information and prepare for other disasters as well: terrorist attacks, technological or other hazards.
<p>Who will I need to call, do I have those numbers?</p> 	<p>Get numbers of emergency response agencies and other important numbers and contact information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Besides 911, locate other emergency response numbers. • Make a list of your personal emergency contacts locally and in other states you can call. • List numbers of your children's schools or child care providers. • Make sure you and your family members have these numbers with them at all times. • Post emergency numbers near all phones in your home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your contacts also have a way to contact you – a cell phone is recommended as well in case ground phone lines are down. • Find out your school and child care provider's emergency/disaster plan.
<p>What are my escape routes?</p>	<p>Find ways to get out of your home if needed</p>	<p>Determine at least two ways to get out of your home. Try to have at least two ways to exit for each level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a map of your home with escape routes. • Do practice drills with your family.

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Question to Consider	What It Involves	Actions to Take	Also...
<p>Do I have my family's vital information and records together?</p>	<p>Have copies of your family's medical needs, health insurance, and other important records in one place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make copies – place in safety deposit or lock box. • For vital medical information – make sure everyone has copy of their medical needs or other special needs with them or with your contacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a medical bracelet or other convenient way to store information.
<p>If separated, where will we meet or contact one another?</p>	<p>Have a place outside to meet in case you need to evacuate your home or in case you are not together when a disaster occurs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In case of fire, discuss where you and family members will meet outside of home (a nearby tree, neighbor's home, etc.). • If separated during a disaster, have agreed upon place where you will be able to talk to each other. 	<p>You will need to involve other people – family, friends, neighbors in the plan as well. Everyone needs to know the same information.</p>
<p>Does everyone in my family know what to do?</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know what to do in case of different emergency situations and how each one calls for different actions. • Know how to shut off house utilities if there is time. • Know where your fuse box and the other main lines are in your home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the procedures for how to respond to different situations: fire, floods, hurricanes, and so on. • Do practice drills (once a month for fire) and every six months for others. Make sure you involve children age 5 and older.) • Learn when to use fire extinguisher and when not to, and how to operate one. • Keep wrench and flashlights near utilities. 	<p>Keep batteries around for flashlights and other battery-operated supplies, such as a radio.</p>
<p>What supplies do we need?, Is there a supply kit ready?</p>	<p>Use the recommended basic disaster supply list.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put together a supply kit. • Keep it fully supplied, add new batteries every six months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a cell phone or a few cell phones for you and your family to use. • Make sure your home has enough smoke alarms and they are in working order. • Make sure you have an operable fire extinguisher.

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Questions to Ask and Answer for Your Plan

The most common emergencies (and potential disasters) are those that can happen in your home, such as a fire or gas leak. Second are the weather emergencies, such as floods or tornadoes that are typical of the area in which you live. You most certainly want to be prepared for a fire or other emergency in the home by taking precautions to lower your risk. Your family must also know what to do in case anything happens.

Each state has an emergency management department or agency that operates under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. You can find your state's agency by doing an internet search – "Google" it [search for "emergency management _____" (fill in the name of your state)]. You can also go to www.dhs.gov to find your state's Homeland Security contacts. There may be other local agencies that handle emergency management within your

state as well. Your state and local emergency management offices are great resources for you to find out your state's emergency plan. They should have written materials and other information to help you practice safety measures and prepare for any emergencies.

With the help of your family, friends and other essential people in your lives, make your disaster plan.

Talking with Your Children and Family

It is important that you talk with your older children about being prepared for emergencies. Do so without alarming them. But the more you talk about it in a calm manner, and do practice drills, the more natural it will seem. If an emergency does come up, your children won't be as scared and will know what to do.

With smaller children, just make sure you take into

The Basic Supply Kit

Your kit can be very basic or it can take into consideration all the possible weather-emergencies you may face depending on where you live. For example, if you live in an area where there may be frequent power outages during the summer, you may want to make sure you have food to eat that doesn't require refrigeration or heating. *The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends that you include the following in any basic disaster kit.*

- Three days of non-perishable food

- Paper plates and utensils

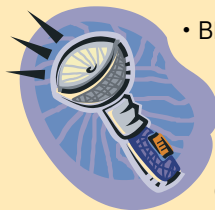
- Can opener

- Three day supply of water – a gallon of water for every person in your family

- Battery-powered radio or television (with batteries)

- A supply of extra batteries for all battery-powered supplies

- Flashlights and batteries



- Blankets or sleeping bags

- First aid kit

- Sanitation/hygiene items – moist towelettes, hand sanitizer, toilet paper

- Whistle

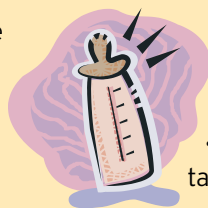
- Copies of your important



- records, necessary information – identification, passports, credit cards, wills, birth certificates, social security

- cards, deeds, insurance policies, medical records, bank records, and so on

- Cash money (in addition to credit cards, etc.)



- Medications, eye glasses

- For infants – formula, diapers, bottles

- Matches, waterproof container

- Extra set of car keys

- Change of clothing for all family members – think about the climate you live in and what types of clothing you'll need

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IT'S ESSENTIAL TO INCLUDE YOUR CHILD CARE PROGRAM AS PART OF YOUR FAMILY'S DISASTER PLAN.

account how you will get them out of the home or how you will make sure you will take care of them while doing the other things in your disaster plan.

Practice Drills/Roles with Your Children

Practice drills are a good idea, especially for fire safety and learning how to get of your home quickly and safely. It is recommended that you have home fire drills once a month. Teach your children how to unlock and get through doors if needed. Teach them fire safety rules, such as crawling on hands and knees when there is smoke and the stop-drop-and roll techniques. They should also know how to use the phone for emergencies.

Talking with Your Child Care Program

It's essential to include your child care program as part of your family's disaster plan. You will need to consider and plan what steps you or other adults will take if your child is in child care during a disaster. Before you can do this, you will need to know your child care program's disaster plan.



Talk with your child care program. Ask questions. If you do not know what kinds of questions to ask your child care program, there is a brochure developed just for parents on the types of questions you should ask your child care programs on disaster preparedness. Go to www.naccrra.org/parent/coping/disaster.php to read and download this brochure. Three main questions are: (1) Do you have an emergency preparedness plan? (2) Can the staff safely evacuate the children to a safe, predetermined location? and (3) How will you be notified by the child care program if a disaster occurs while your child is in care?

Your child care program's plan should answer these questions as well as give you other critical details. Make sure you understand their plan. Ensure that they have information on your child's vital information such as health needs or other special needs, and that you both have current, necessary contact information. Let them know what your family disaster plan is as well. If your program needs assistance with their disaster plan, offer to help if you are able.

Thinking about disasters is not pleasant. But it is necessary. Keeping your children and family as safe as possible requires planning. There is plenty of emergency preparedness information available. Every state has an emergency management office as part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Many organizations provide excellent and in-depth resources for families on how to prepare for disasters.

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For More Information

- **FEMA**, www.fema.gov, site has resources to work with children in preparing for disasters, as well as a guide (*Are You Ready?*) on the latest disaster preparedness information for families and communities. Find your state office or emergency management agency as well.
- **Department Homeland Security**, www.ready.gov, has a *Ready* Campaign designed to prepare Americans for and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks. From putting together a supply kit, to using a checklist, and details on different types of emergencies. You can look at each state for their contact information at the community level.
- **DisasterHelp**, www.disasterhelp.gov, is a federal interagency initiative that brings together all the federal agencies that can help citizens before and after disasters, to streamline assistance. Website has useful information and up to the minute alerts and status of disaster/risks through the country.

- **American Academy of Pediatrics**, www.aap.org/parents.html. Dedicated to the health of all children, AAP's parenting corner has three resources for parents on disaster preparation.
- **National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA)**, www.naccrra.org/parent/coping/disaster.php. As part of their disaster preparedness initiative, NACCRRA has many parent resources, including: a brochure that gives you questions to ask your child care program about their emergency plan and how to help children after disasters.

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