

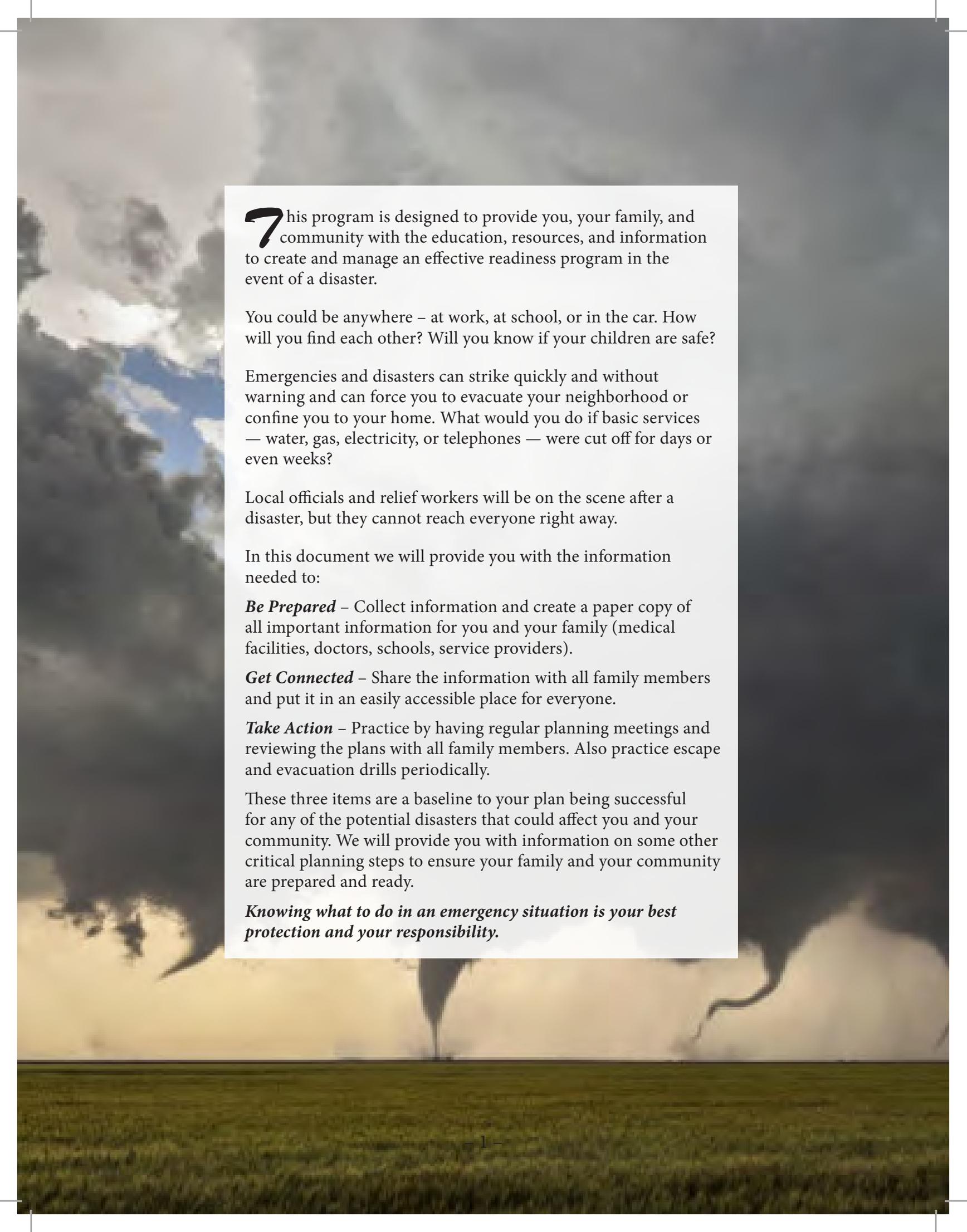
HOW IMPORTANT IS A **COMMUNITY EMR PROGRAM?**

(EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT READINESS)

DISASTER PLANNING GUIDE

*We make sure
Our Communities
are Ready!*





This program is designed to provide you, your family, and community with the education, resources, and information to create and manage an effective readiness program in the event of a disaster.

You could be anywhere – at work, at school, or in the car. How will you find each other? Will you know if your children are safe?

Emergencies and disasters can strike quickly and without warning and can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services — water, gas, electricity, or telephones — were cut off for days or even weeks?

Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away.

In this document we will provide you with the information needed to:

Be Prepared – Collect information and create a paper copy of all important information for you and your family (medical facilities, doctors, schools, service providers).

Get Connected – Share the information with all family members and put it in an easily accessible place for everyone.

Take Action – Practice by having regular planning meetings and reviewing the plans with all family members. Also practice escape and evacuation drills periodically.

These three items are a baseline to your plan being successful for any of the potential disasters that could affect you and your community. We will provide you with information on some other critical planning steps to ensure your family and your community are prepared and ready.

Knowing what to do in an emergency situation is your best protection and your responsibility.

Overview

GET INFORMED

- ▶ Prepare Your Family

MAKE A PLAN

ACTION CHECKLIST

- ▶ Things to Do Before a Disaster

ASSEMBLE A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT

FOOD AND WATER IN AN EMERGENCY

- ▶ If The Electricity Goes Off
- ▶ How To Cook If The Power Goes Out
- ▶ Prepare And Store An Emergency Supply Of Water
- ▶ Hidden Water Sources In Your Home
- ▶ Emergency Outdoor Water Sources
- ▶ Ways To Treat Water

SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES DISASTER PREPARATION: BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER

- ▶ Create A Personal Support Network

HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH DISASTER

- ▶ Children's Reaction To Disaster
- ▶ What Parents and Caregivers Can Do
- ▶ Monitor And Limit Your Family's Exposure To The Media

MAINTAINING YOUR DISASTER PLAN AND KIT

RESOURCES TO HELP WITH PLANNING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. GET INFORMED

Prepare Your Family.....	1
Community Hazards.....	1
Community Disaster Plans	1
Community Warning Systems	2

2. MAKE A PLAN

Meet with Your Family Members	2
Choose an “Out of Town” Contact	3
Decide Where to Meet	3
Complete a Family Communication Plan	3
Escape Routes and Safe Locations	3
Planning for Special Needs and Disabilities	4
Plan for Your Pets.....	5
Prepare for Different Hazards	5

3. ACTION CHECKLIST

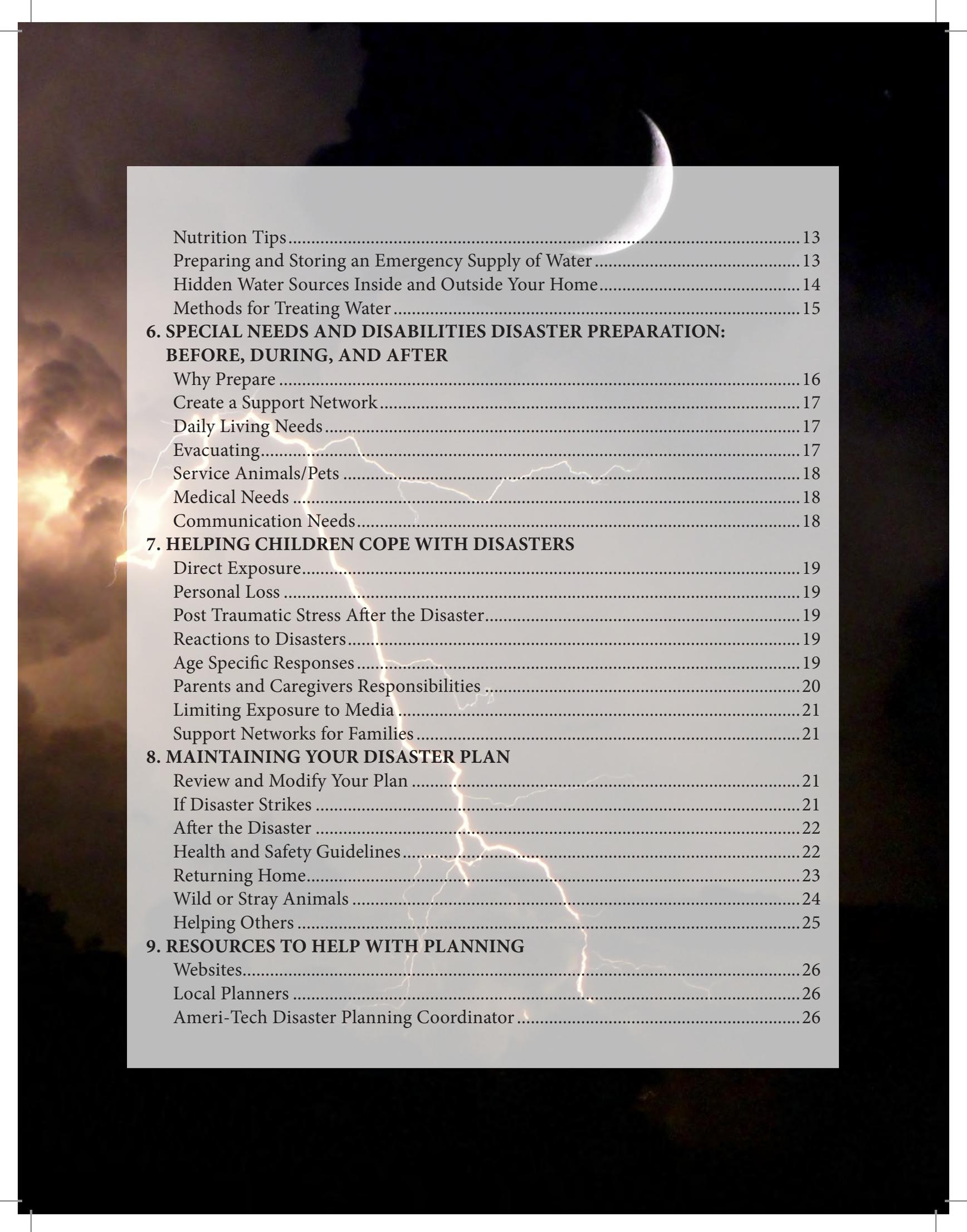
Before, During, and After a Disaster	5
Utilities	6
Fire Extinguishers	7
Smoke Alarms.....	7
Vital Records and Documents Preparedness	7
First Aid Training (Include Automatic External Defibrillator AED)	8
Inventory Home Possessions (Photos, Video, Itemized).....	8
Reduce Home Hazards	8

4. ASSEMBLE A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT

Basic Supplies for Daily Needs.....	9
Additional Emergency Supplies	9
Maintaining Your Supplies Kit.....	10
Kit Storage Location.....	10

5. FOOD AND WATER IN AN EMERGENCY

Preparing an Emergency Food Supply	11
Storage Tips.....	11
Shelf Life for Foods in Storage	12
Food Preparation.....	12
Minimal Food Supplies.....	13



Nutrition Tips.....	13
Preparing and Storing an Emergency Supply of Water.....	13
Hidden Water Sources Inside and Outside Your Home.....	14
Methods for Treating Water.....	15
6. SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES DISASTER PREPARATION: BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER	
Why Prepare.....	16
Create a Support Network.....	17
Daily Living Needs.....	17
Evacuating.....	17
Service Animals/Pets.....	18
Medical Needs.....	18
Communication Needs.....	18
7. HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH DISASTERS	
Direct Exposure.....	19
Personal Loss.....	19
Post Traumatic Stress After the Disaster.....	19
Reactions to Disasters.....	19
Age Specific Responses.....	19
Parents and Caregivers Responsibilities.....	20
Limiting Exposure to Media.....	21
Support Networks for Families.....	21
8. MAINTAINING YOUR DISASTER PLAN	
Review and Modify Your Plan.....	21
If Disaster Strikes.....	21
After the Disaster.....	22
Health and Safety Guidelines.....	22
Returning Home.....	23
Wild or Stray Animals.....	24
Helping Others.....	25
9. RESOURCES TO HELP WITH PLANNING	
Websites.....	26
Local Planners.....	26
Ameri-Tech Disaster Planning Coordinator.....	26

1. Get Informed

Prepare Your Family

Preparing for a disaster helps everyone in the family accept the fact that disasters do happen, and that they can do something about it. Families should work together to identify and collect the resources needed to meet basic needs during and after a disaster. It is best to prepare using an all-hazards approach to the many threats that may impact you and your community – both natural and man made – when considering your disaster plan. When people feel prepared for a disaster, they are better able to cope with the situation.



Community Hazards

Think about the specific hazards that threaten your community (e.g. hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes) and about your risk from those hazards. Community hazards, preparedness planning, and risk mitigation need to be developed as part of this process. Potential threats or hazards are ones that can cause injury, property damage, and community disruption. Also, you need to consider the potential environmental impact to your community.

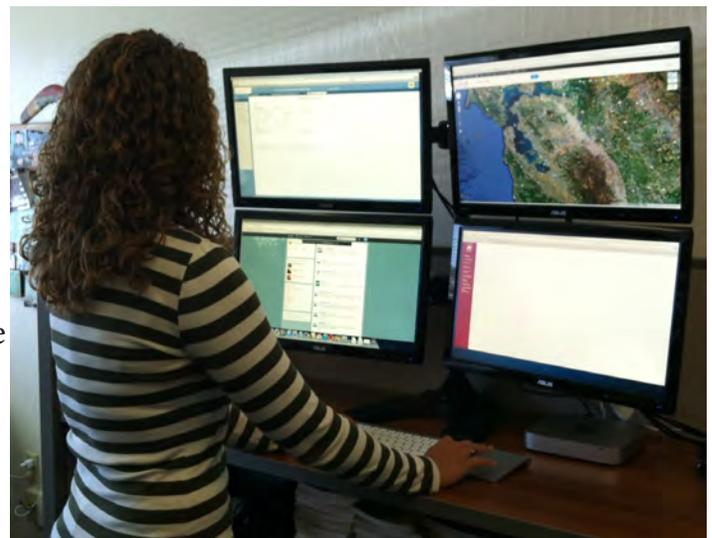
Community Disaster Plans

Community disaster plans are developed to help set guidelines for your community in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. Our First Responders and emergency managers do a great job of ensuring our safety, but they cannot do this alone. The community approach to planning is essential to the successful completion of all the challenges that are faced in times of emergency.

Learn about community response plans, evacuation plans, and designated emergency shelters.

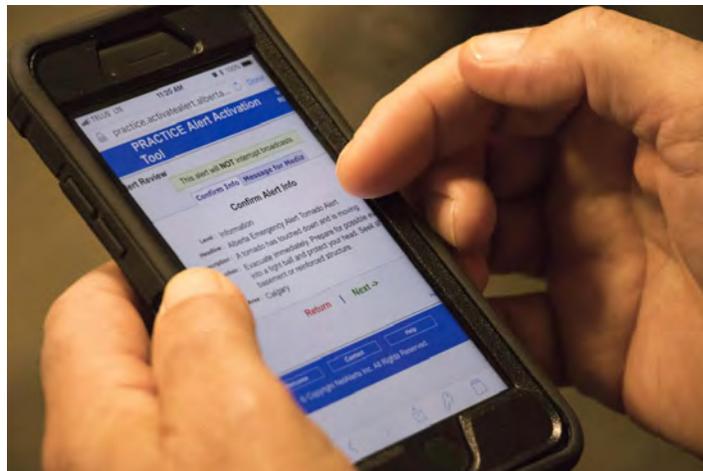
Ask about the emergency plans and procedures that exist in places you and your family spend time such as places of employment, schools, and child care centers. If you do not drive or own a vehicle, find out in advance what your community's plans are for evacuating those without private transportation.

Identify local partners in the community – those partners could be your local fire department, American Red Cross, or your local Emergency Management office. You can also check to see if there is a local CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) near your community that could assist during a disaster.



Community Warning Systems

In Florida, Public Safety Officials have a timely and reliable warning system to alert you and your community in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. The different types of warning systems are Wireless Emergency Alerts, the Emergency Alert System, and NOAA weather radio. These different systems are described below to assist with the proper notification needed for your community.



▶ *Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)*

These are made available through the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), and can quickly and effectively alert and warn the public about serious emergencies. WEA's can be sent out via local, state, or federal warning systems, and may include the National Weather Service, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the President of the United States. The 3 categories are *Imminent*, *AMBER Alert*, and *Presidential*. They are in the form of text messages and are received through your cellular provider. This service is not subject to any charges from your service provider.

▶ *Emergency Alert System*

This is a national public working system that is normally transmitted over your cable TV or local television stations. This system can be used locally to transmit important information at times when other alert systems are not immediately available.

▶ *NOAA Weather Radio*

This is a nationwide broadcasting service that brings you continuous coverage of potentially hazardous weather threats to your community. It can also broadcast non-weather-related emergencies that are national security related.

More information is available on this website: www.ready.gov/alerts

2. Make a Plan

Meet with Your Family Members

Review the information you have gathered about community hazards and plans. Explain the dangers to family members and work with them as a team to be prepared. Be sure to include any caregivers that may be directly involved with your family in your meeting and planning efforts to ensure they are prepared and have clear instructions that pertain to your family.



Choose an “Out-of-Town” Contact

Ask an out-of-town friend or relative to be your emergency contact. Following any disaster, family members should contact this person and tell them where they are located (shelter, home, or other location). All family members should have the contact person’s phone number. After a disaster, it is often easier to make out-of-town phone calls rather than local calls due to the potential damage to local cellular equipment and towers.

Decide Where to Meet

In the event of an emergency, you may become separated from family members. You will need to designate a place outside your residence in the event of a sudden emergency such as a fire. Choose a location close to your house that is safe – you may need to meet somewhere in your neighborhood in the event you cannot return home. Remember to practice this meeting plan regularly.



Complete a Family Communication Plan

Your plan should include contact information for family members, work, and school. It should also include information for your out-of-town contact, meeting locations, and emergency services. A sample form for recording this information can be found at [fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/34330](https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/34330). Teach your children how to call the emergency phone numbers and when it is appropriate to do so. Be sure each family member has a copy of your communication plan and post it near your telephone, refrigerator, or desk for use in an emergency.

Escape Routes and Safe Locations

Fire can spread rapidly through your home, leaving you as little as one or two minutes to escape safely once the smoke alarm sounds. Keeping the bedroom door closed may slow the spread of smoke, heat, and fire. You need to install and maintain smoke alarms in all hallways and sleeping rooms of every floor.

Make a plan with every family member in your household. Use a blank sheet of paper to draw floor plans of your home. Show the location of doors, windows, stairways, large furniture, your disaster supplies kit, fire extinguisher, smoke alarms, collapsible ladders, first-aid kits, and utility shut-off points. Show important points outside such as garages, patios, stairways, elevators, driveways, and porches. Indicate at least two escape routes from each room, and mark a place outside of the home where household members should meet in case of a fire.



Walk through your home and inspect all exits and escape routes. If members of your family are elderly or infants make sure to assign a responsible family member to assist them with the evacuation and all drills. If you have guests staying overnight make sure they are familiar with your safety plan. Be prepared for a real fire when the smoke alarm sounds and “get out immediately.” If you live in a high rise, your best option might be to shelter in place. When you do have to evacuate you will need to stay out and not re-enter until the residence has been deemed safe by First Responders. Practice these drills at least biannually and make them as realistic as possible. Always choose the safest route when exiting the home. Should you encounter smoke you will need to stay low to the ground, as smoke rises. In the event you have to shelter in place, close all doors and windows between you and the fire. Use duct tape or towels to seal all openings around doors, windows, and air vents to keep smoke from penetrating. Wave a flashlight or a light-colored piece of clothing at the window to let the firefighters know where you are located.



Planning for Special Needs and Disabilities

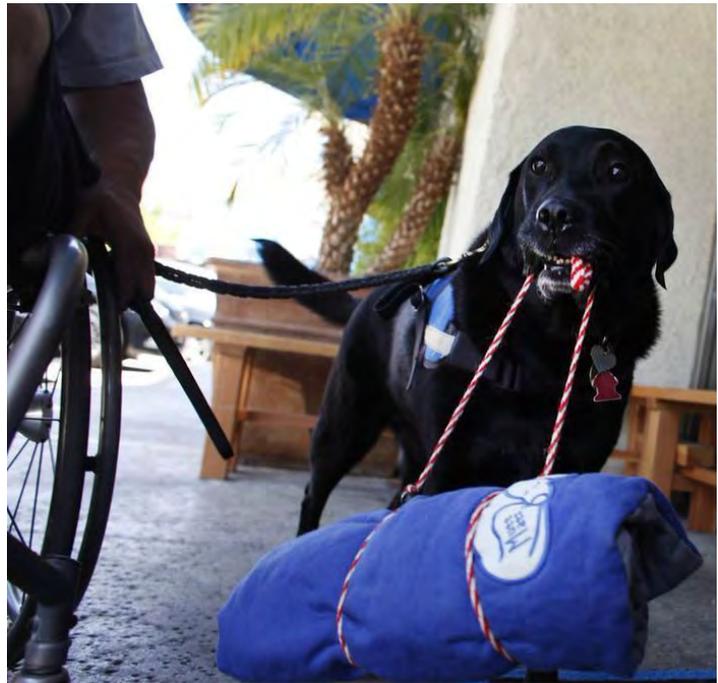
For people with disabilities and special needs, emergencies and disasters present their own set of challenges. The emergency responders will be on the scene quickly after the disaster but may not be able to help you right away. You are in the best position right now before the disaster strikes to plan how you will manage the event. You know your own capabilities and needs for your care, and with proper preparation, you can cope with the disaster by completing your own personal assessment.

Your assessment should include putting together a support network of family or friends (neighbors) to assist with your needs. Do not depend on just one person; your network should include a minimum of three people from places where you regularly spend a lot of time.



Plan for Your Pets

It is vital to know what you and your pets will require during a disaster before it occurs. If you leave your pet behind when evacuating they may get lost, injured, or worse. Never leave a pet chained outdoors during a disaster. You can create a buddy system in the event you are not at home – ask a trusted neighbor to check on your pet. There are now shelters in most counties that are pet-friendly. You can check with your local Emergency Management Department to confirm they have a pet-friendly shelter and what their specific requirements are. You may also find pet-friendly hotels on your evacuation route. There may also be local veterinarians that offer emergency shelters during a disaster. Have all of this information ready in your evacuation response kit. Make sure you have your pet's current medical records available for the shelter or wherever you are evacuating to ensure proper acceptance. It is also a good idea to have all your pets micro-chipped in the event you become separated.



Prepare for Different Hazards.

You should have an action plan ready to protect you and your family from all the types of hazards that could impact your community. Some of these of hazards are listed below and are addressed in other areas of this document. There is also more information available at www.ready.gov.

- ▶ Hurricanes
- ▶ Thunderstorms and Lightning
- ▶ Severe Weather
- ▶ Extreme Heat
- ▶ Storm Surge
- ▶ Power Outages
- ▶ Flooding
- ▶ Active Shooter

3. Action Checklist

Before, During, and After a Disaster

Always keep a full tank of gas in your vehicle if an evacuation seems likely. Try and use only one vehicle to evacuate your family to keep road congestion to a minimum. If you do not have transportation, make arrangements with family, friends, or local government. Monitor all radio and television broadcasting to get the latest



information regarding any impending disaster and follow all local instructions. If directed to evacuate, you will need to gather your family members and your disaster response kit and leave early in order to avoid being trapped or delayed. Follow the evacuation route that you have planned out in your response kit. Pay attention to your surroundings and look out for any blocked roads. Avoid shortcuts and stay on the proper evacuation route unless instructed by local authorities. Stay away from downed power lines and be careful of roads that may be flooded. Remember, **“Turn Around Don’t Drown.”** Make sure the out-of-town contacts on your emergency contact list are aware of the evacuation route you are taking to safely get out of the area.

Utilities

Know how and when to turn off water, gas, and electricity at the main switches or valves and share this information with your family and caregivers. Keep any tools you will need near gas and water shut off valves. Turn off the utilities only if you suspect the lines are damaged, you suspect a leak, or if local officials instruct you to do so.



- ▶ **Gas Shut-Off Procedure** – As part of the learning process, do not actually turn off the gas. If the gas is turned off for any reason, only a qualified professional can turn it back on. It might take several weeks for a professional to respond. In the meantime, you will require alternate sources to heat your home, make hot water, and cook.
- ▶ **Power** – Extended power outages may impact the whole community and economy. Power outages may disrupt communications, water, transportation, and affect business operation like grocery stores, gas stations, ATM’s, and other services. Food could spoil if the power is out for an extended period, and any special devices for medical use may be impacted. If you plan to use a generator you will need to follow all manufacturer specifications and make sure you never place the generator in operation inside any residence including the garage. It is best to keep all generators in operation 10 feet from any structure. When refueling any generator you must wait until the motor has cooled below ignition temperature (see manufacturer specifications for proper time frame). For items in the refrigerator or freezer, keep the door opening to a minimum to protect the temperature for any extended period to avoid spoilage.
- ▶ **Water** – If your water has been affected you will need to have a plan for drinking water and a plan for replacement of used water. There are instructions on pages 15 and 16 of this guide that describe a few different methods that can be used to purify water and make it safe to drink. You should plan on having a seven-day supply of drinking water per person, one gallon of drinking water per day per person.

Fire Extinguishers

Your home should be equipped with a working, serviced ABC fire extinguisher. A minimum of a 2A10BC type extinguisher is recommended by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). You should also have the fire extinguisher serviced by a licensed fire extinguisher service company annually to ensure all parts are in good working order.

Smoke Alarms

Smoke Alarms are required in all residential homes, apartments, condominiums, town homes, and mobile homes. One should be installed on every level in hallways and in every sleeping room of the residence. These smoke alarms are normally wired directly to the home electric service with a battery backup. You should test each smoke alarm every month and change the batteries every 6 months. If you have a new-style lithium battery smoke alarm, they have a sealed battery and are normally good for 10 years. Should they start to chirp or fail during your monthly check you will need to replace the entire alarm.



Vital Records and Documents Preparedness

An experience like a disaster event that has the potential to impact you financially can be very stressful for you and your entire family. Having access to your finances, insurance documents, and other important records is vital after a disaster. Take the time now to collect and secure all those important records – it will give you peace of mind when that event does occur and you are prepared for the recovery process. Below are three steps for the preparation of your finances, insurance, and other vital documents:

- ▶ You will need to acquire copies of your essential vital records for you and your entire family. These items include birth and marriage certificates, social security information, driver's licenses, passports, wills, deeds, any financial records, insurance policies, medical records, and immunizations. These items should also be kept in a safe deposit box or weather-proof safe.
- ▶ Consider saving money in an emergency savings account, which could be used in any crisis. Keep small amounts of cash at home in a safe place – it is important to have small bills on hand since ATM's and credit cards may not be working before, during, and after a disaster. You will need cash to purchase necessary items like food, water, fuel, and other essentials.



- ▶ Obtain property (homeowners or renters), health, and life insurance policies if you do not have them already. Review your existing policies for the amounts and extent of all coverages. Remember, homeowner's insurance policies normally do not cover flood insurance, and you may need to purchase a separate policy for that coverage from the National Flood Insurance Program.

First Aid Training

You may want to consider taking an American Red Cross or American Heart Association First Aid class that includes CPR training. Also make sure those courses offer an Automatic External Defibrillator Training (AED).

Inventory Home Possessions

Before the start of hurricane season (June 1st) homeowners and renters should make an inventory of all items in their homes. By having a well documented inventory, you are giving your insurance agent additional tools to complete a very accurate account of your possessions. There are many resources available to help guide you in preparing a



good home inventory and your insurance agent can also assist with this process. Involve the whole family when creating your inventory. It is easier to document and record your possession before the disaster then try to account for the items after suffering a loss. Some methods for documentation are an inventory list or spreadsheet, photos of all the items, or a video recording. You will want to store this information in a safe location, preferably off-site, like a safe deposit box or a weather-proof safe.

Reduce Home Hazards

Ordinary items in your home can create a potential hazard and cause injuries. In order to minimize the danger you can take the following steps to reduce the risk: have a professional repair or replace defective electrical wiring and leaking gas connections or appliances; place large, heavy items on lower shelves and hang pictures and mirrors away from and not over beds; use straps or other types of restraints to secure tall cabinets, bookshelves, appliances, and other items that may pose a risk of falling.

4. Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit

In the event you need to evacuate at a moment's notice and take essentials with you, you probably will not have the opportunity to shop or search for the supplies you and your family will need. Every household should assemble a disaster supplies kit and keep it up to date. You will need to stock your disaster supply kit with basic items for every day survival. Most items are easy to find and readily available at your local store. You may also want to consider any additional needs you may have in order to care for pets, children, and any seniors or family members with special needs.

Basic Supplies for Daily Needs

- ▶ Water – at least one gallon of water per person per day. Plan for at least three days worth of water for drinking and sanitation, but consider having a seven-day supply on hand.
- ▶ Food – you will need a minimum of a three-day supply of non-perishable food, but a seven-day supply is recommended.
- ▶ Battery powered or hand-crank radio. You may also want a NOAA weather alert radio with tone alerting.
- ▶ Flashlights with extra batteries.
- ▶ Whistle or some type of loud alerting device to signal for help.
- ▶ Dust masks to help filter any contamination from the surrounding area.
- ▶ Moist towelettes and garbage bags with plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- ▶ Variety of tools to allow you to turn on or off utilities, or make minor repairs as needed.
- ▶ Manual can opener
- ▶ First aid kit
- ▶ Local paper maps, as cellular data service might be limited or non-existent.
- ▶ Cell phone with chargers and a battery back-up.



Additional Emergency Supplies

You may want to consider having these additional items available in the event a local disaster has been declared in your area. These items can be tailored to your individual needs.

- ▶ Non-prescription medication, i.e.: pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medications, antacids or laxatives.
- ▶ Extra pairs of glasses or contact lenses and supplies.
- ▶ Any additional needs for infants and small children such as infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, rash cream, and baby food.
- ▶ Pet food and additional water for all pets.
- ▶ Cash or traveler checks, as ATM's and bank services might not be readily available.
- ▶ Important documents: copies of insurance policies, identification, and bank account records saved electronically or in a waterproof portable container.

- ▶ **Vehicle** – in the event you become stranded in your vehicle, you'll need an emergency kit in your vehicle with the following items: first aid kit, jumper cables, flares and reflective triangle, tire repair kit, bottled water, and non-perishable food items such as granola bars, auto cell phone charger, additional blankets, paper map, small bag of cat litter or sand to place under tires for better traction, and rain ponchos.



5. Food and Water in an Emergency

Though it is unlikely your food and water supply would be cut off for any extended period of time you may want to consider having and maintaining an additional supply of those resources in preparation for an event that may last up to two weeks or longer. You may not have the ability to go and shop like you would in a normal situation, but you can use the canned goods, dry mixes, and other staples on your cupboard shelves in a sparing manner to preserve their life and meet all your nutritional needs. A couple things you may want to do are practice a first in, first out procedure, and always check the expiration dates of all your food products.

Preparing an Emergency Food Supply

As you stock food, take into account your family's unique needs and tastes. Familiar foods are important; they lift morale and provide a sense of security in times of stress. Try to include foods that your family will enjoy that are also high in calories and nutrition. Foods that require no refrigeration, water, special preparation, or cooking are best. Individuals with special diets and allergies will need particular attention, as will babies, toddlers, and the elderly. Nursing mothers may need liquid formula, in case they are unable to nurse. Canned dietetic foods, juices, and soups may be helpful for people who are ill or elderly. Make sure you have a manual can opener and disposable utensils. Don't forget nonperishable foods for your pets.



Storage Tips

Keep food in a dry, cool, dark spot if possible. Open food boxes and other resealable containers carefully so you can close them tightly after each use. Wrap perishable foods such as cookies and crackers in resealable plastic bags and

place in a sealed container. Empty open packages of sugar, dried fruits, and nuts into a screw top jar or air tight canister to protect them from pests. Always inspect all foods and snacks for signs of spoilage before use. Check all canned goods for damage like swells, dents, or corrosion on the exterior of the cans, and discard any cans that show signs of damage. Make sure to use the foods in your supply kit before their expiration dates and to replace them after use. Remember to rotate your items, moving the newer items to the back of your storage area and older ones to the front.

Shelf Life for Foods in Storage

Use items within six months:

- ▶ Powdered milk – boxed
- ▶ Dried fruits
- ▶ Dry, crisp crackers
- ▶ Boxed Potatoes

Use items within one year or prior to date of expiration as indicated on the label:

- ▶ Canned condensed meat and vegetable soups
- ▶ Canned fruits, fruit juices, and vegetables
- ▶ Ready to eat cereals and uncooked instant cereals
- ▶ Peanut Butter, jelly, hard candy, and canned nuts
- ▶ Vitamins

May be stored indefinitely (in proper containers and conditions):

- ▶ Wheat, vegetable oils, dried corn, baking powder, soybeans, instant coffee, tea, cocoa, salt, non-carbonated beverages, white rice, bullion products, dry pasta, and nitrogen-packed powdered milk.



Food Preparation

In the event of a power outage you can follow these guidelines to prepare food:

- ▶ **First:** Use perishable items from the refrigerator, pantry, or garden.
- ▶ **Second:** Use the food from the freezer. To limit the number of times you open the freezer door, you can post a list of the items in the freezer on the door. A well-stocked freezer will keep the items colder longer (having ice crystals in the center usually means the food is still safe for consumption for at least two days). Check to ensure the seal on your freezer door is in good condition.

- ▶ **Third:** You can now start using your nonperishable foods and other items. When cooking food during an emergency you can use several different methods such as candle warmers, chafing dishes, fondue pots, or a fireplace. You can use a charcoal grill or camp stove, but they are for outdoor use only. Commercially canned foods may be eaten out of the can without warming. If you choose to heat the canned food in their cans you should remove all labels and thoroughly wash and disinfect the can by using a solution of one-part bleach to ten parts water. Always open the can prior to heating/cooking.



Minimal Food Supplies

Healthy people can usually survive on about half of their normal food intake for an extended period of time. The only people that require a steady balance of food intake are children and pregnant women. You will still need to maintain your usual water consumption (one gallon per person per day). If you find that your water supply is getting low you may want to limit your intake of foods that are high in salt since they tend to make you thirstier. You can eat salt free crackers, whole grain cereals, and canned foods with higher liquid content.

Nutrition Tips

During and after any disaster you need to maintain your strength. Eat at least one balanced meal a day and drink enough liquid to enable your body to function properly, a minimum of two quarts or half a gallon per day. You need to monitor your calorie intake to ensure you have enough to do any needed work. Take vitamins or protein supplements to help promote adequate nutritional requirements.

Preparing and Storing an Emergency Supply of Water

Having ample amounts of clean water for both drinking and bathing is one of your top priorities in any emergency situation. At a minimum, a normally active and healthy person will need 2 quarts/half gallon of drinking water each day. If you are a child, nursing mother, have any illness, or live in a hotter climate, you may require more than the minimum of drinking water. You may also need water for food preparation and hygiene purposes so you will need to have additional water on hand each day.

If you are able to safely store large amounts of water, plan on having at least a two-week supply on hand in the event of a disaster. If you are not able to keep that amount stored, try to keep as much as possible for your family's needs.



Never ration drinking water unless instructed to by the authorities. But in the event it becomes necessary, make sure you are still drinking your daily minimum amount and are seeking out more for the following day. You can also minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing your daily activities and staying cool.



Always drink water you know is not contaminated first. If it becomes necessary, water that is cloudy such as from faucets, streams, or ponds can then be utilized after being treated properly. In the event you cannot treat the water properly, but you still need to drink so you don't become dehydrated, you may need to drink the untreated water in small amounts until it can be properly sanitized.

Do not drink carbonated or caffeinated beverages as they can cause dehydration and increase the need to drink more water.

If you purchase commercially bottled water try to store it in a cool, dark area. If you prepare your own water be sure to put the water in a food-grade water storage container. Before filling, thoroughly clean the containers with a solution of one teaspoon of non-scented liquid household chlorine bleach to one quart of water. Water not treated commercially should be replaced every six months.

Hidden Water Sources Inside and Outside Your Home

Safe water sources in your home may include your hot water tank, water pipes, and ice cubes. You should never use water from the toilet flush tanks or bowls, radiators, waterbeds, or swimming pools/spas. To protect the available water sources in your home from outside contamination (any reports you may hear of broken water or sewer lines, or if your local authorities provide information of a possible problem), you will need to isolate your water by shutting off the main valve to your home. Locate the main valve coming into your home and turn it to the closed position. You also want to make sure all your family members know where this valve is located and how to perform this procedure.

When using the water in your plumbing pipes, you need to turn on a faucet at the highest level of the house (a small amount of water may trickle out). You then go to the lowest spot of the house where there is another faucet, turn it on, and obtain the water in the pipes. You can also use the water in your hot water tank, however, be sure you turn off the breaker to the hot water tank prior to draining the tank. You will then close the water line on top of the tank that fills the hot water tank. You can then



open the valve on the bottom of the tank and obtain the needed water for use. Remember to refill your hot water tank prior to restoring power to the heater. If you have a gas water heater and you shut the gas off, you will need to get a professional technician to restore gas service to the water heater.

Outside water sources are available but they will need proper treatment. Some of the outdoor sources that can be available and utilized are:

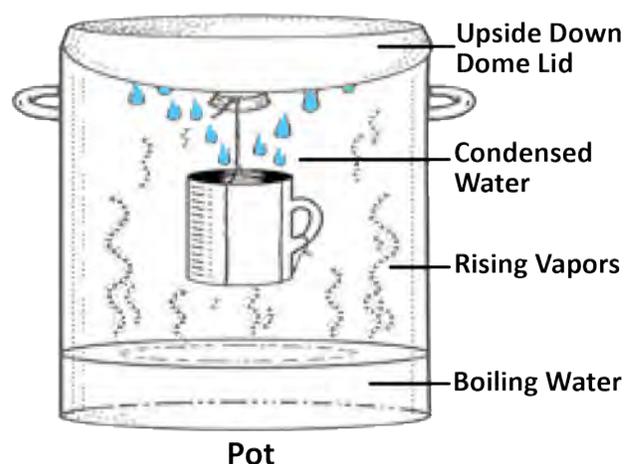
- ▶ Rainwater
- ▶ Streams, rivers, and other moving bodies of water.
- ▶ Ponds and lakes
- ▶ Natural springs
- ▶ Avoid water that contains floating materials and odors, as well as water that is dark in color. Using saltwater is acceptable but only after you distill it first. You should never drink flood water.



Methods for Treating Water

Listed below are some of the ways to properly treat water in the event of having no available fresh water that has been commercially treated. This is after you have already used all of your fresh water and there are no other available resources. If you store enough water prior to the disaster you may not have to use any treatment process from an outside water source.

- ▶ **Boiling** – This is the safest method for treating water. In a large pot or kettle, bring the water to a rolling boil for one full minute, keeping in mind that some water will evaporate. Let the water cool prior to drinking. Boiled water will taste better if you put oxygen back into the water by pouring the water back and forth between two clean containers. This will also improve the taste of stored water.
- ▶ **Chlorination** – Using non-scented household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 to 6.0 percent sodium hypochlorite is the best way to kill microorganisms. Add 16 drops (1/8 teaspoon) of bleach to one gallon of water, stir, and let stand for 30 minutes. The water should have a slight bleach odor. If it doesn't then you need to repeat the dosage and let stand for another 15 minutes. If it still does not have a chlorine smell then you will need to discard and find another source of water to use. Other chemicals, such as iodine or water treatment products sold in camping or surplus stores that do not contain the 5.25 to 6.0 percent sodium hypochlorite as the only active ingredient, should not be used.



- **Distillation** – While boiling and chlorination will kill most microbes in water, distillation will remove microbes (germs) that resist these methods as well as heavy metals, salts, and most other chemicals. Distillation involves boiling water and then collecting only the vapor that condenses. The condensed vapor will not include salt or most other impurities. To distill, fill a pot halfway with water. Tie a cup to the handle on the pot's lid so the cup will hang right-side-up when the lid is upside-down (make sure the cup is not dangling into the water) and boil the water for 20 minutes. The water that drips from the lid into the cup is distilled.

A summary of the different methods of water treatment are listed below:

Methods	Kills Microbes	Removes other contaminants (heavy metals, salt, and most other chemicals)
Boiling	Yes	No
Chlorination	Yes	No
Distillation	Yes	Yes

6. Special Needs and Disabilities Disaster Preparation: Before, During, and After

For the millions of Americans who have physical, medical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities, emergencies such as fires, floods, and acts of terrorism present a real set of challenges. The same challenges also apply to the elderly and other special needs populations. Protecting yourself and your family when disaster strikes requires planning ahead. This section will help you get started. Discuss these ideas with your family, friends, your personal care attendant, or anyone else in your support network and prepare an emergency plan. Post the plan where everyone will see it; keep a copy with you and make sure everyone involved in your plan has a copy.



Why Prepare?

Where will you, your family, your friends, and personal care attendants be when an emergency or disaster strikes? You, and those you care about, could be anywhere – at home, work, school, or in transit. How will you find each other? Will you know your loved ones will be safe? You are in the best position to plan for your own safety, as you know your functional abilities and possible needs during and after an emergency or disaster situation. Make sure you, your family, and your care attendants are prepared in advance for such an event. This will help to ensure the process will be carried out with ease and help everyone involved to be able to cope with the situation.

Create a Support Network

Keep a contact list in a watertight container with your emergency disaster kit. Organize a network that includes your home, school, workplace, volunteer site, and any other places where you spend a lot of time. Members of your network can be roommates, relatives, neighbors, friends, and co-workers. They should be people you trust and are able to check to see if you need assistance. They should know your capabilities and needs, and be able to provide help within minutes. Inform your support network where you keep your emergency supplies; you may want to provide them with a key to your residence.



Daily Living Needs

Some key items that you should plan for when it comes to your personal care are your water service, personal care equipment, special feeding devices, and electronically dependent equipment. Other things you should take into consideration are how you are going to navigate around disaster debris, your transportation options, and any errands you will need taken care of. If you need assistance with evacuation you should have already registered with your local County Emergency Management Department as a “special need required evacuation.” They can assist you prior to the storm when the evacuation is ordered to get you to a shelter that is equipped for special needs requirements. In the event you have to evacuate on your own, you need to make sure you are able to evacuate without any assistance. Make sure you know all of your exits and escape routes, the location of mobility aids that may be necessary, and how you are going to provide care for any service animals or pets.

Evacuating

Be ready to explain to first responders that you need to evacuate and choose the shelter that will meet the needs for you, your family, service animal, caregiver, personal assistant, and all of your assistive devices and supplies you will need. Plan ahead for accessible transportation needs that you may have for the evacuation or getting to a medical facility. You can work with local services like public transportation, or a para-transit service to assist with your needs.



Service Animals/Pets

Are you able to care for your service animals or pets? Providing food, water, shelter, and veterinary needs during and after the disaster? Can you make arrangements for their safe care with a family member or friend? Make sure you have all of their health certificates and licenses up to date. You may be able to choose a shelter that can accommodate you and your pets needs – you can check your local Emergency Management Office for that information.

Medical Needs

If you are dependent on dialysis or other life-sustaining treatment, know your location and the availability of more than one facility. If you use equipment in your home that requires electricity, you can talk to your doctor or health care provider about alternative options to use if you have no power available. Make sure you are wearing your medical alert tags or bracelets at all times.

Communication Needs

If you have a communication disability and use an augmentative communication device or other assistive technology, plan on how you will evacuate with these devices or how you will replace this equipment if lost or destroyed. Keep the model information of all equipment and where the equipment came from (Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, etc.). Make plans to communicate with others in the event your equipment is not working or available, include laminated cards with phrases, pictures, or pictograms. If you use two-way communications you should keep braille/text communication cards handy.

7. Helping Children Cope with Disasters

This section offers parents, caregivers, and other adults suggestions on how to help children cope with the effects of disaster, as well as how to be prepared before a disaster strikes. Children can feel very frightened during a disaster, and afterwards some children will show temporary changes of behavior. For most children these changes will be mild and diminish with time. However, reminders of what happened could cause upsetting feelings to return and behavior changes to emerge again. Watching scenes of the disaster on television can also be distressing for children, especially for younger children.

Younger children may return to bed-wetting, have difficulty sleeping, and not want to be separated from their caregivers. Older children may show more anger than usual, find it harder to concentrate at school, and want to spend more time alone than usual. Some children are more vulnerable, and their reactions can be more severe and last for a longer period of time.



There are many factors that contribute to greater vulnerability, these include:

Direct Exposure

This includes being evacuated, seeing injured or dying people, being injured themselves, and feeling that their own lives are being threatened.

Personal Loss

This includes the death or serious injury of a family member, close friend, or family pet.

Post Traumatic Stress After the Disaster

This includes temporarily living elsewhere, losing contact with their friends and neighbors, losing things that are important to them, parental job loss, and the financial costs of reestablishing their previous living conditions.



Reactions to Disasters

How parents and caregivers react to and cope with a disaster or emergency situation can affect the way their children react. When parents and caregivers or other family members are able to deal with the situation calmly and confidently, they are often the best source of support for their children. One way to help children feel more confident and in control is to involve them in preparing your family disaster plan.

Age Specific Responses

The following are common reactions that children may exhibit following a disaster. While the following descriptions are typical, some children may exhibit none of these behaviors and others may behave in ways not mentioned here.

▶ ***Birth Through 6 Years***

Although infants may not have words to describe their experiences, they can retain memories. They may react by being more irritable, crying more than usual, or wanting to be held and cuddled more. Preschool and kindergarten children can feel helpless, powerless, and frightened about being separated from their caregivers.

▶ ***7 Through 10 Years***

Older children can understand the permanence of loss. They may become preoccupied with the details of the traumatic event and want to talk about it continually. This preoccupation can interfere with their concentration at school and affect their academic performance. Children may hear inaccurate information from their peers which parents can clarify. They may fear that the disaster will happen again and have sad or angry feelings.

▶ ***11 Through 18 Years***

As children mature, their responses become more similar to those of adults. Much of adolescence is focused on moving out into the world. Following a disaster, that world can seem

more dangerous and unsafe. Teenagers may react by becoming involved in dangerous, risk-taking behaviors, such as reckless driving, and alcohol or drug use. Others may become fearful of leaving home and avoid social activity. Teenagers can feel overwhelmed by their intense emotions, yet unable to talk about them.

Parents and Caregivers Responsibilities

It is important for parents and other caregivers to understand what is causing a child's anxieties and fears. Following a disaster, children are most afraid that:

- ▶ The event will happen again.
- ▶ Someone close to them will be injured or killed.
- ▶ They will be left alone or separated from their family.

Parents and caregivers can clarify misunderstandings of risk and danger by acknowledging children's concerns and perceptions. Discussions of preparedness plans can strengthen a child's sense of safety and security.



Listen to what a child is saying. If a young child asks questions about the event, answer them simply without the elaboration needed for an older child or adult. Children vary in the amount of information they need and can use. If a child has difficulty expressing his or her thoughts and feelings, then allowing them to draw a picture or tell a story of what happened may help.

Parents and Caregivers Can Take the Following Actions:

- ▶ Encourage your children to talk and listen to their concerns.
- ▶ Calmly provide factual information about the disaster and plans for insuring their ongoing safety.
- ▶ Involve your children in updating your family disaster plan and disaster supplies kit.
- ▶ Practice your plan.
- ▶ Involve your children by giving them specific tasks to let them know they can help restore family and community life.
- ▶ Spend extra time with your children.
- ▶ Re-establish daily routines for work, school, play, meals, and rest.

Limiting Exposure to Media

News coverage of the disaster can cause fear, confusion, and anxiety in children. This is particularly true for a large-scale disaster or terrorist event, in which significant property damage and loss of life has occurred. Especially for younger children, repeatedly watching images of an event can cause them to believe the event is occurring again and again.

Parents and caregivers should be available to encourage communication and provide explanations when children are permitted to watch television or use the Internet if images or news about the disaster are being shown. Parents can also limit their own exposure to anxiety-provoking information.

Support Networks for Families

Parents and caregivers can best help children when they understand their own feelings and have developed ways of coping themselves. One way of doing this is to build and use social support systems of family, friends, community organizations, faith-based institutions, or other resources. In the event a disaster strikes, they can call on these support systems to help them manage their reactions. In turn, parents and caregivers are more available and better able to support their children.

If a child continues to be distressed by the events or if their reactions interfere with their school work or their relationships at home or with their friends, it may be appropriate to talk with the child's primary care physician or a mental health provider who specializes in children's needs.

8. Maintaining Your Disaster Plan

When evaluating the effectiveness of a disaster plan, it will involve a combination of training, practicing the plan, and examples of real-world incidents which could determine if the goals of the plan meet the objectives. Your disaster plan is a living document that can change periodically. You want to review your plan at least every six months to ensure the plan is current and meets all of the objectives.

Review and Modify Your Plan

You should ask the following question:

- ▶ Did the action, process, decision, or timing of the plan make the situation better or worse?
- ▶ Were any alternate courses of action identified?
- ▶ Were the requirements of children, individuals with disabilities, and others with access or functional needs fully addressed and applied to all aspects of the plan?
- ▶ Are there any aspects of the plan, such as a process, decision, or an operational element, that should be kept the same, modified, or eliminated?



- ▶ Should any changes be made to the plan and/or procedures that could improve its overall operational performance in regards to responsibilities?

If Disaster Strikes

Disasters can be natural or man-made and can strike at any time. No matter the cause you, your family, and your community must have a game plan set up for these events. Plan and prepare as much as possible before the disaster strikes so recovery time and getting back to normalcy is minimized. If you are instructed to take shelter, do so immediately.



If you are prompted to evacuate:

- ▶ Listen to the radio, television, or other media resources about the location of any emergency shelters.
- ▶ Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.
- ▶ Take your disaster supplies kit.
- ▶ Use travel/evacuation routes specified by local authorities, do not use short cuts because certain roads may be impassable or dangerous.

After the disaster

Recovery from a disaster is usually a gradual process. Safety is the primary concern for you and your family. If assistance is available, knowing how to access it can make the process faster and less stressful. This section will provide advice and guidelines to begin the process of getting your home and community back to normal.

Health and Safety Guidelines

Check for injuries and aid the injured. Do not attempt to move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of death or further injury. If you must move an injured or unconscious person you should first stabilize their neck and back, then call for assistance immediately. If a victim is not breathing, carefully position the victim for artificial respiration, clear the airway and commence mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Maintain body temperature with blankets, but be sure the victim does not become overheated. Never try to feed liquids to an unconscious person.

Be aware of exhaustion; do not try to do too much at once. Set priorities, pace yourself, get plenty of rest, drink clean water, and eat properly.

Wear sturdy shoes or work boots. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water when working in debris.

Be aware of any safety related concerns after the disaster. Watch for washed out roads, (remember, **“Turn Around Don’t Drown”**). Avoid contaminated areas such as buildings, water sources, and damaged utilities like gas and electrical lines. As soon as you can and it’s safe to do so, notify local authorities about any health or safety issues which may include downed power lines, chemical spills, washed out roads, smoldering insulation, or dead animals.



Returning Home

- ▶ Before entering your home, inspect the outside carefully by walking around the building and checking for loose power lines, gas leaks, and structural damage. If you have any doubts about the safety of your home, have your residence inspected by a structural engineer prior to entering.
- ▶ Have a battery-powered radio so you can listen to local authorities’ updates and news reports.
- ▶ Have a supply of battery-operated flashlights to inspect the area around your home. Note: you should turn on the flashlight prior to going outside as the flashlight may produce a spark that could ignite the area if there is a gas leak outside.
- ▶ Watch for stray animals, especially snakes. You can carry a stick or pole and poke around debris before walking through the area.
- ▶ Use a phone only for life threatening emergencies.
- ▶ As you return home, watch for fallen objects, downed power lines, weakened walls, bridges, roads, and sidewalks.
- ▶ Do not enter an area or structure if you smell gas or any other foul odors. Avoid walking through any flooded areas. If your home was damaged by fire and authorities have declared it unsafe, do not enter the area.
- ▶ When going inside your home, be cautious upon entering because certain things may have changed.

Some of the do’s and don’ts:

- When checking for damage be aware of any loose boards and slippery floors.



- If you smell any gas or other foul odors, safely open a window and leave the structure immediately. Turn off the main gas valve on the outside of the building if it can be done safely. Remember you will need a professional to turn the gas back on after repairs have been made to the damaged lines.
- Avoid using any flame devices, such as gas or oil lanterns, candles, or torches inside until you are sure there is no gas leaking.



- ▶ Turn off your power from the main electrical breaker box. Unplug all appliances and allow them to dry completely. Have a professional electrician inspect the entire electrical system prior to turning power back on.
- ▶ If water or sewer lines are damaged turn off the main water valve. Check with your local provider prior to any domestic water use. If you have a well you will need to pump it out and have the water tested before drinking. Do not flush toilets until you know the sewer lines are intact.
- ▶ Check any opened or damaged cabinets as they might fall.
- ▶ Clean up any household chemicals that may have spilled and disinfect items that may be contaminated by raw sewage or flooded water. Also, you will want to clean any items that may be salvageable.
- ▶ Contact your insurance agent as soon as time permits and it is safe to do so. Document any damages with photographs or video. Maintain good records of the damage, repairs, and cleaning costs.

Wild or Stray Animals

When it is safe to return home, there may be a wide variety of stray animals, both domestic and wild. They are scared as well and may be looking for water, food, or their family. They may be unpredictable and feel threatened. Avoid contact with them and do not approach them. Do not handle or remove dead animals. Call local



authorities to report what you encounter so they can dispatch the properly trained personnel to assist with either the proper removal of dead animals or care for the strays.

Helping Others

Your compassion and generosity for helping others is never more evident than after a disaster. People want to help, and some guidelines to assist are listed below.

► **Financial contributions**

If you are in a position to assist, cash is the quickest and most effective way. Donating to a local organization is the most beneficial as they already have resources available for people and have identified the immediate needs. The donations will be used according to the organization's priorities and guidelines. You can check with the local charitable organizations in your area and choose the ones that best fit.

► **Volunteer**

You can find local organizations in your area to offer your assistance. Make sure they are recognized as disaster relief organizations prior to any disaster taking place. You can choose a community, faith-based, or other recognized disaster relief organization. Some listed sites you can check are www.nvoad.org, www.serve.gov, or www.networkforgood.org.

► **Donate goods**

You can find an organization and ask them what is needed for in-kind goods. The organization will be able to explain what they need. If you are unsure about the items you have, you should contact the organization and ask them if they have use for them prior to dropping them off. If they are not in need of the items, they may be able to point you in the direction of an organization that could use them.



9. Resources to Help with Planning

Websites

- ▶ www.fema.gov
- ▶ www.fema.gov/individual-and-community-preparedness-division
- ▶ www.ready.gov
- ▶ www.floridadisaster.org
- ▶ www.prepare.org



Ameri-Tech Disaster Planning Coordinator

- ▶ www.ameritechcompanies.com/emergency-management



Local Planners

- ▶ www.floridadisater.org/counties
- ▶ www.tbrpc.org/lepc



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