## Disaster Preparedness: Be Prepared, Not Scared

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We hope that it will never happen to us, but disasters can strike at any moment with little to no notice. It is essential to have a plan in place to protect your home and family in the unfortunate event of a disaster. Evacuations are also more common than people realize and may be optional or mandatory. Disasters often force people to leave their homes, neighborhoods, cities, and sometimes even states on short notice. So, knowing how to talk with your family about your plan, preparing together, and practicing your plan may help save your life and the lives of your loved ones during a disaster.

One way to prepare is to talk with your family and assign responsibilities to each family member. This will ensure less stress and better teamwork in the event of a disaster. You should develop an evacuation plan and pick a location where your family will meet outside of your home and neighborhood in case of a sudden emergency. Also, choose a few places in different directions, so you have options if you are unable to return home and have to evacuate your city. Additionally, it is a good idea to know alternative evacuation routes from your home. And do not forget to include pets in your evacuation plan!

Having a family communication plan is critical if you get separated from your loved ones during a disaster. Create a family contact sheet with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of important contacts. Keep these sheets in a purse, wallet, or child's backpack so they are readily available if needed. It is also important to include an out-of-town contact for family members to get in touch with if they are unable to contact local family members. Keep in mind, it is often easier to make long-distance calls than local calls during a disaster.

Next, your family should locate safe places in your home for different types of disasters. Each family member should know how to properly use a fire extinguisher, as well as how to shut off the water, gas, and electricity in your home. You and your family may also want to become trained in first aid and CPR. Practicing your plan with your family every six months is vital in ensuring everyone feels well prepared if faced with a disaster. Another aspect of being prepared is storing enough food and water for all family members, including pets. Stored water and food should be replaced every three months. You should store at least one gallon per person, per day, for at least three days in addition to a three-day supply of non-perishable foods that do not require refrigeration, preparation, or cooking and little or no water. Avoid salty foods, as they will make you thirsty, and choose ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables. Some food storage options include protein or fruit bars, dry cereal or granola, peanut or other nut butter, dried fruit, nuts, crackers, canned juices, non-perishable pasteurized milk, and milk alternatives.

Lastly, creating a disaster supply kit and checking it every three months is recommended. Below are ideas for putting together your own survival kit. Feel free to add to the checklists so that you and your family are adequately prepared. Check out the <a href="SLCo">SLCo</a> <a href="Emergency Services">Emergency Services</a> website to learn more about preparedness, survival kits, and food storage.

Х	The Essentials
	Water: 1 gallon per person, per day, for at least 3
	days
	Food: at least a 3-day supply of non-perishable
	items
	Blankets, sleeping bags, pillows, & towels
	Closed-toe, sturdy shoes
	Jacket or coat
	NOAA weather radio or other battery-powered
	radio
	Flashlight
	Extra batteries
	Prescription medication
	Extra cash
	Dust masks to help filter contaminated air
	Plastic sheeting & duct tape to shelter in place
	Garbage bags
	Whistle
	Basic tools such as a wrench, screwdriver, & pliers
	Manual can opener
	Local maps
	Cell phone & charger
	Person hygiene items
	Important documents: insurance policies, IDs, bank
	account records, & emergency medical
	information stored in a waterproof and portable
	container
	Family/important contact information

X	Optional Items
	Paper cups, plates, paper towels, & plastic utensils
	Extra clothes that can be washed by hand
	Matches in a waterproof container
	Fire extinguisher
	Household chlorine bleach & medicine droppers
	Books, games, & puzzles for children
	Baby supplies: bottles, formula, & diapers
	Two-way radios
	Rain gear

Х	For Your Pet(s)
	Photocopies of medical records & photos of your
	pets for identification purposes
	Medications
	Feeding dishes & at least a 3-day supply of food &
	water
	Disposable litter trays & litter
	Extra collar or harness & leash
	Blanket & toys
	Sturdy pet carrier
	The name & telephone number of your pet's
	veterinarian

X	First Aid Kit
	2 pairs of latex or other sterile gloves
	Sterile dressings to stop bleeding
	Soap & antibiotic towelettes
	Antibiotic & burn ointments
	Bandages
	Eye wash solution
	Thermometer
	Aspirin or other pain relievers
	Anti-diarrhea medication
	Antacid
	Laxative
	Scissors & tweezers
	Prescription medications & medical supplies

X	Additional Items