

Plan for Emergencies

You can begin this process by gathering family members and making sure each person is well-informed on potential hazards and community plans ([Getting Informed](#)). Discuss with them what you would do if family members are not home when a warning is issued. Additionally, your family plan should address the following:

- [Escape routes](#)
Draw a floor plan of your home. Use a blank sheet of paper for each floor. Mark two escape routes from each room. Make sure children understand the drawings. Post a copy of the drawings at eye level in each child's room.

Where to Meet

Establish a place to meet in the event of an emergency, such as a fire.

Record the locations below:

Location	Where to meet...
Near the home	For example, the next door neighbor's telephone pole
Outside the immediate area	For example, the neighborhood grocery store parking lot
...	...

- [Evacuation plans](#)
Ask local officials the following questions about your community's disaster/emergency plans.
 1. Does my community have a plan?
 2. Can I obtain a copy?
 3. What does the plan contain?
 4. How often is it updated?
 5. What should I know about the plan?
 6. What hazards does it cover?

In addition to finding out about your community's plan, it is important that you know what plans are in place for your workplace and your children's school or day care center.

1. Ask your employer about workplace policies regarding disasters and emergencies, including understanding how you will be provided emergency and warning information.
 2. Contact your children's school or day care center to discuss their disaster procedures.
- [Family communications](#)
Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another. Think about how you will communicate in different situations.
Complete a contact card for each family member. Have family members keep these cards handy in a wallet, purse, backpack, etc. You may want to send one

to school with each child to keep on file. Pick a friend or relative who lives out-of-state for household members to notify they are safe. Family Communications Plan which should be completed and posted so the contact information is readily accessible to all family members. A copy should also be included in your family disaster supplies kit.

[Appendix C of the Are You Ready? Guide](#) (contains blank contact cards and a family communications plan form)
http://www.fema.gov/pdf/areyouready/appendix_c.pdf or see attached

- [Utility shut-off and safety](#)

In the event of a disaster, you may be instructed to shut off the utility service at your home. Below is some general guidance for shutting off utility service. You should modify the information provided to reflect your shut off requirements as directed by your utility company.

- [Natural Gas](#)

Natural gas leaks and explosions are responsible for a significant number of fires following disasters. It is vital that all household members know how to shut off natural gas.

Because there are different gas shut-off procedures for different gas meter configurations, it is important to contact your local gas company for guidance on preparation and response regarding gas appliances and gas service to your home.

When you learn the proper shut-off procedure for your meter, share the information with everyone in your household. Be sure not to actually turn off the gas when practicing the proper gas shut-off procedure.

If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone out quickly. Turn off the gas, using the outside main valve if you can, and call the gas company from a neighbor's home.

CAUTION - If you turn off the gas for any reason, a qualified professional must turn it back on. **NEVER** attempt to turn the gas back on yourself.

- [Water](#)

Water quickly becomes a precious resource following many disasters. It is vital that all household members learn how to shut off the water at the main house valve.

- Cracked lines may pollute the water supply to your house. It is wise to shut off your water until you hear from authorities that it is safe for drinking.
 - The effects of gravity may drain the water in your hot water heater and toilet tanks unless you trap it in your house by shutting off the main house valve (not the street valve in the cement box at the curb—this valve is extremely difficult to turn and requires a special tool).

Preparing to Shut Off Water

- Locate the shut-off valve for the water line that enters your house.

- Make sure this valve can be completely shut off. Your valve may be rusted open, or it may only partially close. Replace it if necessary.

Label this valve with a tag for easy identification, and make sure all household members know where it is located.

- [Electricity](#)

Electrical sparks have the potential of igniting natural gas if it is leaking. It is wise to teach all responsible household members where and how to shut off the electricity.

Preparing to Shut Off Electricity

- Locate your electricity circuit box.
- Teach all responsible household members how to shut off the electricity to the entire house.

FOR YOUR SAFETY: Always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit breaker.

- [Insurance and vital records](#)

Obtain property, health, and life insurance if you do not have them. Review existing policies for the amount and extent of coverage to ensure that what you have in place is what is required for you and your family for all possible hazards.

Flood Insurance

If you live in a flood-prone area, consider purchasing flood insurance to reduce your risk of flood loss. Buying flood insurance to cover the value of a building and its contents will not only provide greater peace of mind, but will speed the recovery if a flood occurs. You can call 1 (888) FLOOD29 to learn more about flood insurance.

Inventory Home Possessions

Make a record of your personal property, for insurance purposes. Take photos or a video of the interior and exterior of your home. Include personal belongings in your inventory.

To help you record your possessions, you may also want to download the free Household and Personal Property Inventory Book (from the University of Illinois).

Important Documents

Store important documents such as insurance policies, deeds, property records, and other important papers in a safe place, such as a safety deposit box away from your home. Make copies of important documents for your [disaster supplies kit](#).

Money

Consider saving money in an emergency savings account that could be used in any crisis. It is advisable to keep a small amount of cash or traveler's checks at home in a safe place where you can quickly access them in case of evacuation.

- [Special needs](#)

Preparing and Planning

- [People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs](#)
- [Additional Resources](#)

If you or someone close to you has a disability or a special need, you may have to take additional steps to protect yourself and your family in an emergency.

Disability/Special Need	Additional Steps
Visually impaired	May be extremely reluctant to leave familiar surroundings when the request for evacuation comes from a stranger. A guide dog could become confused or disoriented in a disaster. People who are blind or partially sighted may have to depend on others to lead them, as well as their dog, to safety during a disaster.
Hearing impaired	May need to make special arrangements to receive warnings.
Mobility impaired	May need special assistance to get to a shelter.
Single working parent	May need help to plan for disasters and emergencies.
Non-English speaking persons	May need assistance planning for and responding to emergencies. Community and cultural groups may be able to help keep people informed.
People without vehicles	May need to make arrangements for transportation.
People with special dietary needs	Should take special precautions to have an adequate emergency food supply.
People with medical conditions	Should know the location and availability of more than one facility if dependent on a dialysis machine or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.
People with intellectual disabilities	May need help responding to emergencies and getting to a shelter.
People with dementia	Should be registered in the Alzheimer's Association Safe Return Program

If you have special needs: Find out about special assistance that may be available in your community. Register with the office of emergency services or the local fire department for assistance so needed help can be provided.

Check for hazards in the home

During and right after a disaster, ordinary items in the home can cause injury or damage. Anything that can move, fall, break or cause fire is a home hazard. Check for items such as bookcases, hanging pictures, or overhead lights that could fall in an earthquake or a flood and block an escape path.

Be ready to evacuate

Have a plan for getting out of your home or building (ask your family or friends for assistance, if necessary). Also, plan two evacuation routes because some roads may be closed or blocked in a disaster.

- Create a network of neighbors, relatives, friends, and coworkers to aid you in an emergency. Discuss your needs and make sure everyone knows how to operate necessary equipment.
- Discuss your needs with your employer.
- If you are mobility impaired and live or work in a high-rise building, have an escape chair.
- If you live in an apartment building, ask the management to mark accessible exits clearly and to make arrangements to help you leave the building.
- Keep specialized items ready, including extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, prescriptions, food for service animals, and any other items you might need.
- Be sure to make provisions for medications that require refrigeration.
- Keep a list of the type and model numbers of the medical devices you require.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your disability.
- Know the location and availability of more than one facility if you are dependent on a dialysis machine or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.

Additional Resources

[Section 689 Reference Guide](#)

Guidelines for use by those who serve individuals with disabilities in emergency preparedness and disaster relief.

Settlement Agreement in "Brou v. FEMA", No. 06-838 (E.D. La.) ([PDF](#) 3MB, [TXT](#) 114KB) [Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and other Special Needs \(FEMA 476\)](#) Available in Spanish ([PDF](#) 601KB, [TXT](#) 32KB) Provides disaster preparedness information specific to people with disabilities and other special needs, including the elderly.

[Emergency preparedness information from DisabilityInfo.gov](#)

Find links to additional preparedness information, grants, assistance, government policies, initiatives and much more.

- [Care for pets: Information for pet owners](#)

If you evacuate your home, **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND!** Pets most likely cannot survive on their own; and if by some remote chance they do, you may not be able to find them when you return. For additional information, please contact [The Humane Society of the United States](#).

Plan for Pet Disaster Needs

- Identifying shelter. For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets. Find out which motels and hotels in the area you plan to evacuate to allow pets -- well in advance of needing them. There are also a number of guides that list hotels/motels that permit pets and could serve as a starting point. Include your local animal shelter's number in your list of emergency numbers -- they might be able to provide information concerning pets during a disaster.
- Take pet food, bottled water, medications, veterinary records, cat litter/pan, can opener, food dishes, first aid kit and other supplies with you in case they're not available later. While the sun is still shining, consider packing a "pet survival" kit which could be easily deployed if disaster hits.
- Make sure identification tags are up to date and securely fastened to your pet's collar. If possible, attach the address and/or phone number of your evacuation site. If your pet gets lost, his tag is his ticket home. Make sure you have a current photo of your pet for identification purposes.
- Make sure you have a secure pet carrier, leash or harness for your pet so that if he panics, he can't escape.
- [Animals in Emergencies for Owners](#) This video, developed by the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) /FEMA, is intended to help pet and livestock owners prepare to protect their animals during emergencies.

Prepare to Shelter Your Pet

- Call your local emergency management office, animal shelter, or animal control office to get advice and information.
- If you are unable to return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Find out where pet boarding facilities are located. Be sure to research some outside your local area in case local facilities close.
- Most boarding kennels, veterinarians and animal shelters will need your pet's medical records to make sure all vaccinations are current. Include copies in your "pet survival" kit along with a photo of your pet.
- **NOTE:** Some animal shelters will provide temporary foster care for owned pets in times of disaster, but this should be considered only as a last resort.
- If you have no alternative but to leave your pet at home, there are some precautions you must take, but remember that leaving your pet at home alone can place your animal in great danger! Confine your pet to a safe area inside -- NEVER leave your pet chained outside! Leave them loose inside your home with food and plenty of water. Remove the toilet tank lid, raise the seat and brace the bathroom door open so they can drink. Place a notice outside in a visible area, advising what pets are in the house and where they are located. Provide a phone number where you or a contact can be reached as well as the name and number of your vet.

During a Disaster

- Bring your pets inside immediately.
- Have newspapers on hand for sanitary purposes. Feed the animals moist or canned food so they will need less water to drink.
- Animals have instincts about severe weather changes and will often isolate themselves if they are afraid. Bringing them inside early can stop them from running away. Never leave a pet outside or tied up during a storm.
- Separate dogs and cats. Even if your dogs and cats normally get along, the anxiety of an emergency situation can cause pets to act irrationally. Keep small pets away from cats and dogs.
- In an emergency, you may have to take your birds with you. Talk with your veterinarian or local pet store about special food dispensers that regulate the amount of food a bird is given. Make sure that the bird is caged and the cage is covered by a thin cloth or sheet to provide security and filtered light.

After a Disaster

- If after a disaster you have to leave town, take your pets with you. Pets are unlikely to survive on their own.
 - In the first few days after the disaster, leash your pets when they go outside. Always maintain close contact. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and your pet may become confused and lost. Also, snakes and other dangerous animals may be brought into the area with flood areas. Downed power lines are a hazard.
 - The behavior of your pets may change after an emergency. Normally quiet and friendly pets may become aggressive or defensive. Watch animals closely. Leash dogs and place them in a fenced yard with access to shelter and water.
- [Safety skills](#)
It is important that family members know how to administer first aid and CPR and how to use a fire extinguisher.

Learn First Aid and CPR

[Take a first aid and CPR class.](#) Local American Red Cross chapters can provide information about this type of training. Official certification by the American Red Cross provides, under the “good Samaritan” law, protection for those giving first aid.

Learn How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

[Read about fire extinguisher selection, location and use.](#) Be sure everyone knows how to use your fire extinguisher(s) and where it is kept. You should have, at a minimum, an ABC type fire extinguisher.

Appendix C:



Homeland Security

Family Communications Plan

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another and review what you will do in different situations.

Out-of-State Contact Name: _____	Telephone Number: _____
Email: _____	Telephone Number: _____

Fill out the following information for each family member and keep it up to date.

Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____
Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
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Where to go in an emergency. Write down where your family spends the most time: work, school and other places you frequent. Schools, daycare providers, workplaces and apartment buildings should all have site-specific emergency plans.

<p>Home Address: _____ Phone Number: _____ Neighborhood Meeting Place: _____ Regional Meeting Place: _____</p>	<p>Work Address: _____ Phone Number: _____ Evacuation Location: _____</p>
<p>School Address: _____ Phone Number: _____ Evacuation Location: _____</p>	<p>Work Address: _____ Phone Number: _____ Evacuation Location: _____</p>
<p>School Address: _____ Phone Number: _____ Evacuation Location: _____</p>	<p>Other place you frequent: Address: _____ Phone Number: _____ Evacuation Location: _____</p>
<p>School Address: _____ Phone Number: _____ Evacuation Location: _____</p>	<p>Other place you frequent: Address: _____ Phone Number: _____ Evacuation Location: _____</p>


Important Information	Name	Telephone #	Policy #
Doctor(s):			
Other:			
Pharmacist:			
Medical Insurance:			
Homeowners/Rental Insurance:			
Veterinarian/Kennel (for pets):			

Other useful phone numbers: **9-1-1 for emergencies.** Police Non-Emergency Phone #: _____

Every family member should carry a copy of this important information:

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Other Important Phone Numbers & Information:

 **Family Communications Plan**

Contact Name: _____
Telephone: _____

Out-of-State Contact Name: _____
Telephone: _____


Neighborhood Meeting Place: _____
Meeting Place Telephone: _____

Dial 9-1-1 for Emergencies!

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Other Important Phone Numbers & Information:

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