Make a Plan
Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling an emergency supply kit and making an emergency plan, are universal regardless of the type of emergency. However, it’s important to be informed about what types of emergencies are likely to affect your community. Creating a plan that fits your needs before, during and after a disaster will help you be more self-reliant in an emergency and find your family if you become separated. Be sure to share your plan with others and include a copy of it in your kit.

Be Informed
Contact your American Red Cross chapter or local emergency management office.

- Ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen. Request information on how to prepare for each.
- Learn about your community’s warning signals: what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
- Find out about the disaster plans at your workplace and your children’s school or daycare center.
- Find out how to help people with disabilities, if needed.
- Ask about animal care after a disaster. Animals other than service animals may not be allowed inside emergency shelters.
- If you undergo routine treatments at a clinic or hospital or if you receive regular services such as home healthcare or transportation, talk to your service providers about their emergency plans. Work with them to identify backup services in your area and the areas you might evacuate to.
- If you use medical equipment in your home that requires electricity, ask your healthcare provider about what you can do to prepare for a power outage.

Build a Support Network
A support network is a group of individuals who have agreed to be a part of your preparedness plan and help you in the event of a disaster. Your support network will know your needs and capabilities and should be able to provide help quickly.

- Ask roommates, relatives, neighbors, friends, peer support group members and coworkers to be a part of your network.
- Explain why you need their help and how they can help.
- Exchange contact information with your support network and think of alternate ways to communicate if phones are not working.
- Arrange for more than one person in your support network to check on you in an emergency.

Make a Communication Plan
- Have an out-of-town contact that every member of your family will call after a disaster.
- Make sure everyone in your family knows this contact’s phone number.
- Use e-mail notification via a family distribution list.
- Register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well List (https://disastersafe.redcross.org).
- Use the toll-free Contact Loved Ones voice message service (866/78-CONTACT).

Make an Evacuation Plan
- Contact your fire department for help in evacuation planning; make sure the advice fits your needs.
- Identify accessible primary and secondary evacuation routes in buildings you frequent.
- Know the location of a building’s designated areas of refuge to await rescue, as it may not be possible to evacuate with everyone else.
- Identify family meeting places; choose a location close to your home and another outside your neighborhood.
- Ask support network members to help you create a plan if you must evacuate a building by stairway.
- If you have a car, keep at least a half tank of gas in it in case you need to evacuate.
- Become familiar with alternate routes and other means of transportation out of your area.
- If you don’t have a car, identify public and private resources with accessible transportation that can help in evacuation.
- When evacuating, take your emergency supply kit with you.
- Lock the door behind you and leave a note telling others when you left and where you’re going.

Additional Considerations
- If you’re dependent on dialysis or other life-sustaining treatment, know the location of more than one facility.
- Teach members of your support network how to operate necessary equipment.
- Practice clear, specific and concise instructions that you would give to rescue workers about your needs.
- Don’t expect assistance at the height of an emergency. First responders may be unable to enter an area immediately.
Having a basic kit on hand to sustain yourself and your family after an emergency is an essential part of preparation. Think first about basic survival needs: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth.

Consider making two kits. In one kit, put everything you will need to stay where you are and make it on your own for a period of time (at least 3 days). The other kit should be a smaller, lightweight version that you can grab and take with you if you have to leave your home on short notice.

Since you may need to move quickly, store your supplies in waterproof, portable containers as close as possible to an exit. Review the contents of your kit at least once a year.

Your kit should include:
- 3-day supply of water: At least 1 gallon per person per day
- 3-day supply of nonperishable food that meets your dietary requirements
- Manual can opener, paper cups, plates, plastic utensils, paper towels
- Medical equipment and assistive devices
- Medications and a list of prescriptions with name, dosage, frequency, and doctor contact information
- Cooler with an ice pack if medications need to be refrigerated
- Medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your disability-related need
- Basic first aid kit and manual
- Copies of important documents (birth certificate, licenses, insurance information, etc.) in a waterproof container
- List of emergency contact information
- Flashlight
- Radio
- Matches, extra batteries
- Warm clothing, blankets, sleeping bag
- Whistle or air horn to signal for help
- Filter face masks (N-95 rated) to help filter contaminated air
- Cash, coins
- Sanitation items (hand sanitizer, towelettes, absorbent pads, toilet paper, feminine hygiene products, garbage bags, plastic ties, etc.)
- Household chlorine bleach and a medicine dropper: 9 parts water to 1 part bleach can be used as a disinfectant. 16 drops of bleach to 1 gallon of water can be used to treat water in an emergency. (Do not use scented, color-safe or other augmented bleaches; they’re toxic.)
- Items for infants (formula, diapers, bottles and pacifiers)
- Supplies for a service animal or pets including 3-day supply of food and water, ID tags, proof of vaccinations, and veterinarian contact information
- Fire extinguisher
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children.
Fire

More than 4,000 Americans die each year in fires, and approximately 25,000 are injured. The greatest tragedy is that many of these deaths and injuries are avoidable. In the event of a fire, remember – time is the biggest enemy and every second counts! In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. Escape plans help you get out of your home quickly.

How to Prepare for a Fire
• Have at least two working smoke alarms; test them at least twice a year.
• Smoke alarms with a vibrating pad or flashing light are available for the deaf or hearing-impaired.
• Smoke alarms are also available with a strobe light outside the house to catch the attention of neighbors and emergency call systems for summoning help.
• If you have a mobility disability, arrange to sleep on the first floor of a home so you can escape faster.
• If you use a walker or wheelchair, check all exits to make sure you can get through doorways.
• Clean out storage areas; don’t let junk accumulate.
• Install fire extinguishers. There are three basic classes of fires. All fire extinguishers are labeled using standard symbols for the classes of fires they can put out. A red slash through any of the symbols tells you the extinguisher cannot be used on that class of fire.
  • **Class A**: Ordinary combustibles such as wood, cloth, paper, rubber, and many plastics
  • **Class B**: Flammable liquids such as gasoline, oil, grease, tar, oil-based paint, lacquer, and flammable gas
  • **Class C**: Energized electrical equipment including wiring, fuse boxes, circuit breakers, machinery and appliances.

How to Respond to a House Fire
• If you or your clothes catch on fire, **Stop, Drop and Roll** or use a fire blanket.
  • If you are escaping through a closed door, use the back of your hand to feel the door before you open it – never use the palm of your hand or fingers to test for heat.
  • If the door is hot, don’t open it. Look for an alternate exit.

• Remember the PASS-word for fire extinguishers:
  • **PULL** the pin. This unlocks the operating lever and allows you to discharge the extinguisher.
  • **AIM** low, at the base of the fire.
  • **SQUEEZE** the lever or button above the handle to spray.
  • **SWEEP** from side to side.

If you can’t get out safely:
• Close all doors between you and the fire and smoke.
• Stuff cracks around doors and cover all vents to keep smoke out. Use wet towels if possible.
• Call 911, report the fire, and tell them exactly where you are trapped.
• While waiting for rescuers, signal from a window, if possible, by waving a light-colored cloth.
Never take storms for granted. In the U.S., an average of 300 people are injured and 80 people are killed each year by lightning. Other associated dangers include strong winds, hail, tornados and flash flooding. Flash flooding is responsible for more fatalities (more than 140 annually) than any other associated hazard.

If a thunderstorm is likely in your area:
- Get inside a building or hardtop automobile.
- Avoid showering or bathing.
- Unplug appliances, especially major items such as computers and air conditioners.

How to Respond to a Thunderstorm
- Don’t be a lightning rod. Avoid:
  - Tall, isolated trees in open areas
  - Hilltops, open fields, the beach, or a boat on the water
  - Isolated sheds or other small structures in open areas
  - Anything metal (tractors, farm equipment, motorcycles, golf carts, golf clubs and bicycles)
  - In a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees.
  - In an open area, go to a low place such as a ravine or valley.
  - If you feel your hair stand on end, the air around you is electrically charged and lightning is about to strike.
  - Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact to the ground.
  - Squat on the balls of your feet.
  - Place your hands over your ears (it’s about to get very loud) and your head between your knees.
  - Do not lie flat on the ground.

How to Identify a Tornado
- Before it hits, the air may become very still.
- A cloud of debris can mark a tornado’s location even if a funnel isn’t visible.
- Other danger signs include:
  - Dark, often greenish sky
  - A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotating)
  - Large hail
  - Loud roar, similar to a freight train.

How to Respond to a Tornado
- If you’re in a building:
  - Go to the basement or the lowest building level.
  - Go to the center of an interior room, away from windows.
  - If possible, get under a sturdy table and use your arms to protect your head and neck.
  - If you’re in a wheelchair: Get under a doorway, lock the wheels and cover your head with your arms.
  - If you’re in a car or mobile home: Get out immediately and go to the lowest floor of a nearby building.
  - If you’re outside with no shelter:
  - Lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands.
  - Do not get under an overpass or bridge.

How to Prepare for a Hurricane
- Secure your property as you would for thunderstorms.
- Cover all windows with plywood or hurricane shutters to protect them from high winds.
- If you’re forced to move to higher ground:
  - Do not attempt to wade through moving water.
  - Do not drive into flooded areas.
  - If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car.

If you can’t evacuate:
- Stay indoors, away from all windows.
- Take shelter in an interior room.
- Be aware that there may be a sudden lull in the storm as the eye of the hurricane moves over.
- Stay out of floodwaters, if possible; the water may be contaminated or electrically charged.

How to Respond to a Flood
- If you have time and assistance, bring in outdoor furniture; move essential items to an upper floor.
- Sanitize bathtubs, sinks and plastic soda bottles with bleach (unscented only; scented bleach is toxic) and fill with clean water for a temporary supply.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so; do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
Having an ample supply of clean water is a top priority in an emergency. A normally active person needs to drink at least 1 gallon of water per day. You will also need water for food preparation and hygiene. Store at least an additional gallon per person, per day for this.

When the power goes out, water purification systems may not be functioning fully. Safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene includes bottled, boiled or treated water.

Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, prepare food, make ice, make baby formula (if possible, use baby formula that doesn’t need to have water added), brush your teeth or wash your hands. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your hands.

**If the power goes out:**
- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperatures. Each time the door is opened, a significant amount of cold air is lost.
- The refrigerator will keep food cold safely for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours.
- Group food together in the freezer; this helps the food stay cold longer.
- Freeze refrigerated items such as leftovers, milk, and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately. This helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- If sealed cans have come in contact with floodwater, remove the labels, wash the cans, and dip them in a solution of 1 cup of bleach (unscented only; scented bleach is toxic) in 5 gallons of water. Relabel the cans with a marker.
- Use bottled water that hasn’t been exposed to floodwater if it is available.

**If you don’t have bottled water:**
- You should boil water to make it safe. Boiling water will kill most types of disease-causing organisms that may be present.
- If the water is cloudy, filter it through clean cloths or allow it to settle, and draw off the clear water for boiling.

**If you can’t boil water:**
- You can disinfect it with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets or household bleach. Bleach will kill most types of disease-causing organisms that may be in the water.
- If the water is cloudy, filter it through clean cloths or allow it to settle, and draw off the clear water for disinfection.
- Add 9 drops of regular bleach (unscented only; scented bleach is toxic) for each gallon of water, stir well and let it stand for 30 minutes before you use it.

**If food comes into contact with floodwater:**
- Food containers with screw caps (including bottled water), snap lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), pop tops (aluminum cans), and home-canned foods should be discarded if they have come into contact with floodwater because they are contaminated and cannot be completely disinfected.

**Emergency Drinking Water**
- Freeze containers of water for ice to help keep food cold in the freezer, refrigerator, or coolers after the power is out. If your normal water supply is contaminated or unavailable, the melting ice will supply drinking water.
- If food comes into contact with floodwater, remove the labels, wash the cans, and dip them in a solution of 1 cup of bleach (unscented only; scented bleach is toxic) in 5 gallons of water. Relabel the cans with a marker.
- Use bottled water that hasn’t been exposed to floodwater if it is available.

Food Safety in the Event of Flooding or Power Outage
When winter temperatures drop low, staying warm and safe can be difficult. Extremely cold temperatures often accompany a winter storm, so you may have to cope with power failures and icy roads at the same time. Although staying indoors can reduce the risk of car crashes or falls on the ice, you may also face indoor problems. Your home may become too cold – either due to a power failure or because the heating system isn’t adequate for the low temperatures. The risk of household fires, as well as carbon monoxide poisoning, is highest in winter, when space heaters and fireplaces are used to stay warm.

Extreme cold can cause serious health issues or even threaten your survival. Anyone can be affected, but young children, seniors and those with other health problems are particularly at risk. To protect yourself and your family, you should prepare by knowing how to prevent cold-related health problems and what to do if a cold-weather health emergency arises.

**Infants**

Infants less than 1 year old should never sleep in a cold room because they lose body heat more easily than adults, and, unlike adults, they can’t make enough body heat by shivering. If a warm temperature can’t be maintained, make temporary arrangements to stay elsewhere.

In an emergency, you can keep an infant warm using your own body heat. If you must sleep, take precautions to prevent rolling on the baby. Pillows and other soft bedding can also present a risk of smothering; remove them from the area near the baby.

**Seniors**

The ability to feel changes in temperature decreases with age, and seniors often make less body heat because of a slower metabolism and less physical activity. If you’re over 65 years of age, keep a thermometer indoors where you can check the temperature in your home often during winter weather.

**Symptoms and Treatment of Hypothermia and Frostbite**

The emergency procedures outlined below are not a substitute for first aid training. However, these procedures can help you to be prepared and know when to seek medical care and what to do to aid your survival until help is available.

**Hypothermia symptoms**

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Memory loss and disorientation
- Slurred speech
- Drowsiness and apparent exhaustion

**Frostbite symptoms**

- Numbness
- Pale appearance in extremities (fingers, toes, ear lobes, and the tip of the nose).

**Treatment for both hypothermia and frostbite:**

- Get medical help as soon as possible.
- Get the victim into a warm room or shelter.
- Warm beverages can help increase the body temperature, but do not give alcoholic beverages. Do not try to give beverages to an unconscious person.
- After body temperature has increased, keep the person dry and wrapped in a warm blanket, including the head and neck.

**Additional treatment for hypothermia:**

- If the victim is wearing wet clothing, remove it.
- Warm the center of the body first – chest, neck, head, and groin – using an electric blanket, if available.

**Additional treatment for frostbite:**

- Do not rub the frostbitten area with snow or massage it at all; this can cause more damage.
- Unless absolutely necessary, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes; this increases the damage.
- Immerse the affected area in warm – not hot – water, or warm the affected area using body heat.
- Do not use a heating pad, heat lamp or the heat of a stove, fireplace, or radiator for warming.

**If you’re trapped in a car during a blizzard:**

- Pull off the road if possible.
- Turn on hazard lights and hang a distress flag or bright cloth from the radio antenna or window and remain in the vehicle unless you can walk to a nearby building.
- Run the engine and heater 10 minutes every hour to keep warm; while the engine is running, open a window slightly for ventilation.
- Maintain body heat by moving around.
Stagnant atmospheric conditions and poor air quality, added to extreme temperatures and high humidity, can lead to heat-related illnesses, especially in young children, seniors and those with health problems.

**How to Prepare for Extreme Heat**
- Weather-strip doors to keep cool air in.
- Install window air conditioners snugly.
- Install temporary window reflectors such as aluminum foil-covered cardboard similar to the panels used in cars.
- Keep storm windows up all year.

**How to Respond to Extreme Heat**
- Never leave children or pets alone in closed vehicles – not even for a 5-minute errand.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Limit intake of alcoholic beverages.
- Dress in loose-fitting, lightweight and light-colored clothes that cover as much skin as possible.
- Check on family and neighbors who don’t have air conditioning.
- Avoid strenuous work during the hottest part of the day.

**Symptoms and Treatment of Heat Exhaustion & Heat Stroke**
Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids. Those most prone to heat exhaustion are seniors, people with high blood pressure, and people working or exercising in a hot environment.

Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition. The body’s cooling system, which is controlled by the brain, stops working and the internal body temperature rises to the point where brain damage or damage to other internal organs may result (temperature may reach 105°F).

**Heat exhaustion symptoms**
- Often pale with cool, moist skin
- Sweating heavily
- Muscle cramps or pains
- Feels faint or dizzy
- May complain of headache, weakness, thirst and nausea
- Core temperature elevated (usually between 100°F and 104°F)
- Increased pulse rate.

**Heat stroke symptoms**
- High body temperature (105°F+)
- Hot, red, dry skin
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Hyperventilating (rapid, shallow breathing)
- Disorientation or unconsciousness.

**If someone is a victim of serious heat-induced illness:**
- Call 911 or get the victim to a hospital immediately; a delay could be fatal. Do not attempt to treat a case of heat stroke at home, but you can help while waiting for medical assistance to arrive.
- Move the victim to a cooler environment.
- Remove the victim’s clothing.
- Use a cool bath, shower, sponging, or wet sheet to reduce body temperature.
To Contact Local Emergency Preparedness Resources

Look up the telephone number of your county government in the telephone book. Your county government should be able to tell you the telephone number of your county emergency manager. Although some incorporated municipalities will have their own emergency manager, your county will certainly have one.

Ask if your community has a special needs registry. A special needs registry is a database containing information about individuals in your community who have disabilities or other special needs who may need assistance in the event of a disaster. If there is a disaster, those on the registry will be called and given information about how to prepare for or respond to the emergency, given information regarding facilities or shelters, and asked about their well-being. The information may also be used to help emergency personnel and volunteers in providing assistance. Participation in a special needs registry is voluntary. Individuals on the registry decide whether to accept assistance or remain responsible for themselves. However, not all areas have such a service in place. The National Organization on Disability (NOD) conducted a survey in 2004 to assess how emergency managers at the local and state level had incorporated the needs of people with disabilities in their planning. At that time, 50 percent of the officials said they did not maintain a special needs registry.

Sources of this publication and other resources

Administration on Aging
Disaster Preparation and Assistance
www.aoa.dhhs.gov/prof/preparedness/preparedness.asp

American Association on Health and Disability
301/545-6140
www.aahd.us

American Red Cross
Missing Persons Hot Line
713/313-1628
Safe and Well List
https://disastersafe.redcross.org

www.fema.gov/areyouready

Center for Disability Issues and the Health Professions
www.cdihip.org/evacuation/toc.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.bt.cdc.gov

Contact Loved Ones
866/78-CONTACT
www.contactlovedones.org

DisabilityInfo.gov

Easter Seals
s.a.f.e.t.y. first
www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ntl_safety_first_evacuation

Federal Emergency Management Agency
Disaster Help Line
800/621-3362
Hotline For Evacuees To Find Shelter
888/312-4567
www.fema.gov

Katrina Disability Information
www.katrinadisability.info

National Domestic Preparedness Coalition
www.ndpci.us/contact.html

National Institutes of Health
health.nih.gov/result.asp?201

National Organization on Disability (NOD)
Emergency Preparedness Initiative
www.nod.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageld=1564
NOD Interactive Resources Map
www.nod.org/EPI/Resources/interactive_map.html

PrepareNow.org
www.preparenow.org

Project Disaster
projectdisaster.com

“Survival Kit Is Sweet for Diabetics”
www2.tulane.edu/article_news_details.cfm?ArticleID=7488

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
www.hhs.gov/aspr/opeo/ndms

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
dwww.dhs.gov/xprepresp

U.S. Fire Administration (USFA)
www.usfa.fema.gov
USFA Kid’s Page
www.usfa.fema.gov/kids

Amputee Coalition of America

Amputee Coalition of America
National Limb Loss Information Center
900 E. Hill Ave., Suite 205
Knoxville, TN 37915
Web: www.amputee-coalition.org
Phone: 888/AMP-KNOW (267-5669)