

AAFP PREPAREDNESS MANUAL FOR DISASTERS AND PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Section I: Personal Preparedness

(PRACTICE NAME)

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Introduction

Are you ready for a disaster? Do you know what disasters are likely to happen in your area? What would you do in an emergency? You likely will have responsibilities to your practice and community in a disaster situation. If you know that you have planned for your safety and the safety of your family and your possessions, you will be able to help others.

This section of the manual will help you establish a plan for your personal preparedness. It is possible to learn from mistakes made in recent disasters and to prevent or reduce the impact of future tragedies. For instance, we have learned from recent disasters such as Hurricane Katrina how important it is to prepare and protect our medical records and even our pets' records. The checklists and inventories provided should not be considered complete; every family is different and each will have its own needs and concerns. As you use the guides, consider your own needs and adapt as necessary.

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1. Assess risk and preparedness

Preparations for natural and man-made disasters are similar in some ways. It is important to have an emergency supply kit, a communication plan, plans for your personal records, plans for each family member, and plans for your pets.. Some disasters are predictable while others occur without warning. Thinking ahead and communicating with others is an important part of being prepared. It is easy to investigate what natural disasters are likely to happen in your community. You may already be aware of some, but there may be others that you don't know about. Information may be obtained through your local government about natural disasters that can happen where you live.

Flooding is the nation's single most common natural disaster and can happen anywhere. Tornadoes can also happen anywhere, but are more likely to occur in the central Midwest and in Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut and Florida. Hurricanes are severe tropical storms that form in the southern Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific Ocean. Scientists can now predict hurricanes, but people who live in coastal communities should plan what they will do if they are told to evacuate. Surprisingly, 45 states and territories in the United States, located in every region of the country, are at moderate to high risk for earthquakes.

Other common disasters include heat and cold emergencies, droughts, fires and landslides. Man-made disasters include biological or terrorist attacks, bomb threats, hazardous material incidents, equipment failures, robberies and other major events.

You should also consider the threat of pandemic flu. If a pandemic occurs, it is likely that many public facilities will be closed, both to contain the spread of disease and as a result of interruptions in supply lines and employee availability. Expect schools and day care centers to close for extended periods of time (12 weeks in a severe outbreak per CDC guidance). Banks and stores may close as well. Planning for a pandemic influenza outbreak is similar to planning for other disasters; however, the need for supplies and to consider disease prevention and care of family members may be magnified.

This manual will address many of these issues, help you to plan and prepare for these events, and give you ideas of what to do after an event.

Risk assessment

1. Define your risks. Do you live in an area at risk for the following natural disasters?

Avalanche or mudslide	Ice storm
Blizzard	Severe thunderstorms or lightning
Earthquake	Tornado
Extreme heat or cold	Tsunami
Flood	Volcanic eruption
Frozen or broken pipes	Wildfire
Hazardous materials accident (nearby roadway, railway or industrial site)	
Hurricane	Windstorm or sandstorm

2. Are all family members up-to-date with immunizations for infectious disease?

Vaccine	Self:	Spouse:	Other:	Other:
Tetanus and diphtheria				
Measles-mumps-rubella				
Varicella				
Influenza				
Pneumococcal				
Hepatitis A				
Hepatitis B				
Meningococcal				

3. What medical concerns or limited physical abilities do you need to consider in preparing for emergencies (medications, accessible escape routes)?

Person	Medical or physical ability concerns
<i>Example: Mary</i>	<i>may need nebulizer treatments during prolonged emergency</i>

4. Are there nearby relatives or neighbors who will depend on you for assistance in a disaster situation?

Preparedness assessment

1. Do you have plans in place for the following? (Check “Yes” or “No” for each)

	Yes (update annually)	No (to do list)
Shelter from severe storms (not requiring evacuation)		
In-home shelter in case of hazards in area		
Evacuation of your neighborhood or community		
Home evacuation in the event of a fire		
Shelter for an earthquake		
Care of family during a pandemic		
Place to meet family members if separated in an emergency		

2. Do you have the following? (Check “Yes” or “No” for each)

	Yes	No (to do or get list)
Hardwired telephone for use in power outage		
Emergency contact list		
ICE (in case of emergency) listing in cell phone directory (e.g., ICEWife)		
Smoke detectors with working batteries (check every 6 months)		
Fire extinguisher		
Battery- or crank-powered radio		
First-aid kit		
Whistles in each bedroom (fire safety)		
Disaster supply kit		
Waterproof/fireproof container for important documents		
Plastic sheeting (tarps)		
Electrical generator		
Wind-up or battery-powered clock		
Extra eyeglasses		
Manual can opener		
Supply of bottled water		
Pre-cut boards for covering windows (not applicable in all areas)		
Flashlights		
Stored food		
Water storage containers		

2. Developing a disaster plan and other preparedness considerations

a. Insurance coverage

Find out whether or not you are adequately covered for disasters under your insurance plan before a disaster, not after. Review your policy annually; things can change drastically in only a year.

- Have housing values in your area increased significantly?
- Have you added personal property that might require added insurance protection? Do you know your policy's terms regarding loss and what losses are covered? Is flood or water damage covered?
- Should you have earthquake insurance?
- Are you covered for sewer and drain backups?

Flood insurance typically covers damage to a structure, but not its contents. You can contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for flood insurance information. Flood insurance is sold separately from other homeowner policies. Flood insurance typically does not cover the cost of temporary housing if your home is damaged.

Most homeowner policies provide coverage for property loss caused by a volcanic eruption when it is the result of a volcanic blast, airborne shock waves, ash, dust, or lava flow. Fire or explosion resulting from volcanic eruption is also covered. However, most homeowner policies do not cover damage from earthquake, land tremors, landslide, mud flow or other earth movement regardless of whether or not the quake was caused by or causes a volcanic eruption.

Keep a copy, either electronic (preferable) or paper, of all related phone numbers as well as copies of your insurance policies off-site. Notify your insurance carrier as soon as possible after a disaster occurs.

b. Claims documentation

Videotaping your home and belongings will help establish what is missing or damaged in a disaster. Along with a detailed video, receipts and a list of serial numbers should be maintained off-site with copies of your homeowner policy and other records. Be sure to videotape the outside of your home with your address clearly marked, as this will help insurance agents to make sure it is your home they are assessing. Having your house or apartment number clearly marked also helps rescuers locate you in an emergency. Have a camera in your disaster kit to take pictures of the damage to compare with the "before" pictures and lists.

c. Communications

One of the most overlooked problems that occur during an emergency is lack of communication. How will you give and receive information during a crisis? Do you have a working battery- or crank-operated radio? Several companies offer crank-operated or solar radios that may also include a flashlight and cellular phone charger. If your radio operates on battery power, it is important to check the batteries periodically and to have spare batteries on hand. During power outages, a hardwired phone may be operational; a

cordless phone may not be. Do you have an emergency contact list? If a disaster occurs in your area, do you have a prearranged place to meet, such as the home of an out-of-town relative? Do you have a relative or friend whom you can contact who will, in turn, contact others for you? What is the communications plan for your employer or business¹ during a disaster?

During an emergency, your cellular phone may not work. If it is not working because too many people are using the system, try sending a text message. Texting takes less space from the system and may slip through more easily. However, it may be necessary to use public phones, so change or a calling card should be included in your emergency kit. Immediately following an emergency, keep phone use to a minimum to allow rescue workers access to the communications network. Page 18 of this document provides a template for creating an emergency contact list.

Nixle is a free, public system that will keep you connected to civil defense and other emergency systems. Using your smart phone, sign in to nixle.com and add the zip codes you would like to follow. Alerts will come to your phone in text formats.

d. School and day care emergency procedures

What will you do if an emergency occurs while your children are at school? Does the school have up-to-date information on how to contact you? Have you given the school an alternate contact in case they cannot reach you, and does that person have the authority to initiate treatment or care for your child? Are your child's medical consent forms up to date? Who has a copy of them?

If the usual route to the school is blocked, do you have alternative routes planned? If your children carpool, what plans will be followed in the event of an evacuation order?

Before an emergency occurs, sit down with your children and make sure they are aware of how to contact you in an emergency and who can and cannot pick them up from school. If they are released from school early, they should know where to go. Rehearse the plan with young children to ensure they understand what is expected and review it several times during the year to make sure they do not forget. If they are too young to use a phone, be sure to keep emergency contact numbers in their bags or attached to their car seats or infant carriers.

e. Considering guests

When preparing plans for unpredictable emergencies, such as house fires or earthquakes, consider that an emergency might occur when you have houseguests. You may want to post your evacuation plans in the guest room and educate babysitters or house-sitters about your preparedness plans.

f. Considering medical conditions and disabilities

Take into consideration any medical conditions or disabilities that may affect persons in your household when developing your disaster preparedness kits and plans. Are your medical histories stored on retrievable computer discs or jump drives? Are your escape

¹ Section II of this manual provides information on developing a communications plan for your practice.

routes accessible to everyone? Do you need to plan for extra time in your evacuation plans due to physical limitations? Are medicines refilled at intervals that allow for a disruption to normal availability? Do you know if your physician has a communication plan for patients during and after a disaster?

g. Considering pets and livestock

Many emergency shelters will not allow pets, so have a backup plan for evacuating your pets. Secure lodging in advance for each pet. Contact kennels, hotels and friends for possible options. Discuss additional options with your veterinarian. Make a list of animal shelters and local Humane Society and animal rescue groups in case you become separated from your pet.

If you have livestock, consider your plans for evacuating or providing for their needs during your evacuation well in advance. Your county extension office may be able to provide you with information on evacuation plans and sheltering for livestock.

h. Basic emergency supplies, safety equipment and car survival kits

An important part of preparation is gathering items that will help keep you safe and comfortable in an emergency situation. First among these is the basic first-aid kit. Make a first-aid kit for your home and for each of your automobiles.

First-aid kit checklist

- Sterile adhesive bandages, assorted sizes
- Sterile gauze pads, assorted sizes
- Hypoallergenic tape
- Sterile roll bandages, assorted sizes
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Needles
- Pre-moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Thermometer
- Tongue blades
- Tube of petroleum jelly
- Safety pins
- Antibacterial soap
- Latex gloves
- Sunscreen
- Aspirin or other pain reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid
- Laxative
- Activated charcoal

One first-aid kit should be a part of a basic survival kit. A basic survival kit includes necessities for at least 72 hours following an emergency. Typically, it takes 72 hours (three days) following a major disaster event before normal emergency response and community services can be restored. Be prepared to care for yourself, your family and your community during these critical hours. Assemble a three-day survival kit in an area of your home near where you would take cover in an emergency. You may find this invaluable if leaving your home is not a safe option. A three-day survival kit checklist

follows to help you consider what to include in your kit. Note that in some emergencies, such as a pandemic flu episode, supplies may be needed for a longer time period.

Three-day survival kit checklist

Kit updated _____

Basic kits should include the following supplies:

Essentials:

- Water, 1 gallon per person per day for at least 3 to 7 days
- Bleach or water purification method
- First-aid kit and instructions for use
- Food requiring minimum heat or water
- Can opener, non-electric
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Portable radio and spare batteries or hand-crank/solar radio
- Medications
- Spare eyeglasses
- Fire extinguishers, multipurpose dry chemical labeled "ABC"
- Flashlight, with extra batteries and/or light sticks
- Watch or clock, non-electric
- Cash including coins for emergency use
- Extra keys to house and vehicles
- Baby supplies: formula, bottles, pacifier, diapers, wipes
- Food, water and restraint for pets

Sanitation supplies:

- Large plastic trash bags to be used for waste²
- Large trash cans
- Hand soap and liquid detergent
- Shampoo and other personal supplies
- Toothbrush and paste
- Deodorant
- Toilet paper and paper towels wrapped in plastic
- Powdered chlorinated lime³
- Pre-moistened towelettes
- Feminine supplies
- Household bleach

Safety and comfort:

- Whistle
- Heavy shoes for each family member
- Heavy gloves for adults
- Rainwear
- Candles and waterproof matches
- Clothes
- Cold weather apparel

² Trash bags can also be used as rain ponchos, tarps or window coverings

³ Powdered chlorinated lime is used to deodorize and disinfect sewage and may reduce insects

Cooking:

- Plastic utensils, plates and cups
- Heavy-duty foil
- Cooking utensils
- Pot and pan

For indoor use only:

- Sterno stove and lighter⁴

For outdoor use only:

- Grill with charcoal and lighter fluid or propane tank

Tools and supplies:

- Axe, shovel, broom
- Adjustable wrench⁵
- Screwdriver, hammer, pliers
- Knife or razor blades
- Garden hose, for siphoning and firefighting
- Coil of ½-inch rope
- Plastic tape, staple gun, plastic sheeting
- Bicycle
- Maps

Pet care kit:

- Food for at least 3 days
- Water for each pet
- Medications and medical record
- First aid kit
- Collar with ID tag, harness or leash (backup for what pets usually wear)
- Pet carrier
- Picture of you and your pet
- Toys/familiar comfort items
- Sanitation supplies (litter, etc.)

⁴ Be sure that there is no gas leak before lighting.

⁵ Include a wrench for turning off utilities if necessary.

Car survival kit

- Blanket
- Rain and/or snow gear
- Nonperishable food and bottled water
- First-aid kit
- Sealable plastic bags
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Fire extinguisher
- Tools and rubber hose
- Critical medications

3. Written disaster plans

a. Lists and forms

Your disaster plan should include scenarios for different types of disasters. For some types of disasters you may need to take shelter in the home, while others will require plans for evacuation. Your disaster plan will include worksheets with information that will need to be updated regularly. Forms may be printed before they are filled out for future use. These forms can then be stored in a notebook or folder and organized with tabs to identify the different sections. A few examples:

- Emergency response plan tables
- Evacuation plan forms
- Household floor plans
- Emergency contact forms

b. Considerations for specific occurrences

Earthquake

If you are indoors during an earthquake, remain there. Move away from windows, other glass objects and moveable objects such as bookcases, entertainment centers, etc. Get under a table or desk and hold on to it. Move with it as needed until the shaking stops. If there is no sturdy object to hide under, brace yourself in an interior corner. Watch for falling, flying and sliding objects.

If you are in a mobile home that rests on A-frame supports, get on top of the bed or sofa and cover your head and face. If the mobile home slips off of its supports, the supports can penetrate the floor and cause injury.

If you are outdoors, move away from buildings, trees, power poles, brick or block walls, and other objects that could fall. If you are in an automobile, stop and remain inside until the shaking stops. Avoid stopping near buildings, trees and overpasses.

If you are in a high-rise building, get under a desk and hold on to it or crouch next to an interior wall until the shaking stops. Do not use an elevator; always use the stairs in an earthquake.

If you are in a store, get under any sturdy object. Do not run to the exit, and when the shaking stops, choose your exit route carefully.

Tornado

Designate where you will go in the event of a tornado, either the basement or a specially designed shelter. If you don't have a basement, consider installing a prefabricated shelter, which can be placed into a hole in the ground and then blended into your landscaping.

If you are taking shelter in the basement, stay away from the west and south walls. Most, but not all tornadoes, travel from southwest to northeast per the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Hide under stairs, heavy worktables or desks for protection from flying and falling debris. Use old blankets, rugs and mattresses as cover for additional protection. These should be stored in a tub or container near the safe area to save time in an emergency.

If no basement is available, hide in a windowless area in an interior room on the ground floor. Closets or bathrooms can work well. In the bathroom, the bathtub and commode are often the only thing left after a tornado since they are well anchored. If the bathroom is not a good place and the closets are full, do not waste time trying to clear them. An interior hallway is the next best option. Cover yourself with blankets and rugs. If possible, move a table over you for protection. You can even use metal garbage cans for protection from flying debris.

Ice storm or blizzard

What alternative sources of heat do you have if there is no electricity in your home? Does your gas or propane heat operate only with an electrical thermostat? If you have a fireplace or wood-burning stove, has the chimney been cleaned and inspected?

Are your water pipes insulated? If freezing of pipes is a concern, water may be run at a drip to keep water moving in pipes, which may deter freezing. Leaving under-sink cabinet doors open allows warmer room air to circulate around pipes and can also deter freezing. If you must thaw frozen pipes, use warm air from an electric hair dryer. Do not use a torch. Do not venture out onto icy or slick surfaces if you can avoid it. If you are in danger of running out of propane, turn your thermostat to approximately 65 degrees and close off unneeded rooms without water lines.

If you must travel when a snow or ice storm is predicted, make sure you have a safety kit including matches, blankets, bottled water and food in your vehicle. If you must travel in a storm, show your planned route to a family member, friend or coworker. If you are stranded in your car during a snow storm, do not leave the car unless a safe place is visible within 100 feet. Instead, you should:

- call for help or put up a sign requesting a call for help,
- clear the snow from around the exhaust pipe to keep carbon monoxide from filling the vehicle,

- run the vehicle approximately ten minutes per hour to heat the car, and
- do not eat snow as this will lower your body temperature.

If you are stranded for an extended time without supplies, use newspapers or any cloth or plastic items to protect yourself from the cold.

Emergency response plans

Type of emergency	What we do/where we go	What we take with us
<i>example: Tornado</i>	<i>Be sure to turn off stove if cooking and blow out any burning candles. Go under staircase in basement, sit on blanket, and use other blankets and pillows to cover from debris if necessary.</i>	<i>weather radio, cell phone, light sticks (in plastic tub next to staircase), pillows</i>

Evacuation planning

Your evacuation plan lists what supplies you will need in order to evacuate, where you will go when you evacuate, and who should be contacted about your evacuation. If you have pets, include where they will go in case of evacuation. Plans should include local and state maps with evacuation routes marked and floor plans of your home marked with the locations of exit routes, safety equipment, utility shut-off valves and breakers, and emergency supply kits.

Consider the possibility that you may have guests or workers in your home during an evacuation. Be sure to include enough supplies for additional persons who may be in your home during or immediately following a disaster. Your plan should include instructions for overcoming physical disabilities and challenges.

In a planned evacuation, bring your evacuation manual and any pictures or mementos that you want to save.

If you must leave your home, be aware of potential dangers such as flooded streets. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. Flash floods can quickly sweep you and the vehicle away. Per NOAA, in 2006, 32 of the 76 people whose deaths were flood-related died while trapped in their vehicles. It doesn't take much water to disable your vehicle. Just six inches of water can cause loss of control and possible stalling in most passenger cars; a foot of water will float many vehicles and two feet of rushing water can carry away even large sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks. Plan to avoid areas along your evacuation route that are at risk for flash floods.

Consider also that your primary route may be blocked by fallen power lines, trees or other obstructions. An alternate route may be necessary. A local map should be included in your evacuation kit and will assist you in case you need to find an alternate route.

In a situation where evacuation is predictable, plan to leave early to avoid traffic and be sure to get a full tank of gasoline at the first notice that evacuation may become necessary. If you depend on others for transportation or use public transportation, be sure that your evacuation plan is up-to-date with those who will transport you or current public transportation schedules. Public transportation may become overwhelmed or unavailable as an emergency situation nears. Likewise, personal automobiles may fail. Consider having a backup plan in the event that your primary transportation is not available.

Evacuation plans

Primary evacuation destination ⁶ and planned route:
Alternate route considerations:
Secondary evacuation destination and route:
Alternate route considerations:
Reunion location and out-of-area phone contact:
Special considerations (pets, livestock, neighbors):

⁶ In a hurricane evacuation, the primary evacuation destination might be a temporary stop just beyond the predicted danger zone of the storm with plans for a more long-term location should quick return be impossible.

Household floor plans with evacuation routes

Use one square to draw a floor plan for each level of your home, including the basement. If you prefer, include a drawing that shows outbuildings or an outdoor reunion location as well. Note the location of main and secondary exit routes, doors, windows, fire extinguishers, stairs, collapsible ladders, first-aid kits and disaster supply kits.

Emergency contact list

Remember, 9-1-1 is for life-threatening conditions only.

Emergency services	Family physician (List for each person if not all family members have the same medical home)
Ambulance	
Fire Dept.	
Police	
Hospital	
Poison Control	
Utilities (emergency and customer service)	Family contact numbers
Gas Co.	Local Contact
Electric Co.	Out-of-State Contact
Water Co.	School
Cable/Satellite Co.	Day Care
Telephone Co.	Other
Other	Other
Financial and insurance	Contractors
Bank	Plumber
Credit Card	Electrician
Debit Card	Tree Service
Mortgage Lender	Carpenter/Builder
Auto Ins.	Recovery assistance
Homeowners Ins.	Red Cross 1-800-RED-CROSS (733-2267)
Other	FEMA 1-800-621-FEMA (621-3362)

Post-disaster safety checklist

- ___ 1. First, check yourself and others for injury and address first-aid needs. Then, listen for an all clear from public safety officials following a storm. If there was an earthquake, be ready for aftershocks.

- ___ 2. Check for fires and hazards. Sniff for gas leaks, if applicable, starting at the hot water heater. If you smell gas, hear a hissing sound or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open the windows and carefully leave the house. **DO NOT TURN LIGHTS ON OR OFF, OR STRIKE MATCHES** Do not shut off the gas unless you suspect a leak exists. If the gas is off, do not turn it back on. Your plumber or someone from the gas company should check the system and then turn on the gas.

If necessary, shut off the main water valve.
If fire is a concern, turn off the electricity at the main circuit breaker or fuse box.

- ___ 3. Watch for fallen power lines and other hazards when leaving your home. Be very careful not to touch objects or standing water which may be in contact with fallen power lines.

- ___ 4. All persons entering areas where buildings have been damaged or debris has accumulated should wear shoes with heavy soles to avoid injury. Locate a light source like a flashlight if necessary.

- ___ 5. Check on your neighbors and offer assistance as appropriate. Do not go sightseeing. Leave roads clear for emergency vehicles.

- ___ 6. Listen to the radio for advisories and listen for instructions for your area. Expect that evacuations or curfews may be necessary for public safety.

- ___ 7. Check for structural integrity of buildings where rushing floodwater or damaging winds may have weakened supports, especially porches and awnings. Check for obvious damage to the roof and chimney. Be careful when opening cabinets where items may have shifted during an earthquake or other disaster.

- ___ 8. Clean up potentially harmful materials as soon as safely possible. Use extreme caution in removing piles of debris which may contain sharp objects and/or flammable materials. Wear gloves when handling anything exposed to floodwater, as sewage may have entered the water.

- ___ 9. Follow the safety precautions included with power equipment such as generators or chain saws. Take precautions against carbon monoxide poisoning. When sawing, use goggles to protect your eyes, wear protective clothing and avoid loose-fitting garments that may become caught in the chain.

- ___ 10. Be wary of wildlife and other animals, especially following flooding.

Post-disaster recovery checklist

- ___ Can you safely stay in or return to your home? If not, keep all receipts related to expenses incurred during your evacuation. These expenses may be reimbursable under your homeowner policy as additional living expenses.
- ___ Upon return, determine the impact of the disaster to your household structures and belongings. Document each loss with pictures and create an inventory of losses. Contact your insurance claims office as soon as possible to schedule a visit by an adjuster. Ask if you need to keep samples of damaged items, such as carpet, before disposing of them.
- ___ Check for mold if your home has been flooded or subjected to high humidity. If possible, maintain a temperature of 70 degrees and relative humidity of 45 percent to prevent a mold outbreak. If mold is present and the air is less humid outside than inside, open the windows. Open cabinets and remove any drawers that are not stuck. As soon as possible, remove wet carpets and standing water.
- ___ Discard any food items that may have become contaminated. If your refrigerator must be discarded, use duct tape to secure the doors shut, which will contain odors and mildew and protect children who may try to hide inside and become trapped.
- ___ Determine your immediate needs and contact the American Red Cross or other agencies for assistance if necessary.
- ___ Contact needed contractors beginning with those on your emergency contact list. If you must hire a contractor whom you have not hired previously, be sure to ask for his or her license and proof of insurance beforehand. Do not hire a contractor to repair structural damage prior to consulting building officials for approval of the repairs.
- ___ Secure undamaged property if possible. If your home is not secure, consider options for removing and storing important papers, valuables and irreplaceable items that are undamaged or restorable.
- ___ Consider your financial security. Ask for an advance on insurance settlements if needed. Check for policies that may pay for lost income if your business is unable to return to operations immediately. Use credit cards with restraint. Contact your mortgage company regarding possible deferment of interest charges.
- ___ Take time to rest and to eat as well as you are able. Recognize signs of exhaustion, depression and anxiety and seek relief or assistance as needed.
- ___ Ask the hard questions. If I must rebuild, is this the place to do so? Do I have other options? Should I investigate building smarter with a safe room, elevated floor plan or other safety options?

c. Securing your home before and after a disaster

Inspect your home to determine what would be needed to protect it in an emergency. For example, will you need to board the windows during a hurricane? Boards can be purchased and cut to fit windows in a time of non-emergency. Items such as boards often are in short supply and more expensive when a predictable disaster approaches. Boards can be stored under the bed, in the garage or any place they can lie flat and be protected. An electric screwdriver with charged batteries and long screws should also be kept on hand. Will you need tarps to protect your belongings?

When notified of an approaching disaster, secure all assets outside of the house, such as boats, trampolines, bikes, play sets, trash cans, etc. Store all your important items in watertight containers in a safe place. Be sure that you have the filled fuel containers and vehicles. Unplug all electronic or electrical equipment and move to a secure area that will remain dry. Except in the case of a tornado, fill your bathtub with water. If you must evacuate and time permits, empty your kitchen garbage can before leaving.

Turn down your freezer temperature and if you must evacuate, consider whether to discard items that could melt and leak. If you purchase dry ice to help maintain the cold temperature in the freezer, wrap it in paper or in cardboard. It is important to wear gloves when handling dry ice and to keep the dry ice separate from your food.

A full freezer will generally retain food quality for two to four days. A freezer less than half-full will generally retain food quality for one to two days. When deciding whether to discard food after an outage, remember the old adage, “when in doubt, throw it out.” The presence of ice crystals and the absence of soft spots, odor and leakage are signs that frozen food is likely still safe for consumption. Refrigerated food may spoil much more quickly. Of special concern are dairy products, eggs, meats and meat dishes or salads. If you must evacuate for more than four days, be prepared to use duct tape to secure your refrigerator and freezer doors upon your return to contain odors.

4. Preparations for comfort, safety and financial stability

a. Cash supply

Be sure to have both cash and credit cards available. In some cases, you will need to have cash. If store or hotel credit card machines or electricity are disabled, you will likely need cash to buy what you need. In the event of a terrorist attack, expect that cellular phone service will be disrupted. Disruption may also occur following natural disasters. Plan to have coins or prepaid calling cards for use with pay telephones.

b. Water tips

Drinking water is one of the most sought after commodities in a disaster situation. It is recommended that you have three to seven gallons of water per person on hand. This is based on an allotment of one gallon per day per person in an extended emergency situation. Alternatively, water can be purified for drinking. There are several water purification options to consider:

1. Boil water for 5 to 10 minutes.

2. Add 8 drops of bleach to a gallon of clean water, mix well, and let it stand for 30 minutes.
3. Add household tincture of iodine in the same manner as bleach.
4. Use commercial purification tablets, following package directions.

Water from an undamaged hot water heater can also be consumed. Water purification products and other comfort items are often available at camping supply stores.

c. Purchase and safe use of a generator

When considering a generator there are several considerations to be taken in to account. First, make sure the unit carries the Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) or FM Global (FM) mark, ensuring that it has been objectively tested and meets high standards for quality.

Check labels to determine the amount of power needed to operate the lighting, equipment and appliances in your setting. Household equipment and light bulbs are usually clearly marked with the amount of power needed. Consider everything your generator will be called upon to power and be sure it can supply enough power for your known requirements plus additional power to cover unexpected needs. If the generator cannot handle the initial surge of power, consider alternating what you use and the order of use. If you do not know and are unable to calculate the amount of power needed by the generator to run your equipment, contact an electrician. Trying to run more power than the generator is rated to produce can damage your equipment as well as the generator.

Be sure to follow the directions on the generator's label and in its instruction manual. Generators are for outdoor use only and should never be run indoors (including inside sheds or garages). It is imperative that you have adequate ventilation and use proper refueling techniques, as described in the owner's manual. If you do not already own one, now is a good time to buy a carbon monoxide monitoring device, which can give you an early warning in case the generator were to leak deadly carbon monoxide into your home. If you already own one, make sure to change the batteries regularly. Fire and carbon monoxide poisoning from improperly used or refueled generators has caused many costly accidents and deaths. At least 78 people were poisoned and 10 people died in Alabama and Texas as a result of exposure to carbon monoxide from portable generators following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita per the CDC.

Always make sure the generator has cooled down before attempting to refuel. Never refuel a running generator. When you refuel the generator, use only the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Local regulations govern the amount and type of fuel that may be stored, so be sure to check with local authorities prior to use. Store all fuel outdoors in a locked shed or other protected area. Never store fuel in your home or car where fumes could escape into living areas.

For safety reasons, consult an electrician before trying to connect a generator to your home's wiring. The safest and best use of the generator is to hook up the equipment directly to the machine. Normally a household generator will not produce enough amperage to provide power to most homes. By hooking the generator directly to the house it can cause a "feedback" impulse. When the power supply does not have a

disconnect on it, the electrical power from the incoming utility line can flow back into the line from the generator. This can create damage for you, your neighbors, and even the power company. You will need an electrician to isolate the generator from the lines prior to use.

The National Fire Protection Agency recognizes the use of generators for electrical outages when the correct safety precautions have been put in place prior to use. This includes proper transfer equipment that prevents back feeding.

d. Personal documents and resources

In addition to the information you collect on the forms in this manual, have copies of important personal information, insurance policies, credit card information, computer backup, dial-up information for Internet connectivity (if subscribed to dial-up), and your address book ready in case evacuation is necessary. Consider scanning documents and information necessary for recovery or which are not easily replaced to a disc or jump drive and storing this off-site.

Other resources

Disaster supplies kit

http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/checklist_1.pdf

– Downloadable checklist for a basic emergency supply kit from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security

www.loepl.state.la.us/factsheets/disasterkit.htm – Comprehensive disaster supply kit checklist from the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness

General preparation

<http://www.72hours.org> – Preparedness information with a focus on preparing to be self-sufficient for 72 hours following an emergency, from the San Francisco Office of Emergency Services

<http://www.ready.gov> – Kits, plans and information on emergency preparedness from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security

<http://www.fema.gov/areyouready> – In-depth, downloadable guide to citizen preparedness from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

<http://www.redcross.org/support/emergency-preparedness> – An American Red Cross resource on preparing for various emergency situations

<http://www.nixle.com/> - A website that allows you to subscribe to public alerts by geographic region, and alerts can be sent via e-mail and SMS/text to your phone

<http://www.ready.gov/shelter> - Various shelter resources for a variety of hazards

<http://www.allstate.com/be-aware-and-prepare.aspx> – Preparation, safety and recovery tips from Allstate Insurance Company for catastrophic events

http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/oes/community/oes_jl_familyplan.html - Downloadable family disaster plan and personal survival guide from the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services

Generator safety

<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/fswy24.pdf> – Generator safety information from FEMA

<http://www.nfpa.org/assets/files/PDF/Public%20Education/GeneratorSafetyTips.pdf> - Generator safety information from NFPA

Preparing for the safety of pets

http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/PrinterFriendly_Pets.pdf – Downloadable brochure from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on preparing your pets for emergencies

Recovery

<http://www.mmrs.fema.gov/hazard/flood/coping.shtm> - Information on recovering from and coping with flood damaged property from FEMA

<http://www.fema.gov/assistance/process/index.shtm> - Online registration for FEMA disaster assistance

Storm and hurricane preparedness

http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/english/disaster_prevention.shtml - Predictions, forecasts, and hurricane preparedness information from the National Hurricane Center

Getting Involved

<http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/> - Information regarding volunteer Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)