

Disaster Safety

Find out what could happen to you:

- Potential disasters in our area include (but are not limited to): fire, flooding, severe winter weather, hazardous materials incidents, transportation accidents, essential resource shortage (i.e., drought), and acts of terrorism.
- Learn how the community is notified in an emergency.
- Locate nearby shelters, and ask about animal care for pets.
- Find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or daycare center, and other places where your family spends time.

Create a *Disaster Plan*:

- * Meet with your family and discuss the need for preparedness.
- * Discuss the dangers of potential disasters in our area.
- * Plan to share responsibilities and to work as a team.
- * Discuss specific types of disasters and what to do in each case; learn more about each one *before* it happens.
- * Pick at least two places to meet: (1) right outside your home and; (2) a safe place outside of your neighborhood that is well known.
- * Have an out-of-state friend or relative be your "family contact". After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Family members should call the family contact and report their whereabouts and condition. Everyone must know the contact's phone number.
- * Discuss evacuation procedures. Who will do what job? What will be done with the pets?

Complete this checklist:

- ✓ Make sure you have adequate insurance coverage.
- ✓ Post emergency telephone numbers by telephones.
- ✓ Teach children how and when to call 911, and what to say.
- ✓ Show family members how and when to turn off water, gas, and electric services at the source; don't shut off the gas main unless it is leaking or you are instructed to do so.
- ✓ Be sure family members know where fire extinguishers are kept, and how and when to use them.
- ✓ Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, especially in or near bedrooms.
- ✓ Conduct a "home hazard hunt" to eliminate fire & life safety hazards. (See - <http://www.co.mo.md.us/dfrs/emg/emerprep.html>)
- ✓ Stock emergency supplies and assemble a *Disaster Supplies Kit*.
- ✓ Take a first aid and CPR class.
- ✓ Determine "safe spots" in your home for each type of disaster.
- ✓ Develop a home escape plan; know two ways out of every room.
- ✓ Practice your plan—before you need it.

Practice and maintain your *Disaster Plan*:

- Quiz family members every six months as a reminder.
- Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills.
- Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six months.
- Inspect and maintain fire extinguishers according to the manufacturer's instructions (on the label).
- Test smoke alarms monthly. Be sure they are installed correctly. Change your battery when you change your clock or when it is indicated.

If Disaster Strikes:

- ✗ Remain calm and be patient.
- ✗ Follow the advice of local emergency officials.
- ✗ Listen to your radio or television for news and instructions.
- ✗ If the disaster occurs near you, check for injuries. Give first aid and get help for seriously injured people.
- ✗ If the disaster occurs near your home while you are there, check for damage using a flashlight. Do not light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches. Check for fires, fire hazards and other household hazards. Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly.
- ✗ Shut off any other damaged utilities.
- ✗ Confine, release, or secure your pets.
- ✗ Call your family contact—do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.
- ✗ Check on your neighbors, especially those who are elderly or disabled.

Remember to ...

- ... confine, release, or secure your pet(s).
- ... call your family contact—do not use the telephone any more than is absolutely necessary.
- ... check on your neighbors, especially elderly or disabled persons.
- ... make sure you have an adequate water supply in case service is shut off.
- ... stay away from downed power lines.

Sheltering in Place

If you are advised by local officials to "shelter in place," what they mean is for you to remain inside your home or office and protect yourself. Close and lock all windows and exterior doors. Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Close the fireplace damper. Get your disaster supplies kit, and make sure the radio is working. Go to an interior room without windows that's above ground level. In the case of a chemical threat, an above-ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air, and may seep into basements even if the windows are closed. Using duct tape, seal all cracks around the door and any vents into the room. Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate.