

Creating a Home Emergency Plan

Wildfires, flooding, earthquakes, tornadoes, and a myriad of other natural disasters are a part of life. In addition, smaller personal emergencies such as a house fire or flooded basement may also require emergency actions. It may seem like you are helpless in such situations, but there are steps you can take to prepare before a disaster occurs. The best way to prepare is to create a Home Emergency Plan.

Tailor your Emergency Plan to your own unique needs: Take into account the natural disasters for your area; some may require evacuation and some to shelter in place at home, possibly without electricity or water. Consider your housing and family situation – a one-story house will have different needs than a fifth-story apartment. Take mobility difficulties into account – can each person evacuate on their own?

Plan for evacuation and practice: Plot evacuation routes for each room in your home. Choose two meet-up areas - one close to your house a personal emergency (e.g. a house fire), and one outside of your area if you need to evacuate. Plan alternate routes in case your main route is inaccessible. Keep your car's gas tank filled in case of a sudden evacuation notice. Write down your plan and review it regularly with your whole household. Practice evacuating from each room and meeting up at the evacuation points; bring the supply kit!



Discuss communication: Create a list of essential numbers (each person in your household, emergency services, school(s), workplace(s), a contact who lives outside of your area). Decide how everyone will be notified of an emergency and how to let each other know you are safe. Choose an alternate form of communication to use in case you are unable to call or need to leave phone lines clear.

Assemble an emergency supply kit: Gather enough supplies for each person in your household for 72 hours - include any family required medications. The Department of Homeland Security has developed a list of suggested supplies: <https://templatelab.com/emergency-supplies-kit-checklist/>. Check your kit yearly and replace expired items. Store the kit in a portable container, such as a backpack, in an easy-to-access location. Consider keeping a second kit in your car in case you are away from home when an emergency happens.

Documentation practices: Keep important paperwork (ID, vital records, insurance documentation, etc.) and irreplaceable items like photographs together and easily accessible to grab and go. Keep copies in a fireproof safe or safety deposit box.

Keep pets in mind: Include supplies for all pets (food, water, leash/harness, etc.) in your supply kit. Make a list of pet-friendly hotels/shelters in your local area and along your evacuation route.

Utilize online resources: Ready.gov, redcross.org, fema.gov, and other sites have extensive information and resources available for helping you prepare for a disaster. Red Cross also has a free Emergency App.