



Disasters and emergencies can happen at any time without warning.

You can greatly increase your ability to cope during a natural disaster, terrorist threat, or bioterrorism event by simply planning ahead.

If you answer “no” to one or more of the following questions, you and your family can benefit from emergency planning.

- Do you have three to five days of essential supplies at home – enough for each of your family members?
- Does your family have an emergency communications plan? If a disaster happens, will you be able to contact all of your family members?
- Do your children know what to do during an emergency?
- Have you established a family meeting location, in case you can't reach your home?

From the federal government to individual citizens, everyone can play a role in emergency preparedness. The federal government is ready to help communities in the event of bioterrorism (for example, the intentional release of smallpox or anthrax) by having medicines, vaccines and supplies on hand. In addition, law enforcement, fire and rescue teams, and health care professionals are trained to respond to a variety of emergencies. On an individual level, there are many things you can do to plan ahead. The Prince George's County Health Department has developed this brochure to make it easier for you to prepare for an emergency. Just follow the steps outlined in the three Ps: Pack, Plan, and Practice.

1. Pack

Gather the essential supplies you and your family will need for three to five days if you can't leave your house or if you need to evacuate. This is your emergency “go-kit.”

What You Need

First, think in terms of the necessities for survival: water, food, light, and warmth:

- **Water:** One gallon per person per day, stored in plastic containers. Replace your water supply every six months.
- **Food:** Non-perishable food that doesn't require refrigeration, preparation, or cooking, plus a manual can opener and utensils. Also include baby and pet food if necessary. Replace your food supplies when the expiration dates pass.
- **Light:** Battery-operated flashlights and/or lanterns plus extra batteries, waterproof matches and/or a butane lighter, and candles.
- **Warmth:** One or two complete changes of clothes, plus one blanket or sleeping bag and pillow per person. Don't forget baby clothes and diapers if necessary.

Then, consider the other essential items you may need, such as:

- A first-aid kit, as well as any prescription medicines you or your family takes.
- A battery-operated radio. • Cell phone and extra cell phone batteries.
- Toilet paper and personal hygiene items.
- Tools — a utility knife, pliers, wrench, screwdriver, scissors, needle and thread, duct tape.

Other important items to pack include:

- Family documents, such as wills and insurance papers, social security cards, passports, etc. Store these in a waterproof container.
- Eyeglasses and/or contact lenses, dentures, or other specialty medical equipment.
- Extra car and house keys.
- Cash and credit cards.

During an emergency, you may have to evacuate your home or remain at your workplace. To prepare for these situations, have a smaller version of your go-kit in your car and office. Make sure your car also has maps and a roadside emergency kit in the trunk.

2. Plan

Having an emergency plan will help you and your family be better prepared if and when an emergency occurs.

How To Plan

First, talk to your family about the types of emergencies that are most likely to happen and explain what to do in each case. Emergency events might include:

- Household fire
- Natural disaster, such as a tornado, hurricane or earthquake
- Severe weather, such as a snow or ice storm
- Terrorism event, such as a bombing
- Bioterrorism event, such as the intentional release of smallpox or anthrax

Then, choose places for your family to meet and people to contact during an emergency:

- Show your family the safe spots in your home for each type of disaster — usually interior rooms on the lowest level of your house.
- Determine the best escape routes from your home. Identify at least two ways out.
- Pick two family meeting places: right outside your home and outside your neighborhood if you can't return home. Every family member should know the address and phone number of this location.
- Ask an out-of-state family member or friend to be your family contact. (After a disaster it is often easier to call long distance.) Tell your family to let this person know where they are if they get separated during an emergency.

Other important things to add to your emergency plan include:

- Creating an emergency plan for your pets. (Most shelters don't accept pets.)
- Teaching your children how and when to call 911.
- Installing smoke and carbon monoxide detectors at all levels of your home.
- Buying fire extinguishers for your home and teaching all family members how to use them.
- Taking a first-aid or CPR class.
- Showing family members how to turn off water, gas, and electricity at the main switches.

3. Practice

What To Do

Practicing your emergency plan ensures that you'll be able to quickly and calmly respond to an emergency.

- Conduct emergency evacuation drills from your house.
- Review your emergency plan with your family on a regular basis.
- Quiz your children every few months on what to do in case of an emergency.
- Make sure your go-kit supplies are refreshed or replenished every six months.
- Test your smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide detectors and replace the batteries every six months. Recharge your fire extinguishers every year.

Essential Items Checklist:

Plan for 3-5 days

- Water one gallon per day per family member
- Non-perishable food
- Pet and baby food
- Diapers
- Changes of clothes one or two for each family member
- Sleeping gear blankets, sleeping bags, and pillows
- Can opener and utensils
- First aid kit and medications
- Radio and flashlight battery-operated with extra batteries
- Candles, butane lighter, and waterproof matches
- Tools and household items such as scissors, a utility knife, screwdriver, wrench, duct tape
- Toilet paper
- Personal items glasses, contact lenses, prescriptions, personal hygiene items
- Extra car and house keys
- Important personal documents such as passports, social security cards, wills, etc.
- Cash and credit cards

In case of a local or national emergency, authorities will broadcast instructions on local radio and television stations.

Remember, when disaster strikes:

- Remain calm and be patient.
- Follow the advice of local emergency officials.
- Tune in to your radio or television for news and instructions.
- 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.
- Select the best location in your home to confine or secure your pet.
- 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.

Planning ahead for pets

- Get one pet carrier or crate for each pet.
- Keep your pet's vaccinations and medical records up-to-date and ready to take with you.
- Make arrangements for boarding your pet if you need to evacuate your home.
Never leave your pets tied up outside.
- Stock up on plastic bags, newspapers, and household cleaners to handle pet waste.