

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

by Amanda Ripley

Image credit: Mike Theiss/Corbis



Community Preparedness: The Facts

Research on preparedness shows that people who believe themselves "prepared" for disasters often aren't as prepared as they think. Forty percent of survey respondents did not have household plans, 80 percent had not conducted home evacuation drills, and nearly 60 percent did not know their community's evacuation routes.

Nearly 20 percent of survey respondents reported having a disability that would affect their capacity to respond to an emergency situation, but shockingly only one out of four of them had made arrangements specific to their disability to help them respond safely in the event of an emergency. Many also have pets to consider.

Our nation's emergency managers, firefighters, law enforcement officers, EMT/paramedics, and other emergency responders do an incredible job of keeping us safe, but they can't do it alone. We must all embrace our individual responsibility to be prepared - in doing so, we contribute to the safety and security of the nation as well.

Becoming more prepared in case of an emergency is easier than you might think. Whether it's your home, your neighborhood, your place of business, or your school, you can take a few simple steps to prepare your community.

Don't wait another day, do it for you, and do it for your family.

Did You Know? 78% of Americans believe preparation, planning and stocking emergency supplies will help them during a disaster.



This 72-hour kit was only \$14.99 at Costco. Don't miss a chance to have something put together for each member of your family. Find an old backpack, duffle bag or piece of luggage, even a reusable grocery bag will work great! Think about adding a multiuse tool, like a Leatherman, a flashlight that doesn't use batteries [that you shake for 1 minute and it will work for 20 minutes], but don't stop there!

Preparing Makes Sense. Get Ready Now.

1. Get a Kit of emergency supplies.

Be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to make it on your own for **at least three days**, maybe longer. While there are many things that might make you more comfortable, think first about fresh water, food and clean air.

Recommended Supplies to Include in a Basic Kit:

Water one gallon per person per day, for drinking and sanitation

Non-perishable Food at least a three-day supply

Battery-powered or hand crank **radio** and a **NOAA Weather Radio** with tone alert and **extra batteries** for both

Flashlight and **extra batteries**

First Aid kit

Whistle to signal for help

Filter mask or cotton t-shirt, to help filter the air

Moist towelettes, garbage bags and **plastic ties** for personal sanitation

Wrench or **pliers** to turn off utilities

Manual can opener if kit contains canned food

Plastic sheeting and **duct tape** to shelter-in-place

Important Family Documents

Items for unique family needs, such as daily prescription medications, infant formula or diapers



Consider two kits. In one, put everything you will need to stay where you are and make it on your own. The other should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you have to get away. For more suggestions visit webpage www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html

2. Make a Plan for what you will do in an emergency.

Plan in advance what you will do in an emergency. Be prepared to assess the situation. Use common sense and whatever you have on hand to take care of yourself and your loved ones.

Develop a Family Emergency Plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another and review what you will do in different situations.

Consider a plan where each family member calls, or e-mails, the same friend or relative in the event of an emergency. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an **out-of-town contact** may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members. Be sure each person knows the phone number and has coins or a prepaid phone card to call the emergency contact. You may have trouble getting through, or the phone system may be down altogether, but be patient. Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the attack, the first important decision is whether you stay put or get away. You should understand and plan for both possibilities. Use common sense and the information you are learning here to determine if there is immediate danger. **Watch television and listen to the radio for official instructions as they become available.**

2. Make a Plan for what you will do in an emergency. (continued)

Create a Plan to Shelter-in-Place. There are circumstances when staying put and creating a barrier between yourself and potentially contaminated air outside, a process known as sheltering-in-place and sealing the room can be a matter of survival. **If you see large amounts of debris in the air, or if local authorities say the air is badly contaminated, you may want to shelter-in-place and seal the room. Consider precutting plastic sheeting to seal windows, doors and air vents.** Each piece should be several inches larger than the space you want to cover so that you can duct tape it flat against the wall. Label each piece with the location of where it fits. Use all available information to assess the situation. Quickly bring your family and pets inside, lock doors, and close windows, air vents and replace dampers. Immediately turn off air conditioning, forced air heating systems, exhaust fans and clothes dryers. Take your emergency supplies and go into the room you have designated. Seal all windows, doors and vents. Understand that sealing the room is a temporary measure to create a barrier between you and contaminated air. Watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet for instructions from local emergency management officials.

Create a Plan to Get Away. Plan in advance how you will assemble your family and anticipate where you will go. **Choose several destinations in different directions** so you have options in an emergency. If you have a car, keep at least a half tank of gas in it at all times. **Become familiar with alternate routes as well as other means of transportation** out of your area. If you do not have a car, plan how you will leave if you have to. **Take your emergency supply kit**, unless you have reason to believe it is contaminated and lock the door behind you. Take pets with you if you are told to evacuate, however, if you are going to a public shelter, keep in mind they may not be allowed inside. If you believe the air may be contaminated, drive with your windows and vents closed and keep the air conditioning and heater turned off. Listen to the radio for instructions. Know Emergency Plans at school and work. **Talk to your children's schools and your employer about emergency plans.** Find out how they will communicate with families during an emergency. If you are an employer, be sure you have an emergency preparedness plan. Review and practice it with your employees. A community working together during an emergency also makes sense. **Talk to your neighbors about how you can work together.**

3. Be Informed about what might happen. Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling a supply kit and developing a family emergency plan, are the same for both a natural or manmade emergency. However there are significant differences among potential terrorist threats, such as biological, chemical, explosive, nuclear and radiological, which will impact the decisions you make and the actions you take. By beginning a process of learning about these specific threats, you are **preparing yourself** to react in an emergency. Go to **ready.gov** to learn more about potential terrorist threats and other emergencies or call **1-800-BE-READY** (1-800-237-3239) for a free brochure. Be prepared to adapt this information to your personal circumstances and make every effort to follow instructions received from authorities on the scene. Also learn about your community's local emergency plan. With these simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected.

4. Get Involved in preparing your community. After preparing yourself and your family for possible emergencies, take the next step and get involved in preparing your community. Learn more about **Citizen Corps**, which actively involves citizens in making our communities and our nation safer, stronger and better prepared. We all have a role to play in keeping our hometowns secure from emergencies of all kinds. Citizen Corps works hard to help people prepare, train and volunteer in their communities. Go to **www.citizencorps.gov** for more information and to get involved. **DON'T WAIT!**

Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps Cell phone and chargers
- Additional Items to Consider Adding to an Emergency Supply Kit:
- Prescription medications and glasses
- Infant formula and diapers
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container
- Cash or traveler's checks and change
- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or information from www.ready.gov
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person.
- Consider additional bedding if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes.
- Consider additional clothing if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper – When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, it can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Fire Extinguisher Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, paper towels
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children



Through its Ready Campaign, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security educates and empowers Americans to take some simple steps to prepare for and respond to potential emergencies, including natural disasters and terrorist attacks. Ready asks individuals to do three key things: get an emergency supply kit, make a family emergency plan, and be informed about the different types of emergencies that could occur and their appropriate responses. All Americans should have some basic supplies on hand in order to survive for at least three days if an emergency occurs. Following is a listing of some basic items that every emergency supply kit should include. However, it is important that individuals review this list and consider where they live and the unique needs of their family in order to create an emergency supply kit that will meet these needs. Individuals should also consider having at least two emergency supply kits, one full kit at home and smaller portable kits in their workplace, vehicle or other places they spend time.

For more information, visit www.ready.gov or call 1-800-BE-READY **Preparing Makes Sense. Get Ready Now.**