

For Immediate Release

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IS YOUR FAMILY PREPARED?

Spring is here, and everyone is getting out and enjoying the great weather we have been having. Many are out mowing yards and preparing gardens. With this preparedness, we must not forget to keep our families prepared for emergencies that can happen at home and in our community. Emergency preparedness is no longer the sole concern of those who live in earthquake or hurricane-prone areas. Assembling an emergency kit and developing a family emergency plan are the same for both natural and man-made emergencies. We all must take personal responsibility to be prepared for emergencies that can impact our families.

Preparing a kit is a simple and easy first step toward making your family prepared for emergencies. You need to have enough food, water, and other essential supplies to last for three days. The following are recommended items to include in a basic emergency kit:

- Water – one gallon per day per person for drinking and sanitation
- Food – a minimum supply of three days of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio with weather radio channels
- Flashlight with batteries
- Extra batteries for radio and flashlight
- First aid kit
- Dust masks for each person
- Duct tape and plastic sheeting to seal windows and doors
- Can opener and tools to turn off utilities
- Personal hygiene items and garbage bags for sanitation
- Local maps
- Additional items to consider are medications, pet supplies if you have a pet, important family documents, special items for anyone with special needs,

sleeping bags, blankets, a complete change of clothing, mess kits, paper and pencil, and books or other activities for children

Every family member should be involved in the decisions of making a family plan. Start with the evacuation of your home. Draw up a floor plan of your home; be sure to include windows and doors. Have everyone identify at least two ways out of each room. (Involving your kids in the planning will help them remember the escape routes better.) Discuss the best escape routes with your family. Agree on a meeting place outside the home, so it's easy to determine if a family member is missing during an emergency. Have a plan to contact 911; either use a neighbor's phone or a phone close by if you cannot contact them from your home. Practice using this evacuation plan so that everyone learns and remembers what to do in the event of an emergency.

Family communications need to be included as part of your plan. Make sure you identify one emergency contact that is out-of-town and another one that is close to your area. The out-of-town contact may be easier to contact in a large-scale emergency while the contact close to your area will be more useful during isolated emergencies. Make sure your family knows the various methods they can use to contact these emergency contacts (cell phone, text message, or neighbor's phone). Again, the best thing you can do is talk extensively about this plan so everyone in your family knows what to do to communicate during an emergency.

The final part of your plan is to understand the hazards that your community faces and know where to get reliable information about emergencies. Some of the most common hazards that face our area are floods, tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, windstorms, winter storms, and hazardous materials spills. Reliable information about these and other hazards can be obtained at the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) website at www.fema.gov. Knowing where to find information during an emergency is also essential. Tune to your local TV and radio station for watches and warnings information. Listen for information as it becomes available and follow safety instructions.

Lastly be knowledgeable about the emergency plans that are in place at your place of work and at the schools your children attend. Talk to your family about your family emergency plan and the school and work emergency plans that affect you and your family. This preparedness and knowledge will reduce the impact that emergencies have on you and your family.

A great resource to help develop your family emergency kit and plan is available at www.ready.gov. This website has many helpful hints to consider and tools to use when developing your family emergency kit and plan.

If you would like to submit questions or make topic suggestions, please access our website at www.whec.org.