

# HOPE

helping others prepare for emergencies  
**BEGINS HERE**

## FAMILY EMERGENCY PLAN

*Prepare It Forward: Learn, Live, Lead*

Prepare It Forward – prepare yourself, then help others prepare.

**Learn:** What you need to do to prepare your family.

**Live:** Take action and get a family preparedness kit.

**Lead:** Personify preparedness and inspire others to follow.

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An initiative of **CONVOY OF HOPE**

[www.convoyofhope.org](http://www.convoyofhope.org)

Content in the HOPE Begins Here *Family Emergency Plan* was drawn from [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) and other sources.

The following HOPE Begins Here *Family Emergency Plan* includes:

- Escape routes and meeting locations
- Evacuation plans
- Family communication
- Utility shut-off and safety
- Insurance and vital records
- Special needs
- Care for pets
- Care for livestock
- Safety skills

When you have completed your plan, put a copy in your HOPE Begins Here [Family Preparedness Kit](#).

**Start your *Family Emergency Plan* today and *Prepare It Forward!***

## Escape Routes and Meeting Locations

Begin by drawing a floor plan for each level in your home and, for each room, identify two escape routes. If you have children, review the drawings with them so they understand how to exit each room in an emergency. Make copies of your drawings and display at eye level in each child's room. Review escapes routes with your children regularly.

### Where to Meet

As a family, choose locations to meet in case of an emergency. Involve your children in the selection process to teach them about safety and help them remember where to meet. Remember, the scope of an emergency can be limited to your home (e.g., house fire) or affect an entire community or region. Determine meeting locations based on the potential scope of an emergency.

Record the "Where to meet..." locations and, if applicable, phone numbers in the following chart:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Where to meet...</u>	<u>Phone number</u>
<b>Around the immediate home</b>	_____ <i>Example: the next door neighbor's mailbox.</i>	
<b>In the neighborhood</b> <i>(when your street is not accessible)</i>	_____ <i>Example: the neighborhood pool.</i>	
<b>Outside the neighborhood</b>	_____ <i>Example: retail center such as a grocery store.</i>	
<b>Outside the city</b>	_____ <i>Example: gas station or retail center such as a grocery store.</i>	

## Evacuation Plans

When community evacuations become necessary, local officials provide information to the public through the media. In some circumstances, other warning methods, such as sirens or telephone calls (i.e. reverse-911), are used. Additionally, there may be circumstances under which you and your family feel threatened or endangered and you need to leave your home, school or workplace to avoid these situations.

The amount of time you have to leave will depend on the hazard. If the event is a weather condition, such as a hurricane that can be monitored, you might have a day or two to get ready. However, many disasters allow no time for people to gather even the most basic necessities, which is why planning is essential.

### Evacuation: More Common than You Realize

Evacuations are more common than many people realize. Hundreds of times each year, transportation and industrial accidents release harmful substances, forcing thousands of people to leave their homes. Fires and floods cause evacuations even more frequently. Almost every year, people along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts evacuate in the face of approaching hurricanes.

Ask local authorities about emergency evacuation routes and see if maps are available with evacuation routes marked.

### Evacuation Guidelines: Prepare Yourself and Your Family

<u>Always...</u>	<u>If time permits...</u>
<b>Keep a full tank of gas in your car if an evacuation seems likely. Gas stations may be closed during emergencies or unable to pump gas during power outages. Plan to take one car per family to reduce congestion and delay.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Get your Family Preparedness Kit.</li> </ul>
<b>Make transportation arrangements with friends or your local government if you do not own a car.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and a cap.</li> </ul>
<b>Listen to a battery-powered or hand crank AM/FM radio and follow local evacuation instructions.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Secure your home by closing and locking doors and windows.</li> <li>▪ Unplug electrical equipment, such as radios and televisions, and small appliances such as toasters and microwaves. Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding.</li> <li>▪ Leave the gas utility on unless otherwise directed by local authorities.</li> </ul>
<b>Gather your family and leave immediately if instructed to do so. Do not delay.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Let others know where you are going.</li> </ul>
<b>Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather.</b>	
<b>Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts; they may be blocked.</b>	
<b>Be alert for washed-out roads and bridges. Do not drive into flooded areas.</b>	
<b>Stay away from downed power lines.</b>	

## Family Communications

Disasters can strike at any time and without warning. For this reason, it is important to plan how you will contact each family member if you are not together when a disaster occurs. Think about how you will communicate with your spouse and/or children in different situations.

There are online interactive applications you can use to create contact cards for your family. These include:

- [Are Your Ready?](#) by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- [Be Prepared](#) by the Ad Council

You can also create your own contact cards with the following information included:

### Step 1: Adult Information

- Your primary household information
  - Address (street, city, state and zip)
  - Home Phone
- Your secondary household information (if applicable)
  - Address (street, city, state and zip)
  - Home Phone
- Adult #1 (of # in your household) information
  - Name
  - Email
  - Other email
  - Cell phone
  - Special needs information
  - Identifying characteristics (i.e. height, weight, hair color, eye color, nicknames, etc.)
- Adult #1 (of # in your household) work information
  - Business name
  - Phone
  - Address (street, city and state)
  - Point of contact or special instructions
  - Work emergency plan
- Repeat steps above for each additional adult

### Step 2: Child Information

- Child #1 (of # in your household) information
  - Name
  - Sex (male or female)
  - Email
  - Other email
  - Cell phone
  - Special needs information
  - Identifying characteristics (i.e. height, weight, hair color, eye color, nicknames, etc.)
  - Parent / guardian name(s)
- Child #1 (of # in your household) school/daycare information
  - School/daycare name
  - Office phone
  - Address (street, city and state)
  - Point of contact or special instructions
  - School emergency plan
- Repeat steps above for each additional child

### Step 3: Pet Information

- Pet #1 (of # in your household)
  - Pet's name
  - Type of animal
  - Age
- Repeat step above for each additional pet
- Veterinarian phone

**Step 4: Meeting Places** (see previous section, *Escape Routes and Meeting Locations*)

- Around the immediate home
  - Where to meet
  - Phone number
- In the neighborhood (when your street is not accessible)
  - Where to meet
  - Phone number
- Outside the neighborhood
  - Where to meet
  - Phone number
- Outside the city
  - Where to meet
  - Phone number

**Step 5: Important Numbers**

- For emergency dial 911
- Police:
- Fire:
- Hospital:
- Animal Control:
- Poison hotline: 800-222-1222
- Other:
- Other:
- Other:

**Step 6: Print Out or Photocopy Your Contact Information**

Once you have completed your contact card, have family members keep a copy handy in a wallet, purse, backpack, etc. You may want to send a copy to each child's school or daycare to keep on file. Pick a friend or relative who lives out-of-state (as your out-of-state contact) for household members to call and check in, so someone knows they are safe. **NOTE:** In some emergencies out-of-state calls may be easier to place than local calls.

Keep a copy of your family communications information posted so it is readily accessible to all family members. A copy should also be included in your HOPE Begins Here [Family Preparedness Kit](#).

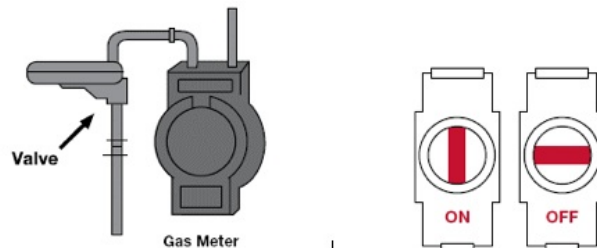
## Utility Shut-off and Safety

When a disaster strikes, local authorities may instruct you to shut off the utilities to your home. The following is general guidance for shutting off utility services. Modify this information as necessary to reflect shutoff requirements as directed by your local utility company.

### Natural Gas

Due to the explosive nature of natural gas, and the number of explosions and fires that follow other disasters, it is imperative you educate each family member how to shut off the gas utility.

- Find the main shutoff valve to your home (see diagram below) and teach family members how to turn off the natural gas (i.e. give lever a quarter turn to the right or left so it crosses the pipe as shown below). Keep a wrench near the shutoff valve or in a specified location for quick access.
- Show children what natural gas smells like and advise them to tell an adult if they ever smell natural gas.
- If you think you smell gas, hear gas escaping or see a broken line, shut off the main valve and open all doors and windows. Go to a neighbor and call your local utility company for help.
  - **DO NOT** use a hard wired phone in your home to make a call for help; doing so can create a spark and cause an explosion.
  - **DO NOT** turn on any light switch or appliance; this can cause an explosion.
- **NEVER** use matches or candles if you smell gas.
- **NEVER** turn the gas back on yourself. Always wait for your utility company, which may take several days.



### Water

Teach your family about risks associated with water leaks including damage to your home and electrocution hazards. It is vital that each member of your household learn where the shutoff valve is located and how to turn off the water.

- Find the main water shutoff valve to your home (not the street valve in the cement box at the curb—this valve is extremely difficult to turn and requires a special tool). Water valves may be located near the water meter, in a basement or garage. They are typically round wheels that you turn clockwise to shut off, or lever handles that you give a quarter turn to the right or left.
- After a major disaster, such as an earthquake or hurricane, turn off your main valve to protect the water in your home. Cracked or damaged pipes may allow contaminants into your home's water supply.

- If you have structural damage to your home, turn off the main water valve to prevent flooding and electrocution hazards.
- If you lose power during severe winter weather, consider turning off the water to your house and open a faucet to drain your pipes. Or, leave one or more faucets on allowing water to trickle which will keep pipes from freezing and breaking.
- Whether your home has city or well water, follow boil orders during disasters.
- Ensure your community water has been declared safe to drink before turning the supply back on to your home.

## Electricity

In normal circumstances and in times of disaster, maintain a healthy respect for electricity. Coming in contact with live wires, anything energized by these wires, or charged appliances can result in electrocution; especially, if you are in standing water or have wet feet.

Electrical sparks have the potential of igniting natural gas if it is leaking. It is wise to teach all responsible household members where and how to shut off the electricity.

- Find the location of your electrical panel box and teach all family members how to turn off the main breaker to your home. Electrical panel boxes are typically located in a garage, basement, laundry room, or closet. Make sure the box is properly installed so you cannot see or accidentally touch exposed wires. Call a professional electrician for proper installation.
- If you have significant flooding, smell burning insulation, smell something hot, see blackened plugs or outlets, or see lights browning or dimming several times and then go off, turn off electricity immediately and call for help.
- If you have a generator and lose power to your home, **DO NOT** hardwire generator into your electrical panel to feed your house; an explosion, fire or electrocution can result. Contact a professional electrician or vendor for information about whole-house backup generators and transfer switches.
- When using a gasoline powered generator, follow manufacturer's operation guidelines including placing generator outside in a well ventilated area to avoid carbon monoxide buildup.

## Insurance and Vital Records

Obtain property, health and life insurance if you do not have them. Review existing policies for the amount and extent of coverage to ensure what you have in place is what is required for you and your family for all possible hazards.

### Flood Insurance

If your home is located in a flood-prone area, consider purchasing flood insurance to reduce your risk of flood loss. Buying flood insurance to cover the value of your home and its contents will not only provide greater peace of mind, but will speed the recovery if a flood occurs.

Call your local government planning office or insurance agent to find out if your community participates in the [National Flood Insurance Program \(NFIP\)](#) or call the NFIP at 1 888-FLOOD29, TDD 1 800-427-5593.

### Inventory Home Possessions

Make a record of your personal property for insurance purposes. Take photos or a video of the interior and exterior of your home. Include personal belongings in your inventory. To help you record your possessions, you may also want to download the free [Household and Personal Property Inventory Book](#) from the University of Illinois. Store a copy of your home inventory photos, video and/or written records in your [Family Preparedness Kit](#) and, if possible, with an out-of-state family member or friend.

### Important Documents

Important documents should be in a water and fire proof box that, ideally, is portable. Make a copy of all documents below that apply to you and, if possible, store with an out-of-state family member or friend. Also, if you keep your originals in a bank safe deposit box, be sure to have copies readily available in another location should your bank become temporarily inaccessible.

- Birth certificates
- Bonds
- Certificates of deposit
- Charge card and bank account information
- Copy of a phone and/or utility bill addressed to you (for proof of residence)
- Copy of your will (original with your attorney)
- Death certificates
- Deeds
- Divorce certificates
- Driver's licenses
- Family records
- Financial inventory
- Home inventory
- Home, auto and life insurance policies
- Immunization records
- Legal documents/contracts
- Marriage certificates
- Medical records
- Military discharge papers
- Passports
- Social Security Cards or numbers
- Stock certificates
- Tax records
- Titles to property
- Trust documents
- Other

### Money

Consider saving money in an emergency savings account that could be used in any crisis. It is advisable to keep a small amount of cash or traveler's checks at home in a safe place where you can quickly access them in case of evacuation.

## Special Needs Preparing and Planning

If you or someone close to you has a disability or a special need, you may have to take additional steps to protect yourself and your family in an emergency.

For more information, see [Seniors & Special Needs](#) at [www.hopebeginshere.org](http://www.hopebeginshere.org). Also visit: [www.ready.gov/america/getakit/disabled.html](http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/disabled.html).

<u>Disability/Special Need</u>	<u>Additional Steps</u>
<b>Visually impaired</b>	May be extremely reluctant to leave familiar surroundings when the request for evacuation comes from a stranger. A guide dog could become confused or disoriented in a disaster. People who are blind or partially sighted may have to depend on others to lead them, as well as their dog, to safety during a disaster.
<b>Hearing impaired</b>	May need to make special arrangements to receive warnings.
<b>Mobility impaired</b>	May need special assistance to get to a shelter.
<b>Single working parent</b>	May require assistance to plan for disasters and emergencies.
<b>Non-English speaking persons</b>	May need assistance planning for and responding to emergencies. Community and cultural groups may be able to help keep people informed.
<b>People without vehicles</b>	May need to make arrangements for transportation.
<b>People with special dietary needs</b>	Should take special precautions to have an adequate emergency food supply.
<b>People with medical conditions</b>	Should know the location and availability of more than one facility if dependent on a dialysis machine or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.
<b>People with intellectual disabilities</b>	May need help responding to emergencies and getting to a shelter.
<b>People with dementia</b>	Should be registered in the <a href="#">Alzheimer's Association Safe Return Program</a> .

**If you have special needs:** Find out about special assistance that may be available in your community. Register with the office of emergency services or the local fire department for assistance so needed help can be provided.

## Check for Home Hazards

During and right after a disaster, ordinary items in the home can cause injury or damage. Anything that can move, fall, break or cause fire is a home hazard. Check for items such as bookcases, hanging pictures, or overhead lights that could fall in an earthquake or flood and block an escape path.

## Be Ready to Evacuate

Have a plan for getting out of your home or building (if necessary, ask your family or friends for assistance). Also, plan two evacuation routes out of your community because some roads may be closed or blocked in a disaster.

- Create a network of neighbors, relatives, friends, and coworkers to aid you in an emergency. Discuss your needs and make sure everyone knows how to operate necessary equipment.
- Discuss your needs with your employer.
- If you are mobility impaired and live or work in a high-rise building, have an escape chair.
- If you live in an apartment building, ask the management to mark accessible exits clearly and to make arrangements to help you leave the building.
- Keep specialized items ready, including extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, prescriptions, food for service animals, and any other items you might need.
- Be sure to make provisions for medications that require refrigeration.
- Keep a list of the type and model numbers of the medical devices you require.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your disability.
- Know the location and availability of more than one facility if you are dependent on a dialysis machine or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.

## Additional Resources

[Section 689 Reference Guide](#) provides guidelines for use by those who serve individuals with disabilities in emergency preparedness and disaster relief.

Settlement Agreement in "Brou v. FEMA" No. 06-838 (E.D. La.) ([PDF](#) 3MB, [TXT](#) 114KB)

[Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and other Special Needs \(FEMA 476\)](#) provides disaster preparedness information specific to people with disabilities and other special needs, including the elderly. Also available in Spanish: [PDF](#) 601KB, [TXT](#) 32KB.

[Emergency Preparedness Information from DisabilityInfo.gov](#) provides links to additional preparedness information, grants, assistance, government policies, initiatives, and much more.

## Care for Pets

If you evacuate your home, **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND!** Pets are not likely to survive on their own. If they do, you may not be able to find them when you return.

For additional information, visit [The Humane Society of the United States](#).

### Plan for Pet Disaster Needs

- Identifying shelter. For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets. Find out which motels and hotels in the area you plan to evacuate to allow pets—well in advance of needing them. There are also a number of guides that list hotels/motels that permit pets and could serve as a starting point. Include your local animal shelter's number in your list of emergency numbers—they might be able to provide information concerning pets during a disaster.
- Take pet food, bottled water, medications, veterinary records, cat litter/pan, can opener, food dishes, first aid kit and other supplies with you in case they are not available later. While the sun is still shining, consider packing a "pet survival" kit which could be easily deployed if disaster hits.
- Make sure identification tags are up to date and securely fastened to your pet's collar. If possible, attach the address and/or phone number of your evacuation site. If your pet gets lost, his tag is his ticket home. Make sure you have a current photo of you and your pet together for identification purposes.
- Make sure you have a secure pet carrier, leash or harness for your pet; so that if she panics, she cannot escape.
- Watch the online video entitled, [Animals in Emergencies for Owners](#). This video, developed by the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP)/FEMA, is intended to help pet and livestock owners prepare to protect their animals during emergencies.

### Prepare to Shelter Your Pet

- Call your local emergency management office, animal shelter, or animal control office to get advice and information.
- If you are unable to return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Find out where pet boarding facilities are located. Be sure to research some outside your local area in case local facilities close.
- Most boarding kennels, veterinarians and animal shelters will need your pet's medical records to make sure all vaccinations are current. Include copies in your "pet survival" kit along with a current photo of you and your pet together.
- **NOTE:** Some animal shelters will provide temporary foster care for owned pets in times of disaster, but this should be considered only as a last resort.
- If you must evacuate and leave your pet behind, notify animal rescue workers.
  - On the front of your house, in a highly visible window or on the door, write the number and types of pets in your house and their location. Include the date you evacuated.
  - Leave plenty of water in one or more large, open containers that cannot be knocked over.

- Provide sufficient food, if possible, in automatic feeders to prevent your pet from overeating.
- Do not crate or tie up your pet in your home.
- Provide a phone number where you or a contact can be reached, as well as, the name and phone number of your vet.

### **During a Disaster**

- Bring your pets inside immediately.
- Have newspapers on hand for sanitary purposes. Feed your pet moist or canned food so he will need less water to drink.
- Animals have instincts about severe weather changes and will often isolate themselves if they are afraid. Bringing them inside early can stop them from running away. Never leave a pet outside or tied up during a storm.
- Separate dogs and cats. Even if your dogs and cats normally get along, the anxiety of an emergency situation can cause pets to act irrationally. Keep small pets away from cats and dogs.
- In an emergency, you may have to take your birds with you. Talk with your veterinarian or local pet store about special food dispensers that regulate the amount of food a bird is given. Make sure that the bird is caged and the cage is covered by a thin cloth or sheet to provide security and filtered light.

### **After a Disaster**

- After a disaster if you have to leave town take your pets with you. Pets are unlikely to survive on their own.
- In the first few days after the disaster, leash your pets when they go outside. Always maintain close contact. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and your pet may become confused and lost. Also, snakes and other dangerous animals may be brought into the area by floods. Downed power lines are a hazard.
- The behavior of your pets may change after an emergency. Normally quiet and friendly pets may become aggressive or defensive. Watch animals closely. Leash dogs and place them in a fenced yard with access to shelter and water.

## Care for Livestock

If you have large animals such as horses, cattle, sheep, goats, or pigs on your property, be sure to prepare before a disaster.

### Preparation Guidelines

- Ensure all animals have some form of identification that will help facilitate their return.
- Evacuate animals whenever possible. Arrangements for evacuation, including routes and host sites, should be made in advance. Alternate routes should be mapped out in case the planned route is inaccessible.
- The evacuation sites should have or be able to readily obtain food, water, veterinary care, handling equipment, and facilities.
- Ensure vehicles and trailers needed for transporting and supporting each type of animal are available. Also make sure experienced handlers and drivers are available. **NOTE:** It is best to allow animals a chance to become accustomed to vehicular travel so they are less frightened and easier to move.
- If evacuation is not possible, a decision must be made whether to move large animals to available shelter or turn them outside. This decision should be determined based on the type of disaster and the soundness and location of the shelter (structure).

### Cold Weather Guidelines

When temperatures plunge below zero, livestock producers need to give extra attention to their animals. Prevention is the key to dealing with hypothermia, frostbite and other cold weather injuries in livestock.

Making sure your livestock have the following will help prevent cold-weather problems:

- Shelter;
- Plenty of dry bedding to insulate vulnerable udders, genitals and legs from the frozen ground and frigid winds;
- Windbreaks to keep animals safe from frigid conditions;
- And, plenty of food and water.

Also, take extra time to observe livestock and look for early signs of disease and injury. Severe cold-weather injuries or death primarily occur in the very young or in animals that are already debilitated. Cases of cold weather related sudden death in calves often result when cattle are suffering from undetected infection, particularly pneumonia. Sudden, unexplained livestock deaths and illnesses should be investigated quickly so that a cause can be identified and steps can be taken to protect remaining animals.

Animals suffering from frostbite don't exhibit pain. It may be up to two weeks before the injury becomes evident as freeze-damaged tissue starts to slough away. At that point, the injury should be treated as an open wound and a veterinarian should be consulted.

## Safety Skills

It is important that family members know how to administer first aid and CPR and how to use a fire extinguisher.

### Learn How to Administer First Aid, CPR and an Automated External Defibrillator

The American Heart Association (AHA) and local American Red Cross chapters (ARC) can provide information about First Aid, CPR and AED training. Official certification by AHA or ARC provides protection for those giving first aid under the "Good Samaritan Law."

For more information about basic life saving skills, visit the following sites:

#### **American Heart Association**

[Click here](#) for CPR Statistics

[Click here](#) for AED Programs Q&A.

[Click here](#) to locate AHA classes near you.

#### **American Red Cross**

[Click here](#) to learn more about CPR and AED and to locate classes near you.

### Learn How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

Read about fire extinguisher selection, location and use at [www.fire-extinguisher101.com](http://www.fire-extinguisher101.com). Be sure everyone in your household knows how to use your fire extinguisher and where it is kept. Minimally, you should have an ABC type fire extinguisher.