

Create a Family Disaster Plan

What is a Family Disaster Plan?

A Family Disaster Plan is a personalized action plan that lets each member of a household know what to do in particular disaster situations and how to be prepared in advance. A functional Family Disaster Plan helps alleviate fears about potential disasters, makes actual disaster situations less stressful, and saves precious time in the face of disasters.

Once you know what disasters are possible in your area, have a household meeting to talk about how to prepare and how to respond if a disaster should occur. Plan to share responsibilities and to work together as a team.

Know what to do in case household members are separated in a disaster.

Disaster situations are stressful and can create confusion. **Keep it simple.**

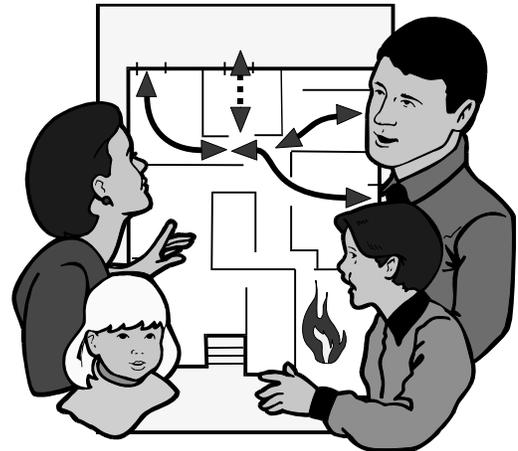
• Pick two places to meet:

1. Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
2. Outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home or are asked to leave your neighborhood.

• Pick two out-of-town contacts:

1. A friend or relative who will be your household's **primary** contact.
2. A friend or relative who will be your household's **alternative** contact.

Both adults and children should know the primary and alternative contacts' names, addresses, and home and cell telephone numbers, or carry the information with them. In addition, include these contact numbers on your pet's identification tags, or use a national pet locator service that someone could call to report finding your pet. Separation is particularly likely during the day when adults are at work and children are at school. **If household members are separated from one another in a disaster, they should call the primary contact. If the primary contact cannot**



be reached, they should call the alternative contact. Remember, after a disaster, it is often easier to complete a long distance connection than a local call.

Make sure that adults and children know how to tell the contact where they are, how to reach them, and what happened or to leave this essential information in a brief voice mail.

• **Discuss what to do if a family member is injured or ill.**

• **Discuss what to do in the rare circumstance that authorities advise you to shelter-in-place.**

• **Discuss what to do if authorities advise you to evacuate.** Learn about public shelter locations in your community. Make “in-case-of-evacuation” arrangements for a place to stay with a friend or relative who lives out of town or with a hotel, motel, or campground you are familiar with that can be reached by an evacuation route you would expect to take.

• **Be familiar with evacuation routes.** Plan several evacuation routes in case certain roads are blocked or closed. Remember to follow the advice of local officials during evacuation situations. They will direct you to the safest route; some roads may be blocked or put you in further danger.

• **Plan how to take care of your pets.** Pets (other than service animals) usually are not permitted in public shelters or other

places where food is served. Plan where you would take your pets if you had to go to a public shelter where they are not permitted.

- **Post emergency numbers (fire, police, ambulance, etc.) by telephones.** You may not have time in an emergency to look up critical numbers.

- **Take a first aid and CPR class** and have other household members take one too. You will learn basic safety measures and skills that can be indispensable in an emergency.

- **Plan home escape routes.** Determine the best escape routes from inside your home in case a fire or other emergency requires you to leave the house quickly. Find two ways out of each room.

- **Make a complete inventory of your home, garage, and surrounding property.** The inventory can be written or videotaped. Include information such as serial numbers, make and model numbers, physical descriptions, and what you paid (receipts, if possible). This inventory could help you prove the value of what you owned if your possessions are damaged or destroyed and can help you claim deductions on taxes. Do this for all items in your home, on all levels.

- **Keep the originals of important documents in a safe deposit box,** if possible, and make two copies of each document. Keep one set of copies in a waterproof, fire-resistant, portable container in your home and give the other set of copies to an out-of-town relative or friend.

Important documents include:

- Wills, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, vehicle titles, stocks and bonds

- Passports, driver's licenses, work identification badges, social security cards, immunization records

- List of bank account names and numbers and credit card names and numbers

- Inventory of valuable household goods

- Important telephone and cell phone numbers

- Family records (birth, marriage, adoption, and death certificates)

- For your pets, vaccination and veterinary records, photographs showing your pet clearly (best with you in the photos), and any other special records

- **Practice and maintain your plan.** Practicing your plan will help you respond appropriately and quickly during an actual emergency. **To make sure your household is ready for disaster:**

- **Review your Family Disaster Plan and your Disaster Supplies Kit at least every six months.** You may need to update them.

- **Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills at least twice a year.**

- At home, practice escaping from various rooms, particularly bedrooms, and meeting at the place you have selected right outside your home.

- Have each driver actually drive evacuation routes so each will know the way. Select alternative routes and familiarize drivers with them in case the main evacuation route is blocked during an actual disaster.

- Mark your evacuation routes on a map and keep the map in your Disaster Supplies Kit. Remember to follow the advice of disaster officials during an evacuation. They will direct you to the safest route, away from roads that may be blocked or put you in further danger.

- **Include your pets in your evacuation and sheltering drills.** Practice evacuating your pets so they will get used to entering and traveling calmly in their carriers. If you have horses or other large animals, be sure that they are accustomed to entering a trailer. Practice bringing your pets indoors, into your safe room, so that if you are required to shelter-in-place, they will be comfortable