



Common Myths about Disasters and Preparedness

MYTH: If something happens all I have to do is call 911 and someone will come protect me.

FACT: When a major disaster strikes, help from local emergency personnel can only go so far or be there only so quickly. Security begins at home and the responsibility for your safety and the safety of your family rests directly on your own shoulders. Don't just assume help is around the corner – do what you can to be self-sufficient while you wait.

MYTH: All I need is a 72-hour kit with a flashlight, first aid kit, some food and water and a radio to hear further instruction.

FACT: A more practical goal is to be self-sufficient for a minimum of two weeks.

MYTH: Good preparedness is too expensive and too complicated.

FACT: There are thousands of simple and economical things we can do to drastically improve our ability to deal with an emergency. The notion that it might be expensive or complicated has come from companies that market unnecessary and over-priced gear.

MYTH: All I have to worry about is my own family.

FACT: Technically yes, but the more you're able to care for your own family, the more you can help others. Helping others is our highest civic duty and one of the best ways to help our country and our fellow citizen. No one regulates this and you don't have to get anyone's permission to coordinate your safety with others. There are many advantages to being listed with these other groups or establishing a good liaison, but it's not required.

MYTH: If my town is hit by a 'Weapon of Mass Destruction' terrorist attack, we're all dead anyway.

FACT: "Mass Destruction" does NOT mean "Total Destruction." These things are survivable, but it will take individual preparedness.

MYTH: Nothing like that could ever happen here or to me.

FACT: Though some areas of the country are more prone to certain types of disasters, say earthquakes in California, or tornadoes in the Midwest, the truth is that no area on earth is completely immune from disasters or general disruption. Prepare accordingly. Also, with as much as people travel, you really don't know where you'll be or what you'll be doing from one month to the next. You might travel somewhere and wind up in a disaster you never thought about. Learn to protect yourself from all types of disaster.

MYTH: I don't need to learn about emergency preparedness – my kids will learn about it in school.

FACT: Preparedness is critical for everyone, and we can't rely on schools alone to train us on how to be safe. Schools only have so much time and budget to teach the things they already do. This is one of the many things we're trying to change across the country. Team SAFE-T (School and Family Emergency Training): A California Partnership for Safety and Preparedness is an alliance of public and private organizations dedicated to integrating safety and preparedness in schools throughout California.

Not only will it help kids to be better prepared, the program's take-home materials also will help parents get involved so the whole family can be ready for an emergency. To learn about the Team SAFE-T program, send an email to support@teamsafe-t.org or call toll free at 1-866-71 SAFE-T.

In the meantime, to ensure your family is ready for a disaster, everyone needs to work together on learning the steps to take in an emergency.

MYTH: I can get all the preparedness information I need for free off the Internet.

FACT: There are a lot of free sources that contain some really good information, however, you should pick your sources carefully. Visit www.teamsafe-t.org for information and links to credible emergency preparedness organizations.

MYTH: If something really bad happens, NO one will help.

FACT: There's no such thing as "no one helping." Though help can only go so far and be there so quickly, some help will come at some time to those who truly need it. The best thing people can do to help themselves and to help others is to prepare their families so they need as little outside help as possible. By being as self-sufficient as possible, you can help free up assistance resources to help those who are the most critically injured.

MYTH: If there's an earthquake, I'll head for a doorway or the outdoors. These are my best options.

FACT: Never stand under a doorway during an earthquake. The door might hit you causing greater bodily harm. And, never head for the outdoors where falling wires and other debris can hit you. The best option is to hide under a desk or a table that covers your entire body and is located away from windows. Be sure to hold the table down as best as possible and cover your head.

MYTH: If an earthquake happens at night, the first thing I need to do is check on other family members who might be sleeping.

FACT: If you are in bed when an earthquake happens, stay put! Protect your head with a pillow and wait until the shaking stops before you get up to check on others.

MYTH: If I'm trapped, the best thing to do is yell and scream. Otherwise, people won't know where I am.

FACT: If you're trapped under a building, never scream or yell. You could inhale dangerous toxins that have been released – many of which are not visible to the naked eye. Try tapping on a wall or using an emergency whistle to notify rescue teams that you are trapped.

MYTH: I need to stockpile water for use in an emergency.

FACT: There are a number of drinking water sources in your home already, including:

- The toilet tank – provided it doesn't contain chemical cleaners.
- The spout on your water heater – if you're concerned the water is too dirty, just add 1/8 teaspoon chlorine bleach for every gallon and the water will be clean.
- The water in canned fruits. If you get desperate enough, drink the water. Just be sure to stay away from salty foods.

Visit www.teamsafe-t.org for information and links to credible emergency preparedness organizations.



Emergency Preparedness Checklist

- ❑ **Identify your risk.** Be aware of hazards where you live or work.
- ❑ **Eliminate hazards in your home and the workplace.**
- ❑ **Create a family disaster plan.** Include things like a family meeting place, out-of-state “family contacts,” places to get emergency information in your community and instructions on how to care for family pets.
- ❑ **Share your plan with neighbors.** Disasters often strike entire communities not just a single home.
- ❑ **Make sure your work and/or school has written emergency plans.** Get copies of each plan.
- ❑ **Be sure your work and/or school conducts practice safety drills regularly.** Talk to your kids about their school's emergency plan.
- ❑ **Build a disaster supply kit for your home and car.**
- ❑ **Work with your school to make sure it has a first aid and a disaster supply kit in each classroom.**
- ❑ **Post emergency telephone numbers by your phones.** Be sure to include local fire, police and ambulance phone numbers.
- ❑ **Install smoke alarms on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.** A smoke alarm should also be in your bedroom if you sleep with your bedroom door closed.
- ❑ **Have a fire extinguisher in the home and know how to use it.** Fire departments will show you how.
- ❑ **Keep your records safe.** Make two photocopies of vital documents and put one in a safe deposit box, another in a safe place in the house (such as in your emergency supplies kit), and/or give a copy to an out-of-town friend or relative.
- ❑ **Know where the safe places are in your home for each kind of disaster.** Plan escape routes out of the house and, if possible, two ways out of each room.
- ❑ **Make a complete inventory list of your home, garage and surrounding property to help you prove the value of your damaged or destroyed possessions.** Store a copy outside the home in a safety deposit box or with a family member or friend.
- ❑ **Be sure you have adequate insurance coverage and a copy of your insurance plan.**
- ❑ **Prepare your children.** Talk to your kids about what the risks are and what your family will do if disaster strikes.
- ❑ **Don't forget those with special needs.** Infants, seniors and those with special needs must not be forgotten and often require special planning.
- ❑ **Learn CPR and First Aid.**
- ❑ **Contact your local American Red Cross to find out about training courses or programs that can help your work or school prepare for emergencies.** To contact the Team SAFE-T program you can send an email to support@teamsafe-t.org or call free at 1-866-71 SAFE-T.
- ❑ **Get involved, volunteer, bear responsibility.** Donate blood, join a local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), educate your neighbors or volunteer with your local American Red Cross.



FAMILY DISASTER KIT CHECKLIST

Following is a list of the *essentials* for what you will need to create your own home disaster kit. You might be surprised to see that most of the items are things you already have. Even if you have everything on this list, now is the best time to organize everything so it is all together when you need it. Medications change, babies arrive, new pets join the family and people move. Check and update your water, food, batteries, medications and contact phone numbers at least once a year.

- Cell Phone, charger (there are also emergency crank or battery powered cell phone chargers) and headset so you can talk hands free.
- Bottled water (1 gallon per person per day for drinking, plus an additional gallon for teeth brushing, bathing, cooking, etc.).
- Battery-powered radio with extra batteries.
- Flashlight **and** batteries.
- Keep your vehicle fueled up. Get in the habit of not letting your gas tank get below half full. In an emergency, when it may be difficult or impossible to get fuel, you will be very thankful you have it.
- Dry and canned foods **and** can opener (make sure the canned and packaged foods don't have too much salt – they will make you more thirsty and with limited water around, that isn't the best thing).
- Disposable eating utensils, dinnerware and cooking tools.
- Baby needs, including diapers, wipes and food.
- Pet needs, food, water, collar and leash.
- Medical supplies, including prescription medications, eyeglasses, contacts, etc.
- Toilet paper, paper towels, hand sanitizer and feminine needs.
- Trash bags.
- Soap and toiletries.

- Scissors and tweezers.
- Utility knife.
- Crow bar.
- First Aid Kit including:
 - first aid instruction guide
 - bandages of various sizes and types
 - elastic wrap
 - adhesive tape
 - finger splints
 - eye pads
 - sterile dressings
 - gauze roll
 - examination gloves
 - instant cold pack
 - burn cream
 - antibacterial ointment
 - alcohol prep pads
 - hydrogen peroxide spray
- Comfortable thick soled shoes and socks.
- Whistle.
- Waterproof matches and emergency candles (do not use if you smell gas or hear a hissing sound).
- Duct tape.
- Rope.
- Emergency blanket.
- Work gloves.
- Small towel or clean rag.
- Bandana or dust mask.
- Change of clothes.
- Cap or visor.

- Pen and paper.
- Emergency contact numbers.
- Emergency gas shut off tool.
- Fire extinguisher.
- Road map.
- Important personal documents.
- Comfort items - especially for children (stuffed animal, toy, cards, etc.)
- Backpack to store important items so you can grab and go.



Family Contact Plan

Name _____

Family members are not always together when an emergency occurs, but your family can get back together if you have a plan. Be sure that every member of your family knows where to meet and whom to call. Choose emergency contacts that everyone knows and can easily reach. Do not forget to let the contacts know that members of your family may call them in an emergency.

Directions: Fill out this sheet with the members of your family. (Return the completed sheet to your teacher. Your teacher will review it and send it back home with you.)

Set up two family meeting places:

1. One right outside the building in case you need to leave your home in an emergency, such as a fire. (For example, your meeting place could be at the street light in front of your home, under the tree with the tire swing, next door at the Smith's front gate.)

Meeting place 1:

2. One outside of your neighborhood in case you cannot get back home when a disaster happens. (For example, your meeting place could be at your grandparents' house across town, in front of the library in the next neighborhood.)

Meeting place 2:

Designate an out-of-town contact.

(It is often easier to call long distance than within the same area during an emergency.)

Name _____

Telephone number (____) _____

Family Emergency Contacts List

Family members work numbers

Neighbor's or relatives name and phone number

In-Town meeting place

Out-of-town contact's name and number

Keep a copy of this list in a handy place at home. Keep a copy of this list with your Family Disaster Supplies Kit. Review this list periodically to keep it up to date.