

# How to Prepare for an Emergency

More than **80%** of Americans live in counties that have experienced a weather-related disaster.<sup>1</sup> However, only **39%** of Americans have created an emergency plan for their households.<sup>1</sup> While it's almost impossible to predict when an emergency or natural disaster will occur, creating a plan may help keep your family safe in the event of one. The better prepared you are, the more comfortable you'll be if you have to put your plan into action.



## KNOW THE RISKS

No matter where you live, your region may be susceptible to one or more emergency situations or weather hazards, including: earthquakes, wildfires, flooding, tornadoes, hurricanes or blizzards. Although some of these events—like hurricanes—may provide some advanced warning, others—like earthquakes—are hard to predict. Most of these occurrences may lead to extended power outages; however, if you live in an area where they are likely, having a plan will help you prepare for the next event.

Other emergencies can happen at any time, such as a house or building fire. Common causes include faulty appliances, electrical components and smoking. In fact, cooking equipment was the cause of **45%** of home structure fires from 2009-2013.<sup>2</sup>

## DECIDE ON AN EMERGENCY MEETING PLACE

Emergency situations are chaotic. In the midst of the confusion, it can be difficult to get in touch with loved ones. Decide on a meeting place with your family ahead of time to reduce some of the initial stress. Choose three locations: one in the neighborhood, one in your town and one out-of-town, and make sure everyone knows how to get there. Your safe area may vary depending on the emergency—for example, in the event of a tornado or hurricane, stay away from windows and take cover in an interior room of your home or building, on the lowest floor.

## MAKE A PLAN

Make a plan that outlines all the information you'll need to know in the event of an emergency. Not only will it help you get to a safe location, it'll also allow you to let your loved ones know you're safe.

### 1. Create a spreadsheet that includes:

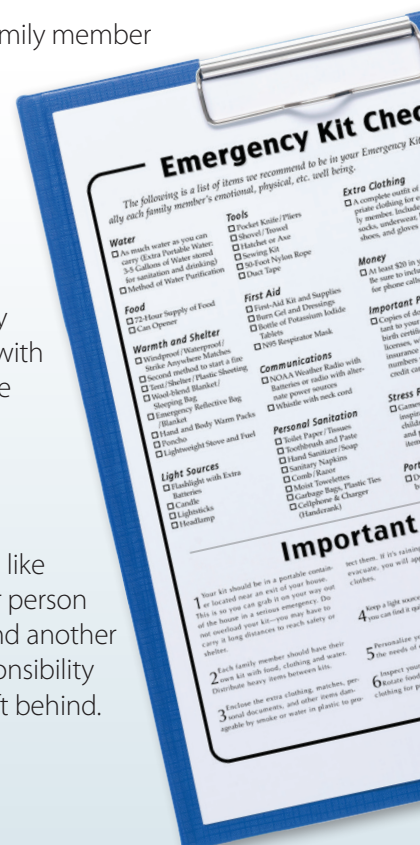
- Names and nicknames of each family member
- Phone numbers
- Email addresses
- Names of doctors
- Places of work
- Schools

### 2. Plan a safe evacuation route.

If you're home when an emergency occurs, you may have to evacuate with little to no notice. Select several safe evacuation routes, and make sure everyone is familiar with them.

### 3. Assign roles.

Have someone turn off the utilities, like water and electricity, while another person packs the important documents and another grabs pets. Giving everyone a responsibility will ensure nothing important is left behind.



Visit [www.ready.gov/make-a-plan](http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan) to download an emergency plan template you can tailor to your family's needs.





**60%**  
of Americans  
haven't practiced  
what to do in a  
disaster.

Source: FEMA



## COLLECT IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Organize important documents in one place—such as an accordion folder or fireproof safe—so you can easily grab them in case of an emergency. Sort them into categories: personal documents, financial, home, insurance, taxes, health/medical and employment. Also, keep any flash drives, removable hard drives or other storage media in the same location.

## PRACTICE

Now that you have a plan, be sure to review and practice it with your family regularly. The more familiar you are with your plan, the more prepared you'll be in the event of an emergency. And, the more prepared you are, the safer you'll be.

## STAY CONNECTED

Know what to do when disaster strikes! Sign up for text alerts from your local emergency services to receive warnings and other up-to-date hazard information. Also, download weather apps to your smartphone to stay on top of dangerous weather-related activity.

If you find yourself in an emergency situation, send a text to your family to let them know you're safe. Texts are more likely to get through busy lines.

Sources: 1. FEMA  
2. NFPA, U.S. Home Structure Fires Fact Sheet

# Remember Your Pets

Our pets are family members, too. Don't forget to include them in your emergency preparation and evacuation plans. Visit [ASPCA.org](http://ASPCA.org) to get a free Pet Safety Pack, that includes a window sticker to let rescue workers know if your pet is inside or if has been evacuated.

## Your Pet's Emergency Kit

- 3-7 days worth of food and water
- Documents, such as copies of the pet's medical records and current photos, just in case you're separated
- Sanitary items, such as garbage bags, litter and disposable trays for cats, and cage liners for dogs
- Miscellaneous pet items, such as extra harnesses, collars, leashes, a travel carrier and a blanket



*When you're researching  
emergency meeting places,  
make sure they're pet friendly.*