

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away. Families can, and do, cope with disaster by preparing in advance and working together as a team. Follow the four(4) steps to safety to create your family's disaster plan. Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility.

FOUR(4) STEPS TO SAFETY

1. Find Out What Could Happen to You:

Contact your local Office of Emergency Preparedness and American Red Cross chapter. Be prepared to take notes:

- a. Ask what types of disaster are most likely to happen. Request information on how to prepare for each.
- b. Ask about animal care after disaster. Animals may not be allowed inside emergency shelters due to health regulations.
- c. Find out how to help elderly or disabled persons, if needed.
- d. Next, find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or daycare center, and other places where your family spends time.

2. Create a Disaster Plan:

Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, severe weather, and earthquakes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.

- a. Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.
- b. Pick two places to meet:
 - Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
 - Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone must know that location (the address and phone number.)
- c. Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "family contact". After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your contact person's phone number.
- d. Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets.

3. Complete This Checklist:

"Call our Emergency Preparedness Office"

- a. Post emergency telephone numbers near phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.)
- b. Teach children how and when to call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) number for emergency help.
- c. Find out which disasters could occur in your area.
- d. Ask how to prepare for each disaster.
- e. Ask how you would be warned of an emergency.
- f. Learn your community evacuation routes.
- g. Ask about special assistance for elderly or disabled persons.
- h. Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room.
- i. Find the safe spots in your home for each type of disaster.

Also....

- a. Ask your workplace about emergency plans.
- b. Learn about emergency plans for your children's school or day care center.

4. Practice and Maintain Your Plan:

- a. Quiz your kids every six months so they remember what to do.
- b. Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills.
- c. Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six months.
- d. Test and recharge your fire extinguisher or extinguishers according to manufacturer's instructions.
- e. Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

Plan ahead; Get Disaster Information from "Family Disaster Plan." developed by the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) and the [American Red Cross](#).