



# Visa READY!

*A Household Preparedness Guide*

Visa Corporate Services

Enterprise Resiliency Program Office

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## **AN INFORMATIONAL RESOURCE FOR WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY**

- What to Have in Your Head
- What to Have in Your Hand
- What to Have in Your Home





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# 1. Introduction

Visa has worked hard to prepare for emergencies. A number of sectors in our communities are preparing as well, including but not limited to, schools, non-profit organizations, and other businesses.

Although Visa can respond to disasters, only you can prepare yourself and your household for emergencies. As you read this guide, you will see how easy it is to prepare.

*Visa READY! A Household Preparedness Guide* describes many of the emergencies we could face and provides important information on how to respond and prepare. Following these suggestions could help you and your household, take control of disasters.

## 1.1 Please Read This Guide Carefully

Keep the *Visa READY! A Household Preparedness Guide* close at hand. Share the information with family, friends, and neighbors.

**Be prepared!**





## 2. Emergency Preparedness and Advice for You and Your Family

Emergency preparedness is as simple as planning ahead. It's easy and inexpensive, anyone can do it! Go over the checklists below with your household to determine how you can take control of an emergency.

Check and update your kits when you change your clocks during daylight-saving times. Make sure they are complete and ready to go.

### 2.1 Household Disaster Plan Checklist

#### 2.1.1 What to Have in Your Head

With your household members, develop a disaster plan that outlines what to do, how to find each other, and how to communicate in an emergency. **To assist you, wallet-size cards are provided in the [Emergency Response Plan](#), page 59.** Make photocopies if necessary. **Also see [Evacuation](#), page 7.**

Decide where your household will reunite after a disaster. Identify two places to meet: one right outside your home and another outside your neighborhood, such as a library, community center, or place of worship.

- Make sure everyone knows the address and phone number of your second meeting place.
- Know and practice all possible exit routes from your home and neighborhood.
- Designate an out-of-state friend or relative who household members can call if separated during a disaster. If phone circuits in your area are busy, this out-of-state contact can be an important way to communicate between household members. When local phone circuits are busy, long-distance calls may be easier to make.
- Plan for everybody's needs, especially infants, seniors, people with special needs or medical conditions, and non-English speakers.
- Practice your plan with all household members.
- Ensure that household members have a copy of your household disaster plan.
- Familiarize yourself with emergency plans for work-place, school, child's school or daycare, and other relevant institutions.

## 2.2 “Go Bag” Checklist

### 2.2.1 What to Have in Your Hand

Every household should consider assembling a “Go Bag.” This bag is a collection of items you may need in the event of an evacuation. Each household member's “Go Bag” should be packed in a sturdy, easy-to-carry container such as a backpack or suitcase on wheels. A “Go Bag” should be easily accessible if you have to leave your home in a hurry. Make sure it is ready to go at all times throughout the year. [Also see Evacuation, page 7.](#)

- Copies of your important documents in a waterproof and portable container (insurance cards, birth certificates, deeds, photo IDs, proof of address, etc.).
- Extra set of car and house keys.
- Credit and ATM cards, and cash, especially in small denominations. We recommend you keep at least \$50–\$100 on hand.
- Bottled water and non-perishable food such as energy or granola bars.

- Flashlight, battery-operated AM/FM radio, and extra batteries. You can also buy wind-up radios that do not require batteries at retail stores.
- Medication for at least one week and other essential personal items. Be sure to change medications before they expire. Keep a list of the medications each member of your household takes, their dosages or copies of all your prescription slips, and your doctor's name and phone number.
- First-aid kit.
- Sturdy, comfortable shoes, lightweight raingear, and a Mylar blanket.
- Contact and meeting place information for your household, and a small regional map.
- Childcare supplies or other special needs items.

## 2.3 Emergency Supply Kit Checklist

### 2.3.1 What to Have in Your Home

Keep enough supplies in your home to survive on your own for at least three days. If possible, these materials should be kept separate in an easily accessible, container or special cupboard. All members of your household should understand that these supplies are for emergency use only. **Also see [Shelter in Place, page 8](#).**

- One gallon of drinking water per person per day.
- Non-perishable, ready-to-eat canned foods and a manual can opener.
- First-aid kit, medications, and prescriptions.
- Flashlight, battery-operated AM/FM radio, and extra batteries.
- Whistle.
- Iodine tablets or one quart unscented bleach (for disinfecting water ONLY if directed to do so by health officials) and eyedropper (for adding bleach to water).
- Personal hygiene items: soap, feminine hygiene products, toothbrush, and toothpaste, etc.



- Sturdy shoes, heavy gloves, warm clothes, a Mylar blanket, and lightweight raingear.
- Extra fire extinguisher.
- Phone that does not rely on electricity.
- Childcare supplies or other special needs items.
- Other supplies and tools.



### 3. General Emergency Response

Responding to an emergency can be easier if you plan ahead.

#### **Evacuate immediately when you ...**

- Are directed to do so by an emergency official
- Are in immediate danger

#### 3.1 Evacuation

**In some cases, it may be necessary to evacuate your home or neighborhood. Emergency Management officials will tell you when to evacuate through the media and direct warnings. Evacuation is used as a last resort when a serious threat to public safety exists.**

### 3.1.1 Be Prepared to Evacuate

- If there is time, secure your home: close and lock windows and doors, and unplug appliances before you leave. Authorities will instruct you if it is necessary to turn off utilities.
- Wear sturdy shoes and comfortable, protective clothing such as long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Bring your “Go Bag” with you.
- Know your workplace, school, and child’s school evacuation plan.
- Remember, evacuation routes change based on the emergency so stay tuned to the local radio or television or other external emergency broadcasts.

See [Emergency Preparedness and Advice for You and Your Family](#), page 3.

## 3.2 Shelter in Place

**When evacuation is neither appropriate nor possible, you may be asked to stay where you are currently located. Sheltering in place is an effective way to protect yourself and your family in many emergencies involving contaminated air. However, you should only do so if directed by emergency officials.**

### 3.2.1 If You Are Asked to Shelter in Place

- Go inside your home or the nearest appropriate facility (school, library, place of worship, etc.).
- Take shelter in a room that has few doors or windows. Ideally, a room to shelter in place should allow at least 10 square feet per person.
- Make use of your “Go Bag” and Emergency Supply Kit.
- Seal all doors and windows.
- Turn off all ventilation systems.
- Do not use the phone – keep the phone line available for emergency information and updates.
- Stay tuned to your radio or television for emergency information and updates.

See [Emergency Preparedness and Advice for You and Your Family](#), page 3.

### 3.2.2 Disaster Sheltering

**Some emergencies may require that you leave your home and travel to an emergency shelter. Your city should have a list of shelter sites appropriate for various types of disasters. Local officials will inform you when sheltering is necessary.**

#### *Disaster Sheltering Guidelines*

- If you can, try to seek shelter with friends or relatives outside the affected area.
- Evacuation shelters can be set up in schools, municipal buildings and places of worship. They provide basic food and water. If possible, bring clothing, bedding, bathing and sanitary supplies, special food needs and pre-filled prescriptions and other medications to shelters.
- Alcoholic beverages, firearms and illegal substances are not allowed in emergency shelters.
- You cannot bring pets to shelters. Only service animals are allowed. [See Tips for Pet Owners, page 50, if you have pets.](#)
- Take your “Go Bag” to the shelter with you.
- Cooperate with shelter managers and other people in order to make a difficult situation less stressful.
- Remember, shelter sites change based on the emergency so stay tuned to the local radio or television news and external emergency announcements.

## 3.3 Utilities Disruptions

**Utilities disruptions are an occasional inconvenience of the modern age.**

### 3.3.1 If You Lose Phone Service

- Use your cell phone, or borrow one from a friend or neighbor if possible, and call your provider to report the outage.
- If you have a cordless phone, keep in mind you may lose service during a power outage. It is a good idea to have a phone that does not rely on electricity.
- Fire alarm boxes will continue to work.

### 3.3.2 If You Smell Gas

- Do **NOT** smoke or light lighters or matches. If the odor is very strong, do not use your phone or operate any light switches or electrical devices – any spark could cause a fire.
- Open windows.
- Evacuate immediately, call 911 and notify your utility company.
- Know where your gas shut off valve is located and how to turn the gas off.

## 3.4 Water and Sewer-Related Problems

It is always a good idea to have a supply of bottled water in the house.

- If you see water coming up from the ground or roadway, or suspect a water main break, contact your state or federal Environmental Protection Agency. Be prepared to provide the following information on the phone: a description of the condition; what is being affected (street, cellar, basement, subway, etc.); the exact location of the problem; and your name, address and telephone number.
- If you have no water or very low water pressure, call your local water utility district.
- If authorities determine that there is a concern about drinking water quality, you will be advised of what actions to take. In some cases, you may be told not to use the water for cooking or drinking purposes unless it is boiled, treated with bleach or iodine, or disinfected by other means. In an extreme case, you may be told not to use the water for cooking, drinking, hand washing or bathing purposes.
- If there is a drought, authorities will advise you to conserve water. Please restrict your water use as much as possible. If the drought worsens, mandatory drought restrictions can be imposed. Conservation measures can slow the depletion rate of the stored water and potentially postpone or eliminate the threat of serious water shortages.

### 3.5 If There is a Power Outage

- Call your power provider immediately to report the outage.
- Disconnect or turn off all appliances that would otherwise go on automatically when service is restored. If several appliances start up at once, they may overload the electric circuits.
- In order to prevent food spoilage, keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Each time the door is opened, heat enters and speeds up the thawing process.
- Stay indoors if possible. Never touch or go near downed power lines, even if you think they are safe.
- Keep a battery-operated radio on for updates on the restoration process.
- If you lose power and/or heat in the winter, insulate your home as much as possible.
- **Do not** burn charcoal indoors and **do not** use your kitchen gas range to heat rooms as this can lead to fire or a hazardous smoke condition.
- **Do not** use generators indoors. Without proper ventilation they can create deadly carbon monoxide.





## 4. Hazard-Specific Information

The following contains information about specific emergencies that may affect various geographic locations.

### 4.1 Weather Disasters

Weather is monitored closely by various government agencies. Severe weather should be taken seriously – it can be dangerous and harm both you and your property.

#### 4.1.1 Severe Weather – Thunderstorms, Flash Flooding, Tornadoes, and Tsunamis

##### *In a Thunderstorm*

- Avoid handling metal, electrical equipment, telephones, bathtubs, water faucets and sinks because lightning can follow the wires and pipes. Be especially careful with televisions.
- If there is a severe thunderstorm, take cover immediately in a stable facility, but avoid trees.

### *In a Flash Flood*

Seek high ground. Never attempt to drive your vehicle through standing water even if it appears shallow.

### *In a Tornado*

Go to your basement or the lowest point of your residence, or an interior room or hallway without windows. If you are outdoors or cannot find shelter, take cover in a ditch or other recessed area.

### *Tsunamis*

- The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) is responsible for providing warnings to international authorities, Hawaii, and U.S. territories within the Pacific Basin.
- All tsunamis are potentially dangerous, even though they may not damage every coastline they strike. The California coastline is vulnerable, but tsunamis are infrequent.
- Understand the hazard and learn how to protect yourself.
- Evacuation is key. Be familiar with the tsunami warning signs.
  - *A strong earthquake lasting 20 seconds or more near the coast may generate a tsunami.*
  - *A noticeable rapid rise or fall in coastal waters is also a sign that a tsunami is approaching.*
- Learn about tsunami risk in your community by contacting your local emergency management office or the American Red Cross.

**If you are asked to evacuate, please do so immediately.**

## 4.2 National Weather Service Terms

Severe Thunderstorm Watch	There is potential for thunderstorms to form that can produce wind gusts greater than 58mph and/or hail greater than ¾ of an inch in diameter.
Severe Thunderstorm Warning	A severe thunderstorm is occurring.
Tornado Watch	A tornado could form in the next few hours.
Tornado Warning	A tornado has been reported and/or the National Weather Service radar has detected a tornado or tornadic signature.
Flash Flood Watch	Localized flooding due to heavy rainfall is possible.
Flash Flood Warning	Localized flooding due to heavy rainfall is imminent.
Tsunami Watch	A tsunami was or may have been generated, but is at least two hours travel time to the area watch status.
Tsunami Warning	A tsunami was or may have been generated, which could cause damage. People in the warned area are strongly advised to evacuate.
Freezing Rain Advisory	Minor accumulation of ice due to freezing rain is expected.
Winter Weather Advisory	A minor accumulation of snow, sleet, and freezing rain is expected.
Snow Advisory	Accumulations of one to four inches are expected within a 12-hour period.
Blizzard Warning	Strong winds, blinding driven snow and dangerous wind chill are expected in the next several hours.
Winter Storm Watch	Significant accumulation of snow and/or ice is possible within 36 hours.
Winter Storm Warning	A storm with six or more inches of snow/sleet/freezing rain within a 24-hour period is expected.

See the National Weather Service website at [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov) for more information.

### 4.3 Some Measures to Assist You in Weathering Major Storms

- Shutter or board windows.
- Secure outdoor objects such as lawn furniture or garbage cans that could blow away and cause damage or injury.
- Never touch or go near downed power lines, even if you think they are safe.
- In extreme conditions, consider shutting off power and appliance gas switches to prevent damage to your appliances.

### 4.4 During Severe Weather

- Dress appropriately for weather conditions.
- Stay updated by watching TV or listening to the radio. The National Weather Service broadcasts forecasts, warnings, and other information 24 hours a day. Special weather radios are available at local retail stores.

### 4.5 Winter Weather

**Dangerous winter weather includes winter storms and blizzards. These can involve a combination of heavy snow, ice accumulation, and dangerous wind chills.**

#### 4.5.1 Dress Warmly and Stay Dry

- Wear hats, scarves, layers and water-repellent coats. Wear mittens instead of gloves as they are warmer.
- Make sure small children – especially babies – stay warm, as infants can easily become hypothermic under conditions that would not necessarily be as dangerous for adults.

#### 4.5.2 Cover Your Mouth

Protect your lungs from extremely cold air by covering your mouth when outdoors.

### 4.5.3 Avoid Overexertion

Take your time while shoveling snow or pushing a car. Stretch before you go out and drink plenty of non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated fluids.

### 4.5.4 Car Safety

Be sure to clear snow from the tail pipe before you start your car to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. **Also see [Carbon Monoxide](#), page 22.**

### 4.5.5 Safe Heating

Many fires and emergencies are caused every year from unsafe heating. Call your local utility company for an inspection if you are unsure whether your heat source is safe.

- If you do not have heat, contact your building owner. If heat is not restored, contact the Department of Housing.
- Fuel-burning items (such as furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters and clothes dryers) should be working, ventilated and regularly inspected by a professional in order to prevent unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Electric heaters should be used with extreme caution to prevent shock, fire, and burns.
- Materials near heaters should be kept at least three feet from the heat source to prevent fire.
- Gas oven and burners should never be used to heat your home.

## 4.6 Coastal Storms

**Coastal storms can cause severe damage and hazardous conditions, especially in low-lying areas where flooding is more likely to occur. Keep in mind that if you live within 10 blocks of a coastal area, it is more likely that you will be directed to evacuate before a severe coastal storm or hurricane.**

Pay attention to local weather forecasts and bulletins issued by the National Weather Service on local radio and television stations.

To find out if you live in a hurricane evacuation zone before a hurricane, you can stay tuned to the local news or call the National Weather Service for the latest information.

#### 4.6.1 Three Types of Coastal Storms

##### *Nor'easters*

Nor'easters are extra tropical cyclones that can cause heavy rain/snow, strong winds and coastal flooding.

- Nor'easters may occur at any time of the year but are most common during fall and winter months (September through April).
- Evacuations are unlikely for nor'easters but shelters may be open during severe storms to offer people relief.

##### *Tropical Storms*

A tropical storm is a tropical cyclone with sustained winds between 39 to 73 mph.

- **Tropical Storm Watch** – Issued when there is a threat of tropical storm conditions in 24–36 hours.
- **Tropical Storm Warning** – Tropical storm expected within 24 hours.

##### *Hurricanes*

A hurricane is a tropical cyclone with sustained winds of 74 mph or greater.

- Hurricane season is the time of year when hurricanes are expected to form in the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. It lasts from June through November.
- During hurricanes, residents in hurricane evacuation zones may be asked to evacuate. Communications with specific evacuation and sheltering information will be sent out to the public through local media.
- **Hurricane Watch** – Issued when there is a threat of hurricane conditions in 24–36 hours.
- **Hurricane Warning** – Issued when dangerously high water and rough seas are expected in 24 hours or less.

## 4.7 Extreme Heat

**During the summer months we can be vulnerable to hazards created by hot weather. The asphalt, concrete and metal that make up cities absorb heat and make it difficult to cool down. This is known as the “heat island effect.” See [Utilities Disruptions](#), page 9.**

Heat waves are particularly dangerous for children and people with special needs. Please check on your neighbors and offer them assistance.

The terms listed below describe the illnesses that extreme heat can cause. Heat-related illnesses can become medical emergencies. Immediately call 911, especially in the case of heat stroke.

### 4.7.1 Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms resulting from heavy exertion. Although heat cramps are the least severe heat-related illness, they are an early signal that the body is having trouble coping with heat and should be treated immediately with rest and fluids. Stretching or direct pressure can also reduce cramps. Unless very severe, heat cramps do not require emergency medical attention.

### 4.7.2 Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion occurs when body fluids are lost through heavy sweating due to vigorous exercise or working in a hot, humid place. Symptoms include: sweating; pale, clammy skin; fatigue, headache; dizziness; shallow breaths; and a weak or rapid pulse. Victims of heat exhaustion are tired but not confused. The condition should be treated with rest in a cool area, drinking water or electrolyte solutions, elevating the feet 12 inches, and further medical treatment in severe cases. If not treated, the victim’s condition may escalate to heat stroke. If the victim does not respond to basic treatment, seek medical attention.

### 4.7.3 Heat Stroke

Also called “sunstroke.” The victim’s temperature control system, which produces sweat to cool the body, stops working. The skin is flushed, hot and dry, and the body temperature may be elevated. The victim may also be confused, develop seizures, breathe shallowly and have a weak or rapid pulse. This is the most serious heat-related illness and people exhibiting these symptoms should seek emergency medical attention.

#### 4.7.4 Heat Terms

Heat Wave	Prolonged period of excessive heat often combined with excessive humidity.
Heat Index	Number of degrees Fahrenheit that indicates how it feels when relative humidity is factored into air temperature.
Heat Advisory	When the heat index exceeds 100°F for fewer than three hours a day for two consecutive days.
Excessive Heat Warnings	When the heat index is expected to exceed 115°F or when it exceeds 100°F for three or more hours for two consecutive days.
Excessive Heat Watch	A long-term alert for excessive heat.
Ozone Advisory	Issued when ozone levels are expected to exceed 0.08 parts per million of ozone over an eight-hour period. People should limit their outdoor activity and those with respiratory problems (such as asthma) should be especially careful and avoid strenuous activity.

### Follow These Tips To Stay Cool

- Stay out of the sun. When in the sun, wear sunscreen (at least SPF 15).
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose fitting clothes that cover as much skin as possible to prevent sunburn.
- Give your body a chance to adjust to extreme temperature changes.
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated fluids.
- Use shades or awnings.
- Consider going to public pools and air-conditioned stores and malls.
- Never leave children, pets, or those who require special care in a parked car during periods of intense summer heat.

- Find a cooling center. When the heat index is predicted to be dangerously high, some cities open cooling centers in air-conditioned public facilities to offer people relief from the heat. Contact your local city government for more information.

## 4.8 Fire

**If your smoke detector goes off or if you notice a fire, remain calm. Do not try to fight a major fire.**

- If your clothes catch on fire, **Stop** where you are, **Drop** to the ground, and **Roll** over and over to smother the flames.
- If you live in a high-rise multiple dwelling, and the fire is not in your apartment, stay in your apartment rather than entering smoke-filled hallways.
- In high-rise office buildings, only evacuate if the fire is on your floor or the one above it, and descend to the second floor below the fire floor. Other occupants should remain on their floor and monitor the PA system for further instructions.
- Feel doors with the back of your hand before you open them. If they are hot, find another way out. Stay as close to the floor as possible – smoke and heat rise and the air is clearer and cooler near the floor. **Close doors behind you.**
- If you are unable to get out for any reason, stay near a window and close to the floor. Close the door and stuff the bottom with a towel to avoid smoke. If possible, signal for help by waving a cloth or sheet at a neighbor's house.
- **Call 911** from a safe place such as a neighbor's house.
- **Do not stop to get anything.**
- **Do not use the elevator.**
- To prevent fires, keep a fire extinguisher in the house.
- Consider renter's insurance if you rent an apartment.
- For more information on fire safety, visit [www.usfa.fema.gov/safety/](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/safety/).

**Also see [General Emergency Response](#), page 7.**

## 4.9 Carbon Monoxide

**Dangerous levels of carbon monoxide – a colorless and odorless gas – can be produced from improperly vented furnaces, plugged or cracked chimneys, water heaters, fireplaces, stoves and tail pipes.**

### 4.9.1 If You Suspect Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Leave your home.
- Call 911.
- Get any victims to fresh air immediately.
- Open windows.
- Call your local utility company.

### 4.9.2 Carbon Monoxide Safety Tips

- Make sure all fuel-burning items – furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters, and clothes dryers – are properly ventilated.
- If you have a working fireplace, keep chimneys clean and clear of debris.
- Never turn on your oven to heat your kitchen, or operate gas or charcoal barbeque grills, kerosene, or oil burning heaters, in an enclosed space.
- Make sure you have a working carbon monoxide detector. Check and change batteries often.
- Recognize signs of carbon monoxide poisoning: the most common symptom is HEADACHE. Symptoms may also include dizziness, chest pain, nausea and vomiting.

Also see [Fire, page 21](#) and [General Emergency Response, page 7](#).

## 4.10 Infectious Disease

**Infectious diseases can crop up at anytime. Here are a few tips to help prevent the spreading of diseases.**

- **Avoid close contact.** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

- **Stay home when you are sick.** If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick.
- **Cover your mouth and nose.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Clean your hands.** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Good hand washing includes the following steps:
  - Wet hands with warm water.
  - Apply a generous amount of soap and lather hands well.
  - Rub hands together for 20 seconds, paying special attention to the areas between the fingers and under nails.
  - Rinse hands thoroughly with warm water.
  - Dry hands with a disposable towel.
  - Use the disposable towel to turn off the faucet and open the door.
  - *Instances to cleanse your hands include but are not limited to:*
    - After touching anything you think could be contaminated with body fluids of others.
    - After coughing or sneezing.
    - Before and after using the toilet.
    - Before and after meals and snacks.
    - Before preparing food.
    - Before and after smoking cigarettes.
    - When arriving home.
    - Before and after work.

## 4.11 Earthquakes

**California, as well as other areas is predisposed to earthquakes on large and small scales. Here are some tips to help you prepare, get through, and recover in the event of an occurrence.**

### 4.11.1 Prepare Your Home

- Choose a safe place in every room – under a sturdy table or desk or against an inside load-bearing wall where nothing can fall on you.
- Practice **DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON** at least twice a year. Drop under a sturdy desk or table, hold on, and protect your eyes by pressing your face against your arm. If there is no table or desk nearby, sit on the floor against an interior wall away from windows, bookcases, or tall furniture that could fall on you. **Teach children to DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON.**
- Use your chosen out-of-town family contact.
- Consult a professional to find out additional ways you can protect your home, such as bolting the house to its foundation and other structural-mitigation techniques.
- Take a first aid class and keep your training current.
- Get training in how to use a fire extinguisher.
- Inform babysitters and caregivers of your plan.

### 4.11.2 Eliminate Hazards

- Bolt bookcases, china cabinets, and other tall furniture to wall studs.
- Install strong latches on cupboards.
- Strap the water heater to wall studs.
- Teach household members how to turn off utilities.

### 4.11.3 Prepare a Disaster Supply Kit for Home and Car

- Have a first aid kit and essential medications.
- Store a three-day supply of canned/non-perishable food and a manual can opener.
- Have at least three gallons of water per person (per day) on hand.

- Keep protective clothing, rainwear, and bedding or sleeping bags accessible.
- Have a battery-powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries on hand.
- Special items for infants, elderly, or family members with special needs.
- Written instructions for how to turn off gas, electricity, and water if authorities advise you to do so.
- Keep essentials, such as a flashlight and sturdy shoes, by your bedside.

#### 4.11.4 What to Do When Shaking Begins

- **DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON!** Move only a few steps to a nearby safe place.
- Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you are sure that it is safe to exit.
- Stay away from windows.
- In a high-rise building, expect the fire alarms and sprinklers to go off during a quake.
- If you are in bed, hold on and stay there, protecting your head with a pillow.
- If you are outdoors, find a clear spot away from buildings, trees, and power lines. Drop to the ground.
- If you are in a car, slow down and drive to a clear place. Stay in the car until the shaking stops.

#### 4.11.5 What to Do After Shaking Stops

- Check yourself for injuries. Protect yourself from further danger by putting on long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes, and work gloves.
- Check others for injuries. Give first aid for serious injuries.
- Look for and extinguish small fires. Eliminate fire hazards. Turn off the gas if you smell gas or think that it is leaking.
- Listen to the radio for instructions.
- Expect aftershocks. Each time you feel one, **DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON.**
- Inspect your home for damage. Get everyone out if your home is unsafe.
- Use the telephone only to report life-threatening emergencies.

Use the card below to identify a safe place for each room in your house. Make sure to post this with emergency numbers in your home and have copies for each member of the household.



<b>EARTHQUAKE SAFE PLACES</b>	
Bedroom	
Bedroom	
Bedroom	
Dining Room	
Living Room	
Kitchen	
Other Room	

<b>EARTHQUAKE SAFE PLACES</b>	
Bedroom	
Bedroom	
Bedroom	
Dining Room	
Living Room	
Kitchen	
Other Room	

## 4.12 Radiation Exposure

**Small amounts of radiation – such as from X-rays – are considered safe. In the unlikely event that a city is exposed to unsafe levels of radiation, there are ways to minimize exposure.**

### **These Three General Guidelines Will Minimize Your Exposure to Radiation**

1. **Time** – Radioactive materials become less radioactive over time. Stay inside until authorities alert you the threat has passed.
2. **Distance** – The greater the distance between you and the source of the radiation the better. Authorities may call for an evacuation of people from areas close to the release.
3. **Shielding** – Put as much heavy, dense material between you and the source of the radiation as possible. Authorities may advise you to stay indoors or underground for this reason. Close and seal your windows and turn off any ventilation.

#### **4.12.1 Additional Steps to Reduce Your Exposure**

- If you are outside, get inside. Remove all clothing and wash thoroughly.
- Cover your nose and mouth to avoid ingesting dust.
- If there is an event indoors, try to get out of the building without passing through the contaminated area. If you cannot escape, it may be better to shelter in place. [See Shelter in Place, page 8.](#)
- Potassium Iodide (known as KI) is a kind of salt that can prevent damage to your thyroid gland ONLY if you are exposed to radioactive iodine. It will not help you in other radioactive environments, and must be administered within a few hours of exposure to be effective. KI is generally only recommended for children, adolescents, pregnant women and others with growing thyroids.

## 4.13 Building Collapses or Explosions

**Building collapses or explosions can be the result of structural damage or sabotage. The set of rules below apply.**

### 4.13.1 If You Are in a Building Collapse or Explosion

- Get out as quickly and calmly as possible.
- If you can't get out of the building, get under a sturdy table or desk.

### 4.13.2 If You Clean Up Debris

- Wear gloves and sturdy shoes.
- Sort debris by type (wood, appliances, etc.).
- **Do not** touch debris that contains utility wires.
- **Do not** move large or heavy debris by yourself. Ask for help from neighbors, friends and recovery workers.

### 4.13.3 If There Is a Fire

Fires often occur after a building explosion. [See Fire, page 21.](#)

### 4.13.4 If You Are Trapped by Debris

- Cover your nose and mouth with a cloth or clothing.
- Move around as little as possible to avoid kicking up dust, which is harmful to inhale.
- If possible, use a flashlight so that you can see your surroundings.
- Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can hear where you are located. Use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort as shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

**Also see [General Emergency Response, page 7.](#)**

## 4.14 Hazardous Materials or Chemical Spills

We use hazardous materials in our homes and businesses every day. Small spills occasionally occur, but these incidents generally cause the public little difficulty other than traffic delays. In the event of a major spill authorities will instruct you on the best course of action; however you should heed the precautions listed below.

**For domestic incidents, you can consult the National Poison Control hotline at 1.800.222.1222.**

### 4.14.1 General Guidelines

- Stay upwind of the material if possible.
- Seek medical attention as soon as possible if needed.
- If there is an event indoors, try to get out of the building without passing through the contaminated area. Otherwise, it may be better to move as far away from the event as possible and shelter in place. [Also see Shelter in Place, page 8.](#)
- If exposed, remove outer layer of clothes, separate yourself from them, and wash yourself.
- In some circumstances, after being exposed to hazardous materials, it may be necessary to be “decontaminated.” Specially trained emergency personnel will perform decontamination procedures, which may include the removal of personal items and cleansing of exposed areas of the body. They will provide for medical attention if necessary.





## 5. Pandemic Influenza

This information is designed to help you understand the threat of a pandemic flu outbreak in our country and your community.

It describes common sense actions that you can take in preparing for a pandemic. Each individual family should know both the magnitude of what can happen during a pandemic outbreak and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your community.

### 5.1 What You Need to Know

An influenza (flu) pandemic is a widespread outbreak of disease that occurs when a new flu virus appears that people have not been exposed to before. Pandemics are different from seasonal outbreaks of influenza. Seasonal flu outbreaks are caused by viruses that people have already been exposed to; flu shots are available to help prevent widespread illness, and impacts on society are less severe. Pandemic flu spreads easily from person to person and can cause serious illness because people do not have immunity to the new virus.

A pandemic may come and go in waves, each of which can last for months at a time. Everyday life could be disrupted due to people in communities across the country becoming ill at the same time. These disruptions could include everything from school and business closings to interruption of basic services such as public

transportation and health care. An especially severe influenza pandemic could lead to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss.

### 5.1.1 Some Differences between Seasonal Flu and Pandemic Flu

Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
Caused by influenza viruses that are similar to those already affecting people	Caused by a new influenza virus that people have not been exposed to before. Likely to be more severe, affect more people, and cause more deaths than seasonal flu because people will not have immunity to the new virus
Symptoms include fever, cough runny nose, and muscle pain. Deaths can be caused by complications such as pneumonia	Symptoms similar to the common flu may be more severe and complications more serious
Healthy adults usually not at risk for serious complications (the very young, the elderly, and those with certain underlying health conditions at increased risk for serious complications)	Healthy adults may be at increased risk for serious complications
Generally causes modest impact on society (e.g., some school closings, encouragement of people who are sick to stay home)	A severe pandemic could change the patterns of daily life for some time. People may choose to stay home to keep away from others who are sick. Also, people may need to stay home to care for the ill family and loved ones. Travel and public gatherings could be limited. Basic services and access to supplies could be disrupted

### 5.1.2 A Historical Perspective

In the last century there were three influenza pandemics. All of them were called pandemics because of their worldwide spread and because they were caused by a new influenza virus. The 1918 pandemic was especially severe. The 1968 pandemic (Hong Kong flu) was the least severe, causing about the same number of deaths as the United States experiences every year with seasonal flu.

1918 – 1919	Most severe, caused at least 500,000 U.S. deaths and up to 40 million deaths worldwide
1957 – 1958	Moderately severe, caused at least 70,000 U.S. deaths and 1–2 million deaths worldwide
1968 – 1969	Least severe, caused at least 34,000 U.S. deaths and 700,000 deaths worldwide

### 5.1.3 Importance and Benefits of Being Prepared

It is difficult to predict when the next influenza pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. The effects of a pandemic can be lessened if preparations are made a head of time.

When a pandemic starts, everyone around the world could be at risk. The United States has been working closely with other countries and the World Health Organization (WHO) to strengthen systems to detect outbreaks of influenza that might cause a pandemic.

A pandemic would touch every aspect of society, and so every aspect of society must begin to prepare. State, tribal, and local governments are developing, improving, and testing their plans for an influenza pandemic. Businesses, schools, universities, and other community organizations are preparing plans as well.

As you begin your individual or family planning, you may want to review your state’s planning efforts and those of your local public health and emergency preparedness officials. Many of the state plans and other planning information can be found at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and other federal agencies are providing funding, advice, and other support to your state. The federal government will provide up-to-date information and guidance to the public if an influenza pandemic unfolds. For reliable, accurate and timely information, visit the federal government’s official Website at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

The benefits of preparation will be many. States and communities will be better prepared for any disaster. Preparation will bring peace of mind and the confidence that we are ready to fight a flu pandemic.

## 5.2 Challenges and Preparation

As you plan, it is important to think about the challenges that you might face, particularly if a pandemic is severe. It may take time to find the answers to these

challenges. The following are some situations which could be caused by a severe pandemic and possible ways to address them. A checklist has been prepared to help guide those efforts, to organize our national thinking and bring consistency to our efforts.

### **5.2.1 Social Disruption May Be Widespread**

- Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted. These could include services provided by hospitals and other health care facilities, banks, stores, restaurants, government offices, and post offices.
- Prepare backup plans in case public gatherings, such as volunteer meetings and worship services, are canceled.
- Consider how to care for people with special needs in case the services they rely on are not available.

### **5.2.2 Being Able to Work May Be Difficult or Impossible**

- Find out if you can work from home.
- Ask your employer about how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Plan for the possible reduction or loss of income if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer about leave policies.

### **5.2.3 Schools May Be Closed for an Extended Period of Time**

- Help schools plan for pandemic influenza. Talk to the school nurse or the health center. Talk to your teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have materials, such as books, on hand. Also plan recreational activities that your children can do at home.
- Consider childcare needs.

### **5.2.4 Transportation Services May Be Disrupted**

- Think about how you can rely less on public transportation during a pandemic. For example, store food and other essential supplies so you can make fewer trips to the store.

- Prepare backup plans for taking care of loved ones who are far away.
- Consider other ways to get to work, or, if you can, work at home.

### 5.2.5 People Will Need Advice and Help at Work and Home

- Think about what information the people in your workplace will need if you are a manager. This may include information about insurance, leave policies, working from home, possible loss of income, and when not to come to work if sick.
- Meet with your colleagues and make lists of things that you will need to know and what actions can be taken.
- Find volunteers who want to help people in need, such as elderly neighbors, single parents of small children, or people without the resources to get the medical help they will need.
- Identify other information resources in your community, such as mental health hotlines, public health hotlines, or electronic bulletin boards.
- Find support systems – people who are thinking about the same issues you are thinking about. Share ideas.

### 5.2.6 Be Prepared

Stock a supply of water and food – **we recommend a minimum 30-day supply for a pandemic**. During a pandemic you may not be able to get to a store. Even if you can get to a store, it may be out of supplies. Public waterworks services may also be interrupted. Stocking supplies can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters. Store foods that:

- Are nonperishable (will keep for a long time) and don't require refrigeration
- Are easy to prepare in case you are unable to cook
- Require little or no water, so you can conserve water for drinking

### 5.2.7 Stay Healthy

Take common-sense steps to limit the spread of germs. Make good hygiene a habit.

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

- Put used tissues in a waste basket.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Stay at home if you are sick.

It is always a good idea to practice good health habits.

- Eat a balanced diet. Be sure to eat a variety of foods, including plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grain products. Also include low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish, and beans. Drink lots of water and go easy on salt, sugar, alcohol, and saturated fat.
- Exercise on a regular basis and get plenty of rest.

### 5.2.8 Get Informed

Knowing the facts is the best preparation. Identify sources you can count on for reliable information. If a pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be critical.

- Reliable, accurate, and timely information is available at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).
- Another source for information on pandemic influenza is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline at: 1.800.232.4636.
- Look for information on your local and state government Websites. Links are available to each state department of public health at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).
- Listen to local and national radio, watch news reports on television, and read your newspaper and other sources of printed and web-based information.
- Talk to your local health care providers and public health officials.

## 5.3 Prevention and Treatment

You have an essential role in preparing and making sure you are informed of prevention activities in your local area. Each community must have plans, each state and each agency of the federal government must work together. The federal government is working to boost our international and domestic disease monitoring, rebuilding our vaccine industry, building stockpiles of medicines, and support research into new treatments and medicines. Your state will be taking steps to monitor and build supplies too.

### 5.3.1 Vaccine

Influenza vaccines are designed to protect against specific flu viruses. While there is currently no pandemic flu in the world, the federal government is making vaccines for several existing bird viruses that may provide some protection should one of these viruses change and cause a flu pandemic. A specific pandemic influenza vaccine cannot be produced until a pandemic flu virus strain emerges and is identified. Once a pandemic influenza virus has been identified, it will likely take 6 – 9 months to develop, test, and begin producing a vaccine.

Efforts are being made to increase vaccine-manufacturing capacity in the United States so that supplies of vaccines would be more readily available. In addition, research is underway to develop new ways to produce vaccines more quickly.

### 5.3.2 Treatment

A number of antiviral drugs are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat and sometimes prevent seasonal flu. Some of these antivirals may be effective in treating pandemic flu. These drugs may help prevent infection in people at risk and shorten the duration of symptoms in those infected with influenza. However, it is unlikely that antivirals alone would effectively contain the spread of pandemic influenza.

The federal government is stockpiling antivirals which would most likely be issued in the early stages of an influenza pandemic. There are efforts to find new drugs and to increase the supply of antivirals. Antivirals are available by prescription only and not over the counter.

## 5.4 Questions and Answers

### **Will the seasonal flu shot protect me against pandemic influenza?**

- No, it won't protect you against pandemic influenza. But flu shots can help you to stay healthy.
- Get a flu shot to help protect yourself from seasonal flu.
- Get a pneumonia shot to prevent secondary infection if you are over the age of 65 or have a chronic illness such as diabetes or asthma. For specific guidelines, talk to your health care provider or call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline at 1.800.232.4636.
- Make sure your family's immunizations are up-to-date.

### **Will bird flu cause the next influenza pandemic?**

Avian influenza (bird flu) is a disease of wild and farm birds caused by influenza viruses. Bird flu viruses do not usually infect humans, but since 1997 there have been a number of confirmed cases of human infection from bird flu viruses. Most of these resulted from direct or close contact with infected birds (e.g., domesticated chickens, ducks, and turkeys).

The spread of bird flu viruses from an infected person to another person has been reported very rarely and has not been reported to continue beyond one person. A worldwide pandemic could occur if a bird flu virus were to change so that it could easily be passed from person to person. Experts around the world are watching for changes in bird flu viruses that could lead to an influenza pandemic.

### **Is it safe to eat poultry?**

Yes, it is safe to eat properly cooked poultry. Cooking destroys germs, including the bird flu virus. The United States bans imports of poultry and poultry products from countries where bird flu has been found.

Guidelines for the safe preparation of poultry include the following:

- Wash hands before and after handling food.
- Keep raw poultry and its juices away from other foods.
- Keep hands, utensils, and surfaces, such as cutting boards, clean.
- Use a food thermometer to ensure poultry has been fully cooked. For example, cook a whole chicken to 180F in an oven set to a minimum of 325F. More information on how to properly cook poultry can be found at [www.usda.gov/birdflu](http://www.usda.gov/birdflu).

### **What types of birds can carry bird flu viruses?**

Wild birds can carry bird flu viruses but usually do not get sick from them. Domesticated birds (e.g., farm-raised chickens, ducks, and turkeys) can become sick with bird flu if they come into contact with an infected wild bird. Domesticated birds usually die from the disease.

### **What is the U.S. government doing to prepare for pandemic influenza?**

The U.S. government has been preparing for pandemic influenza for several years. In November 2005, the President announced the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza. Ongoing preparations include the following:

- Working with the World Health Organization (WHO) and with other nations to help detect human cases of bird flu and contain a flu pandemic, if one begins
- Supporting the manufacturing and testing of influenza vaccines, including finding more reliable and quicker ways to make large quantities of vaccines
- Developing a national stockpile of antiviral drugs to help treat and control the spread of disease
- Supporting the efforts of federal, state, tribal, and local health agencies to prepare for and respond to pandemic influenza
- Work with federal agencies to prepare and to encourage communities, businesses, and organizations to plan for pandemic influenza

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has released the HHS Pandemic Influenza Plan (see [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)). HHS activities detail the medical and public health response to an influenza pandemic.

### **For More Information**

- Visit [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hotline, 1.800.232.4636 (available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. TTY: 1.888.232.6348. Questions can be e-mailed to [inquiry@cdc.gov](mailto:inquiry@cdc.gov))

Links to state departments of public health as follows:

- <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/states/california.html>
- <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/states/colorado.html>
- <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/states/florida.html>
- <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/states/maryland.html>
- <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/states/texas.html>
- <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/states/virginia.html>

## 5.5 Pandemic Preparedness Checklist

### 5.5.1 To plan for a pandemic

You can prepare for an influenza pandemic now. You should know both the magnitude of what can happen during a pandemic outbreak and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. This checklist will help you gather the information and resources you may need in case of a flu pandemic.

- Store a supply of water and food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand.
- Ask your doctor and insurance company if you can get an extra supply of your regular prescription drugs.
- Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Volunteer with local groups to prepare and assist with emergency response.
- Get involved in your community as it works to prepare for an influenza pandemic.

### 5.5.2 To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water, and model the correct behavior.

- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and be sure to model that behavior.
- Teach your children to stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick. Stay home from work and school if sick.

### 5.5.3 Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home

Examples of food and non-perishables	Examples of medical, health, and emergency supplies
Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, and soups	Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment
Protein or fruit bars	Soap and water, or alcohol-based hand wash
Dry cereal or granola	Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
Peanut butter or nuts	Thermometer
Dried fruit	Anti-diarrheal medication
Crackers	Vitamins
Canned juices	Fluids with electrolytes
Bottled Water	Cleansing agent/soap
Canned or jarred baby food and formula	Flashlight
Pet Food	Batteries
	Portable Radio
	Manual Can Opener
	Garbage Bags
	Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers



## 6. Thoughts on Terrorism

The definition of terrorism is the systematic use of terror, violence and intimidation to create fear. With accurate information, basic emergency preparedness, and the below guidelines, you can be ready for potential terrorist attacks.

Keep in mind that accidents can sometimes appear to be terrorist events and vice versa. Your response should be similar in either case.

### 6.1 Know the Facts and Be Responsible

- Know the facts of a situation and think critically. Confirm reports using a variety of reliable sources of information, such as the government or media.
- Do not spread rumors.
- Do not accept packages from strangers and do not leave luggage or bags unattended in public areas such as on BART, the airport, or the bus stop.

## 6.2 Explosions

See [Building Collapses or Explosions](#), page 28.

## 6.3 Biological Attacks

- A biological attack occurs when a terrorist intentionally causes a disease epidemic.
- **Also see [Infectious Disease](#), page 22.**

## 6.4 Chemical Attacks

- The intentional release of hazardous materials constitutes an act of terrorism; however accidents involving hazardous materials may also occur. Your course of action should be the same in either case.
- **Also see [Hazardous Materials or Chemical Spills](#), page 29 for specific information on this type of emergency.**

## 6.5 Radiological Attacks

- Radiological attacks occur when radioactive material is intentionally released.
- Radiological Dispersion Device (RDD): An RDD is designed to scatter amounts of radioactive material over a wide area. The further the material disperses, the less harmful it becomes. In most cases, the amount of material is unlikely to be lethal.
- “Dirty Bomb”: A Dirty Bomb is a kind of RDD that combines conventional explosives and radioactive material. The explosive is intended to scatter the radioactive material. More damage and casualties may result from the explosion than from the radiation itself.
- **Also see the [Radiation Exposure](#), page 27 for more information.**

## 6.6 Suspicious Parcels or Letters

A parcel or letter may be considered suspicious when it has more than one of the following characteristics:

- Handwritten or poorly typed address, incorrect titles or titles with no names, or misspellings of common words.
- Addressed to someone no longer with your organization or not addressed to a specific person.
- Strange return address or no return address.
- Marked with restrictions, such as “Personal,” “Confidential” or “Do not X-ray.”
- Excessive postage.
- Powdery substance on the outside.
- Unusual weight given its size, lopsided, or oddly shaped.
- Unusual amount of tape on it.
- Odors, discolorations or oily stains.

### 6.6.1 If You Receive a Suspicious Package or Envelope

- **PUT IT DOWN** – preferably on a stable surface.
- Cover it with an airtight container like a trash can or plastic bag.
- Call 911 at home; if you are at a Visa facility, call your local security number to alert your building’s security officials.
- Alert others to the presence of the package and evacuate the area.
- Wash your hands with soap and water if you have handled the package.
- Make a list of the people who were in the room or area where the suspicious package was recognized, and give it to authorities.
- Do not stray far from the area if you believe you have been exposed.

## 6.7 If You Receive a Bomb Threat

- Ask the caller as many of the following questions as possible:
  1. *When is the bomb going to explode?*
  2. *Where is the bomb right now?*
  3. *What does the bomb look like?*
  4. *What kind of bomb is it?*
  5. *Where are you calling from?*
  6. *Why did you place the bomb?*
- Keep the caller on the line for as long as possible and try to write down or record the conversation.
- Write down the exact time and length of the call.
- Listen carefully to the caller's voice and background noise.
- After you hang up, call 911 IMMEDIATELY. If you are in a Visa facility, call your local security number.

**If you have information about a potential terrorism attack, call local authorities.**

## 7. Information for You and Your Loved Ones

### 7.1 Seniors and People with Special Needs

**Seniors and people with disabilities may need to take additional steps to prepare for emergencies. If you or someone in your household has special needs, consider the following tips when preparing your disaster plans.**

- Keep a 7–14 day supply of necessary medication on hand at all times.
- Develop a personal emergency plan for each place where you spend time – at home, work, school, and in the community.
- Evaluate your capabilities, limitations, needs, and surroundings to determine what type of support you may need in an emergency.
- Include your home care attendant and other people in your network in your planning process.
- If you are dependent on electricity for your wheelchair, breathing machine or any other life-sustaining device, plan for a loss of power. Consult your power provider.
- The hearing impaired may need to make special arrangements to make sure they receive emergency warnings.
- Mobility impaired people may need assistance to get to a shelter or to evacuate from buildings. Keep in mind elevators will not work in a power outage. Technologically dependent people should check in with 911 or their doctors.
- People with special dietary needs should have an adequate emergency food supply.

- It is a good idea to write down your support needs and numbers. Medical conditions, medications and dosages, allergies, special equipment, medical insurance, Medicare insurance cards as well as personal and medical contact details are important to have available. Keep this list with you in emergencies and supply a friend with a copy.
- If you have a service animal, make sure that it is registered for a service tag.

**For more planning assistance, you may contact the U.S. Administration on Aging at 1.202.619.0724.**

## 7.2 Other Things You Can Do to Prepare Your Household for Emergencies

- **Use the websites and phone numbers listed in [More Resources](#), page 56, to learn more ways to protect yourself and your household in an emergency.**
- Take a first-aid or Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) class to learn how to help family and neighbors if they are injured.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in all areas of your home and check them regularly to make sure they are working.
- Install fire extinguishers in your home and make sure all household members know where they are and how to use them.
- Change batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and check on emergency supplies twice a year during daylight-saving times.

## 7.3 Mental Health

**Disaster victims are likely to experience at least one of several emotional responses: anger, fatigue, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, nightmares, depression, inability to concentrate, hyperactivity, or increased alcohol or drug use.**

### 7.3.1 Mental Health Experts Suggest a Number of Ways to Relieve the Symptoms of Emotional Distress

- Talk about your feelings with family, friends, and neighbors. These people are good medicine, and sharing common experiences helps people overcome anxiety and feelings of helplessness.

- Get back into daily routines as soon as you can, and try to maintain a healthy diet and get plenty of sleep.
- Get some physical exercise every day.
- If you continue to have the symptoms described above for an extended period of time, think about consulting a mental health professional.

**For more information, to obtain a referral, or if you need someone to talk to call 1.800.789.2647 or contact your local mental health agency.**

## 7.4 Parents and Families

**Include your children in planning for an emergency. Teach them how to get help and what to do in different situations. Practice your family emergency plan with your children and quiz them about preparedness information.**

### 7.4.1 Every Child Should Know

- Family contact information for use in an emergency.
- Never touch wires lying on the ground or hanging from poles.
- How to identify the smell of gas. Tell them that if they smell it, they should tell a grown-up or leave the building.
- How and when to call 911.

### 7.4.2 Information to Know About Your Child's School or Day Care Facility

- Find out what your child's school does in the event of an emergency and know the school's emergency plans.
- Find out where you can pick up your child during an evacuation.
- Ensure that the school has up-to-date contact information for you and at least one other relative or friend.
- Find out if you can authorize a friend or relative to pick up your children in an emergency if you cannot.

### 7.4.3 "Go Bag"

Pack child care supplies as well as games and small toys in your family's "Go Bag."

#### 7.4.4 Reassurance

Children are particularly vulnerable to emotional stress after a disaster and may exhibit excessive fear of the dark, crying, fear of being alone and constant worry. Reassure children that they are safe. Encourage them to talk about their fears, emphasize that they are not responsible for what happened, and comfort them.

**For more information, see [Emergency Preparedness and Advice for You and Your Family](#), page 3 and refer to [More Resources](#), page 56 .**

#### 7.4.5 Non-English Speakers

- Non-English speakers should consider their special needs in an emergency.
- Make special preparations in advance to get the information and special assistance you may need in advance.

## 7.5 Tips for Pet Owners

**Pet owners should include provisions for their pet in a household disaster plan. Please note that pets are not allowed in shelters (only service animals are allowed in shelters). Therefore, it is important that you have a plan for your pet in the event of an evacuation.**

#### 7.5.1 Pet Emergency Planning Tips

- Contact friends or relatives outside your area to see if they would be willing to accommodate you and your pets in an emergency. Also, ask a neighbor, friend or family member if they will look after your pet if you cannot return home due to a disaster.
- See if your veterinarian or groomer provides shelter for animals during an emergency.
- Transport your pets in a carrier for the duration of the disaster. This makes pets feel safer and more secure.
- Know your pets' hiding places so that you can easily find them in times of stress.
- Make sure each pet has a license and ID tag.

**Assemble a “Pet Survival Kit” that can be ready to go if you are evacuating your pet to a kennel or to friends or family.**

You should include:

1. Water, food, and containers.
2. A leash/muzzle/harness.
3. A copy of all current vaccination and health records, license numbers, and microchip numbers.
4. Medication for your pet (if needed).
5. A pet carrier or cage (a luggage carrier can be used to wheel the carrier around).
6. Plastic bags for pick-ups.
7. Photo of your pet.





## **8. Public Transportation Preparedness**

Disaster can happen anywhere. If you are caught on any type of public transportation during any kind of emergency, follow these guidelines.

### **8.1 Stay as Calm and Quiet as Possible**

Listen for any instructions.

- Do not leave the means of transportation (bus, car, van, train, etc.) unless you are instructed to do so. The safest place is usually where you are currently situated.
- Tracks are dangerous. Never exit on train or subway tracks unless directed to do so by the train crew or emergency response personnel.
- Control Centers for public transportation are in constant communication with crews. On larger public transportation (BART, subways, trains, etc.), in the event that there is a problem in the system and if the PA system is not operating, the crew will walk through the vehicle to instruct passengers on emergency evacuation procedures.

## 8.2 Think Before You Pull the Emergency Cord

Only pull the cord when the vehicle is in motion if someone gets caught between closing car doors and is being dragged. If your train is between stations and you pull the cord, the train will stop, preventing medical or any other kind of assistance from reaching the train. Help will be much more accessible if the train reaches the nearest station without interruption, where police and medical services will be waiting or can be quickly summoned.

## 9. How You Can Help

Many of the tips in this guide are designed to help you and your household. Here's what you can do to help your community recover from all kinds of emergencies.

### 9.1 Become a Volunteer

- It is best to affiliate with a recognized disaster volunteer organization such as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army before a disaster happens.
- Before going directly to volunteer at a relief organization, hospital, or disaster site after a disaster, wait for instructions from local officials, or check with specific organizations.
- Be patient. In the wake of a disaster, there are often many people waiting to volunteer. However, there may be a greater need for volunteers in the weeks and months after a disaster.

## 9.2 More Resources

### 9.2.1 Learn More About Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Management

- California Office of Emergency Services – [www.oes.ca.gov/](http://www.oes.ca.gov/)
- Texas Emergency Services – [www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/)
- Colorado Division of Emergency Management – [www.dola.state.co.us/](http://www.dola.state.co.us/)
- Virginia Department of Emergency Management – [www.vdem.state.va.us](http://www.vdem.state.va.us)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – 1.800.480.2520 or [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security – 1.800.BE.READY (1.800.237.3239) or [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)
- US Administration on Aging – 202.619.0724 or [www.aoa.gov/](http://www.aoa.gov/)
- Mental Health – [www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – 1.800.424.8802 or [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)
- National Weather Service – [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)
- NOAA All Hazard Radio – [www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr)

### 9.2.2 Volunteer Opportunities

- American Red Cross – [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)
- Salvation Army – [www.salvaramyusa.org](http://www.salvaramyusa.org)

### 9.2.3 For Parents and Families

- FEMA – [www.fema.gov/kids](http://www.fema.gov/kids)
- American Red Cross – [www.prepare.org/children/bereadybook.pdf](http://www.prepare.org/children/bereadybook.pdf)
- The Sesame Workshop's safety page – [www.sesameworkshop.org/parents/solutions/safety](http://www.sesameworkshop.org/parents/solutions/safety)
- American Academy of Pediatrics – [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
- Center for Disease Control – [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

### 9.3 Make A Donation

Making a financial contribution to a volunteer agency involved in disaster relief is often the most sensible and efficient way of helping people in need after a disaster.

Before donating any goods, including food or clothing, wait for instructions from local officials or check with a specific organization. Unneeded items overwhelm the recovery effort and may go to waste.





## 10. Emergency Response Plan

Household Emergency Information –  
Contact information for household members.

**This plan contains all pertinent emergency contact information. Please post it in an easily accessible area in your home and ensure that all household members know where it is located.**

**Also, in the event of an emergency, the cards on the next page can be pulled out and all contact information, addresses, and phone numbers will be at your fingertips. Once the cards are completed, a copy should be given to each family member to carry with them at all times.**

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

### HOUSEHOLD EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Name	Name
Date of Birth / SSN	Date of Birth / SSN
Business or School Evacuation Location	Business or School Evacuation Location
Medical Information or Conditions	Medical Information or Conditions
Blood Type	Blood Type
Work, School or Other Address and Phone #s	Work, School or Other Address and Phone #s

<b>MEDICAL/INSURANCE INFORMATION</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>PHONE #</b>	<b>POLICY #</b>
Doctor(s)			
Other			
Pharmacist			
Medical Insurance			
Home Owners/Rental Ins.			
<b>FIRE STATION #</b>	<b>POLICE PRECINCT #</b>	<b>LOCAL UTILITY COMPANY #</b>	<b>WATER UTILITY DISTRICT #</b>



**HOUSEHOLD DISASTER PLAN – LOCAL**

Home Meeting Address	
Home Meeting Phone #	
Neighborhood Meeting Address	
Neighborhood Meeting Phone #	

**HOUSEHOLD DISASTER PLAN – LOCAL**

Home Meeting Address	
Home Meeting Phone #	
Neighborhood Meeting Address	
Neighborhood Meeting Phone #	

**HOUSEHOLD DISASTER PLAN – OUT-OF-STATE**

Out of State Contact Name	
Contact Address	
Contact Phone #	
Other Information	

**HOUSEHOLD DISASTER PLAN – OUT-OF-STATE**

Out of State Contact Name	
Contact Address	
Contact Phone #	
Other Information	