

THE FOUR STEPS TO DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Step 1 - Get Informed

Step 2 - Make a Plan

Step 3 - Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit

Step 4 - Maintain the Plan

Step 1 - Get Informed

Learn about community response plans, evacuation plans and designated emergency shelters. For complete information, contact the St. Johns County Department of Emergency Management at 904.824.5550 or the Northeast Florida Chapter of the American Red Cross to gather the information you will need to create a plan.

Learn about our community's response plans, evacuation plans and designated emergency shelters. If you do not own a vehicle or drive, find out in advance what your community's plans are for evacuation those without private transportation.

Step 2 - Make a Plan

Take a few minutes to hold a family planning meeting. Review the information you have gathered about community hazards and essential parts of a good family plan and discuss it. This is a great way to involve everyone because everyone will have to be involved should action be necessary. Explain the dangers to children and work with them as a team to prepare your family. Be sure to include caregivers in your meeting and planning efforts.

You should designate an out-of-town contact by asking a friend or relative to be your contact. Following a disaster, family members should call this person and tell them where they are, and make sure every family member has the contact's phone numbers.

Choose a place to meet following a disaster for in the event of an emergency, you may become separated from family members and having a place to meet will help ensure you are reunited as quickly as possible.

Take into consideration the requirements of family members with disabilities or special needs, including prescriptions or ambulatory devices like walkers and wheelchairs.

Don't forget to plan for pets. Part of your plan should be to consider how to transport them, provide food and locating pet friendly shelters or hotels.

Step 3 - Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit

If your family does not have to evaluate, there may be the need to remain at home without electricity for an extended period of time. Consider these items as you assemble your own at-home disaster supply.

- Water: at least one gallon daily per person for three to seven days
- Food: at least enough for three to seven days include non-perishable packaged or canned food and juices, foods for infants or the elderly snack foods non-electric can opener cooking tools and fuel paper plates and plastic utensils
- Blankets, pillows, sheets, towels
- Clothing including rain gear and sturdy shoes
- First aid kit and both non-prescription and prescription drugs
- Special items for infants such as diapers and formula and for the elderly such as eyeglasses and hearing aids
- Personal hygiene items such as tooth paste, soap and feminine supplies
- Flashlights and batteries
- Battery operated radio for both local stations and NOAA weather information
- Cell phone with extra fully charged battery and traditional non-cordless telephone set
- Cash with some small bills and credit cards since banks and ATMs may not be available for an extended period
- Extra set of house and car keys
- Toys, books and games to help entertain family members if there is no electric power
- Important documents in a waterproof container or watertight plastic bag including insurance and medical records, bank account numbers, Social Security card, etc.
- Non electric basic tools like hammers, screw drivers
- Keep vehicle fuel tanks filled
- Pet care items including identification, immunization records, medications, ample supply of food and water, a carrier or cage, and muzzle and leash
- Fire Extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, paper towels
- Paper, pencils, books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

Step 4 - Maintain the Plan

After you have your plan, review it every six months and quiz your family about what to do. Have several practice drills by conducting fire and emergency evacuation drills on a regular basis with your family. Take inventory periodically and restock as necessary after checking food supplies for expiration dates and discard or replace stored water and food every six months.

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

If the emergency is such that you are instructed to take shelter immediately, do so at once!

If you are instructed to evacuate:

- ✓ Listen to the radio or television for the location of emergency shelters and for other instructions from local emergency officials
- ✓ Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes
- ✓ Take your disaster supplies kit
- ✓ Use travel routes specified by local authorities and don't use shortcuts because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous

After a disaster

- ✓ Administer first aid and get help for seriously injured people
- ✓ If the emergency occurs while you are at home, check for damage using a flashlight and do not light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches
- ✓ Check for fires, electrical and other household hazards such as spilled bleaches, gasoline, and other liquids which may produce fumes or be a fire hazard when chemicals mix.
- ✓ Contact your local fire department for information on how to clean up spilled chemicals
- ✓ Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater, and if you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows and get everyone outside quickly
- ✓ Shut off damaged utilities
- ✓ Check on your neighbors, especially those who are elderly or disabled
- ✓ Call your out-of-town contact, but then do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency
- ✓ Stay away from downed power lines
- ✓ Listen to local radio and TV for information about disaster relief assistance

If electric power is lost

- ✓ Call your local power company
- ✓ Use a flashlight or battery operated lantern, and do not use candles or kerosene lanterns for emergency lighting because of the hazard of fire.
- ✓ Turn off all major appliances for they could overload electric lines when power is restored causing a second outage.
- ✓ Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible since food can be kept cold for a day or two if the doors are kept closed
- ✓ Use portable generators cautiously. Make sure they are operated only out-of-doors in a well ventilated area. Refuel a generator only after it has cooled. Do not connect generator to your home's electrical system except through an approved transfer switch installed in compliance with local electrical codes.