



Basic Steps to Disaster Preparedness



Preparing your Family for a Disaster

Unfortunately, disasters are familiar to many citizens of Louisiana. In the past few years, the Southeast region has been impacted by the worst flooding in recent history, experienced damaging storms and tornadoes, seen space shuttle debris rain down in a neighboring state, undergone massive fires in factories and plants, and become aware of the threat of terrorism to the community as it grieved with the nation on September 11, 2001.

Having experienced these disasters, we have learned that we can take some simple steps to protect our families and ensure the safety of our children, while at the same time making it easier to recover if and when we have to go through a future disaster. This family readiness guide is designed to help you and your family be prepared for future disasters.



Find Out What Can Happen To Your Family

From experience, we all know that Southeastern Louisiana is susceptible to natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes. Depending on where you live, however, could put you at even a greater risk for a disaster. For instance, those houses that are located in floodplains are more concerned with flooding than those who live safely outside the floodplain. Take these steps to find out what could happen to your family:

- Contact your Local Office of Emergency Preparedness or your local American Red Cross Chapter to find out which disasters could affect you specifically.
- Determine what types of disasters are likely to happen near you and how to prepare for each.
- Identify what your community's warning sirens sound like and what to do if you hear them.



Create a Family Emergency Plan

Hold a family meeting: Keep it simple and work as a team!



It is important to warn children - without overly alarming them - about potential disasters. Use the following guidelines to teach children about disaster and to make them feel as if they are helping in disaster planning.

- ❑ Tell children that a disaster is something that could hurt people or cause damage. Explain that “sometimes nature provides too much of a good thing”, like fire, rain, and wind.
- ❑ Explain how important it is to make a Family Disaster Plan.
- ❑ Tell children there are many people who can help them in a disaster.
- ❑ Have a common plan in case family members are separated:
 - ❑ Choose a place to go outside of your neighborhood in case you cannot go home.
 - ❑ Choose someone out-of-town to be your family contact.
- ❑ Fill out the local emergency phone numbers and child identification cards.
- ❑ Keep emergency phone numbers by each phone.
- ❑ Teach Children:
 - ❑ How to call for help (emergency numbers).
 - ❑ When to call each emergency number.
 - ❑ How to dial long distance.
 - ❑ How to memorize the names and numbers of local and out-of-state- emergency contacts.
- ❑ Show everyone how and when to turn off the utilities.
 - ❑ Locate the main electric fuse box, water service main, and natural gas main.
 - ❑ Keep a wrench near gas and water shut-off valves.
- ❑ Remember: if you turn off the gas, you will need a professional to turn it back on again.
- ❑ Do a home hazard hunt for items that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire.
- ❑ Plan home escape routes – two from each room.

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- ❑ Find safe places in your home for each type of disaster.
- ❑ Designate “rally points” where you and your family can meet if a disaster happens when you are all away from home.
- ❑ Have all adults take a Red Cross First Aid and CPR Class.

If you have to evacuate...

If you are told to evacuate, please take the following steps:

- ❑ If the Emergency Management Office recommends evacuating, take their advice and do so immediately. It could save your life.
- ❑ Listen to the radio, TV, or a NOAA Weather Radio for instructions from local officials. They will provide instructions on evacuation routes and shelter openings.
- ❑ Shut off water, gas, and electricity if told to do so.
- ❑ Leave a note telling when you left and where you are going.
- ❑ Call your family contact to tell them where you are going.
- ❑ Make sure you have all of your disaster supplies (see checklist)
- ❑ Secure doors and garage doors from the inside.
- ❑ Fill up your car with gasoline.
- ❑ Use evacuation routes recommended by officials.

If you stay at home...

If you decide to stay at home during a disaster, do the following:

- ❑ Only stay at home if you have NOT been ordered to leave.
- ❑ Prepare your home as if you were evacuating (see Hurricanes and Evacuation Checklist).
- ❑ Stay in a large center room with few windows.
- ❑ If flooding occurs, move to higher floors.
- ❑ Keep all windows and doors closed tightly.
- ❑ Monitor radio for news and weather reports continuously.

Hurricanes and Evacuation

You will have more time to prepare for evacuation in the event of a hurricane than during hazardous materials spill. However, it will take more time to prepare your home and your family for this type of evacuation. Here are some steps to take before evacuating.

- ✓ If you live in a mobile home, **LEAVE**.
- ✓ If it is recommended you evacuate, take the advice and **LEAVE**.
- ✓ Cover windows, skylights, and sliding doors with shutters/boards.
- ✓ Wrap up irreplaceable items (family photos, videos, etc.) in plastic and pack them so you can take them if you evacuate.
- ✓ Take your family records and documents. If your home is damaged in a disaster, you will have to prove home ownership to the American Red Cross and FEMA.
- ✓ Move furniture away from windows and cover with plastic.
- ✓ Move lawn furniture inside with other loose outdoor items.
- ✓ Remove TV and Cable antennas and turbines from the roof.
- ✓ Secure dumpsters and land-docked boats by filling them with water.
- ✓ Leave as early as possible – being stuck on an evacuation route as a hurricane strikes is not only scary but also dangerous.
- ✓ Remember any special dietary needs of your family.
- ✓ For the elderly or disabled, take all walkers, wheelchairs, extra oxygen or other special health care needs.
- ✓ Arrange for pets’ safety. **DO NOT** leave pets tied up outside.
- ✓ Take bedding and essential clothing.
- ✓ Bring enough food/water/medicine to last for 3 days.

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- ❑ Turn off propane tank. Unplug all unnecessary appliances.
- ❑ Fill bathtub and large containers with water for sanitary purposes.
- ❑ Use flashlights instead of candles. Cook with Canned Heat; DO NOT USE charcoal or pressurized gas inside!
- ❑ Turn refrigerator to maximum cold and open only when necessary.
- ❑ Turn off utilities if told to do so by authorities.
- ❑ If you are in a multiple-story building and away from the water, go to the first or second floors and take refuge in the halls or interior doors.
- ❑ Stay inside until “all clear” is announced. If seeking shelter during a hurricane, do not leave your home when the eye of the storm passes – Eye wall winds, the strongest of the storm, can start to back up with very little notice.
- ❑ Be alert for and ready to seek shelter from tornadoes, which can happen during a hurricane or a severe thunderstorm.