

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

## “MAKE A PLAN”

Emergencies happen when we least expect them and often when we are not with our families. What happens then to your children at school or elderly parents across town? If phones don't work, or some neighbourhoods aren't accessible, what will you do?

**The best way to help ensure your family's safety in these situations is to have an emergency plan. Having a plan, discussing it with loved ones, and practicing it regularly, will save time and make real situations less stressful.**

All family members, from young children to the elderly, must understand the plan and be ready to follow it through in the event of an emergency. Even if you live alone, you should still have a plan. Remember:

- You aren't prepared until you make a plan
- Photocopy your plan
- Keep copies of your plan in safe and memorable places

## MAKE A FAMILY EMERGENCY PLAN

<p><b>Scenario 1: In the event that you and your family are separated when a disaster strikes, it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency.</b></p>
<p><b>Therefore the plan must include the following steps:</b></p>
<p>1. Decide, in advance, on a <b>safe place to meet</b> e.g. a community centre, library, or school.</p>
<p>2. Prepare an <b>emergency contact list</b> with telephone numbers for family, neighbours and friends, your local community centre, and the emergency services: fire, police, ambulance, hospital and poison control.</p>
<p>3. Make sure that you are part of phone-trees that link you with your community and your neighbourhood emergency centres.</p>
<p>4. Make sure all family members' cell phone numbers are entered in each family member's phone.</p>
<p>5. Include contact numbers for an out-of town contact as it may be easier to make a long-distance call and he/she may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.</p>
<p>6. Your children will need to be picked-up from school or day-care. Know the school and day-care's emergency policies and if you can't pick up your children, designate someone who can.</p>
<p>7. Know your place of work's emergency policies.</p>
<p>8. Talk to your children about your Family Emergency Plan. Teach them basic personal information so they can identify themselves if they become separated from you and who to call like, 9-1-1 or your local emergency number, to get help.</p>

**Scenario 2: In the event that you are at home with your family when a disaster strikes, your plan must include the following steps:**

1. Listen to the radio or television for information from local authorities and follow their instructions.
2. They may advise to turn utilities off or keep them on so it's important to know the location of your home's water valve, electrical panel, gas valve and floor drain.
3. Make sure everyone also knows the location of your family emergency kit and fire extinguisher.
4. Build a safe room or wind shelter: in your basement, atop a concrete slab-on-grade foundation or the garage floor. Your residence may be built "to code," but that does not mean it can withstand winds from extreme events such as tornadoes and major hurricanes.

**Scenario 3: In the event that you and your family have to evacuate because of a disaster, your plan must include the following steps:**

1. Everyone should know your home's safe exits, a designated meeting area and the best places to go in your neighbourhood.
2. Health information – keep a list of medications that you or family members take and keep an extra supply.
3. Elderly family members or those with disabilities or special needs: List the medications and supplies they may need and any information care-givers will require including walkers and oxygen tanks. If they live alone, ask a friend or neighbour to check in on them or help them evacuate.
4. Remember your pets, who may not be allowed in shelters or hotels. Identify kennels or friends' homes where they can go in an emergency.
5. Make copies of birth certificates, passports, wills, property and insurance information. You may wish to scan these documents and have them on a flash drive.
6. These documents should also be kept at work, or other safe locations.
7. Having a plan is also part of being a responsible community member. Local authorities will react swiftly, but they can't reach everyone at once. Being prepared allows these responders to help those in urgent need first.

**Scenario 4: High-rise residents must include the following steps as part of their plan:**

1. Evacuation plan
2. Know your exits
3. Keep extra water in case of power outage – at least 2 litres of water per person, per day

So, do your part! Learn about the emergencies that can happen where you live and plan for situations that are more likely to occur.

Take 20 minutes today and create your family emergency plan. Get started at:

<http://www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/plan.shtm>

<http://www.getprepared.gc.ca/knw/plan/plan-eng.aspx>

<http://www.ga.gov.au/hazards/management/preparedness.jsp>

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