

BEFORE DISASTER STRIKES

Natural or other disasters can strike suddenly at any time, and anywhere. A disaster can damage or destroy your property, force you to temporarily live somewhere else, cut the of wages and other income, or ruin valuable and irreplaceable records. The important thing is to begin planning now, before the unexpected becomes a harsh reality.

CREATE AN EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

- Choose an out-of-town contact your family or household will call or e-mail to check on each other should disaster occur.
- Help your child memorize this important family information. Children not old enough to memorize the information should carry a small index card that lists emergency information to give to an adult or babysitter.
- Teach your children how and when to call for help.
- Post emergency phone numbers by all telephones.

ESTABLISH A MEETING PLACE

- Having a predetermined meeting place away from your home will save time and minimize confusion should your home be affected or the area evacuated.
- Be sure to include pets in these plans, since pets are not permitted in shelters and some hotels will not accept them.

ASSEMBLE A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT

- If you need to evacuate your home or are asked to "shelter-in-place", having some essential supplies on-hand will make you and your family more comfortable.
- Prepare a disaster supplies kit in an easy-to-carry container.
- The kit should include: special needs items for any household member (infant formula or items for people with disabilities or older people), first aid supplies (including prescription medications), a change of clothing for each person, a sleeping bag or bedroll for each, a battery-powered radio and extra batteries, food, bottled water and tools.
- Include some cash and copies of important family documents in your kit. If you have already planned ahead and completed a household inventory, a copy should be placed in your disaster supplies kit.

CHECK ON YOUR WORKPLACE EMERGENCY PLAN AND THE SCHOOL EMERGENCY PLAN FOR ANY CHILDREN

You need to know if schools will keep children at school until a parent or designated adult can pick them up or send them home on their own. Be sure the school has updated information about how to reach parents and responsible caregivers to arrange for pickup. Ask what type of authorization the school may require to release a child to someone you designate. During times of emergency, the school telephones may be overwhelmed with calls.

PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY

- Install smoke/carbon monoxide detectors.
- Keep an AM/FM radio, NOAA weather radio, and extra batteries on-hand.

CONDUCT A HOUSEHOLD INVENTORY

- Inventory your household possessions by making a visual or written record of everything you own, inside and out.

TO CONDUCT A THOROUGH HOME INVENTORY

- Record the location of the originals of all important and family documents. Keep the originals in a safe place and store copies elsewhere.
- Get professional appraisals of jewelry, collectibles, artwork or other items that are difficult to value. Update appraisals every two to three years.
- Update your inventory list annually. Once you have completed your list, put a copy in your disaster supplies kit, leave a copy with relatives or friends, or in a safe deposit box. Do not leave your only copy at home where it might be destroyed.

For more information visit www.redcross.org or call your local American Red Cross at 920-231-3590.