

The American Red Cross outlines this simple, yet important, guideline to finding safety for you and your family:

1. Find out what could happen to you.

- Contact your local emergency management or civil defense office and American Red Cross chapter -be prepared to take notes on the following information:
- Ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen. Request information on how to prepare for each.
- Learn about your community's warning signals, what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
- Ask about animal care during a disaster. Animals may not be allowed inside emergency shelters due to health regulations.
- Find out how to help elderly or disabled persons, if needed.
- Find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or day care center and other places where your family spends time.

2. Create a disaster plan.

- Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of, severe weather and earthquakes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together

as a team.

- Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.

- Pick two places to meet:

- a. Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.

- b. Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone must know the address and phone number.

- Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other family members should call this person and tell where they are. Everyone must know your contact's phone number.

- Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan to care for your pets.

3. Complete this checklist:

- Post emergency telephone numbers near phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.).

- Teach children how and when to call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.

- Show each family member how and when to turn off the water and gas at their source.

- See if you have adequate insurance coverage.
- Teach each family member how to use the fire extinguisher (ABC type), and show them where it's kept.
- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.
- Conduct a home hazard hunt.
- Stock emergency supplies and assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.
- Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room.
- Find the safe spots in your home for each type of disaster.

4. Practice and maintain your plan.

- Quiz your kids every six months so they remember what to do.
- Conduct fire and emergency drills.

- Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six months.
- Test and recharge your fire extinguisher according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

Preparedness planning is an individual's responsibility. Betting that the storm will not strike you may be the most costly mistake you ever make. To protect yourself and your family, you should have a safety plan in action now, before danger hits. The National Weather Service advises that a severe weather preparedness plan should include:

- A thorough knowledge of the hazard and the proper safety rules to be followed.
- Selection and designation of the best shelter you have.
- A reliable method of receiving warning information.
- Instructions in the proper procedures to follow when a watch or warning is issued -or if threatening weather should develop with no advance warning -for each person in the household, factory or business.
- Drills to test and practice the plan.

For families, everyone should be involved in developing the weather safety plans. Also, a safety plan should be developed for each type of bad weather that affects your area.

Simply discussing what to do is not enough. To be fully prepared and ready to act, the plan you develop at home or at work should be rehearsed. Don't make a plan and then lock it away for safe keeping. Practice it - often.

What You Can Do- Planning for Emergencies:

- Establish a disaster plan that includes a family communications plan. Pre-determine potential temporary relocation places for your family in case an emergency or disaster necessitates that you evacuate from your home. For some people, staying with a friend or family member- or even in a hotel if space is available- is preferable to temporary housing in a public shelter.
- Assemble at least one disaster supply kit.
 - Purchase a weather radio in order to receive alerts regarding severe weather in you area- both at work and home.
- Understand local hazards that may affect you and your family.