

Natural Disaster Preparedness

The next time disaster strikes, you may not have much time to act. It is important to plan ahead and prepare for a sudden emergency. Discuss ideas with your family, then prepare an emergency plan and display it where everyone will see it - on the refrigerator or bulletin board.

It is important to have these conversations now in order to learn how to protect yourself and cope with disaster. Below are some suggestions on how to best prepare for a natural disaster or hazard in your community. For more information, contact your local office of emergency management.

Planning

- Find out which disasters could occur in your area
- Ask how to prepare for each disaster
- Ask how you would be warned of an emergency
- Learn your community's evacuation routes
- Ask about special assistance for elderly or disabled persons
- Learn about the emergency plans of your children's school or day care centre
- Create an emergency plan for your household
- Get together to discuss the dangers of fire, severe weather, earthquakes and other emergencies
- Find safe spots in your home for each type of disaster
- Draw a floor plan of your home and mark escape routes from each room
- Discuss what to do about power outages and personal injuries
- Post emergency telephone numbers near phones
- Teach children how and when to call police and fire rescue
- Pick one remote and one local friend or relative to call if you are separated during a disaster (It is often easier to call remotely than within the affected area)
- Identify two emergency meeting places: one near your home in case of a fire and one outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return after a disaster



Preparation

Prepare a disaster supplies kit by assembling items you might need in an evacuation and store it in an easy-to-carry container, such as a backpack or duffel bag, and include:

- A supply of water
- A supply of non-perishable packaged or canned food with a non-electric can opener
- A change of clothing, rain gear and sturdy shoes
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- A first aid kit and prescription medicine
- An extra pair of glasses
- A battery-powered radio and flashlight with extra batteries
- Credit cards and cash
- An extra set of car keys
- A list of family physicians
- A list of important family information (the style and serial number of medical devices such as pacemakers)
- Special items for infants, elderly or disabled family members

Remember to keep it simple. The less moving parts, the better. Fancy preparedness plans and survival gear fail under the pressures of a real-life scenario. Prepare for whatever disaster is likely to affect your area, as not every place on the planet has the same needs.

