



Preparing for Disaster: 3 Step Plan

1) Collect disaster supplies

The devastating hurricane Katrina is graphic evidence of just how disruptive natural disasters can be. Those affected are without electricity, water, stoves, phone and even shelter. To be prepared, collect the following items and store them so that you can find them easily in an emergency — but not so easily that you end up raiding and depleting the supplies without realizing it. Some people store these items in a section of the basement or a closet that is used infrequently. Decide what will work best for you.

Disaster-supply list

- Bottled water (1 gallon per person per day; three-day supply ideal)
- Cash (ATM and credit cards may not work or be accepted by businesses)
- Cell phone (with nonelectrical charger, such as a car charger or AAA battery pack)
- Clothing and underwear
- Contact information (phone numbers of friends and family)
- Documents (driver's license, passport, birth certificate, etc.) in a waterproof container
- Dust mask (one per person)
- Eating utensils (plastic or disposable)
- Emergency numbers: local, state, and federal
- Financial inventory (a list of bank and investment accounts, mortgages, and loans, including account numbers and location of original documents)
- First-aid kit (see "Your first-aid kit," below)
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Food (canned goods and other nonperishable items that don't require cooking)
- Masking tape, duct tape
- Medical information (list of your medications, any chronic conditions, and medical history)
- Medications (three-day supply of all daily medications)
- Paper towels, toilet paper, and sanitary products
- Pet supplies and carrier (include food, water, leashes, records of shots)
- Plastic sheeting
- Radio (battery-operated) with extra batteries
- Scissors
- Sleeping bags or blankets (one per person)
- Toiletries (soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, etc.)
- Tools (can opener, knife, pliers; a Swiss army knife may suffice)
- Trash bags

Kits for sale

The American Red Cross sells first-aid kits and emergency preparedness kits for home use, and a basic disaster-supply kit especially designed for the workplace. Order online at www.redcross.org or obtain through your local Red Cross chapter

2) Create a portable supply kit

In case you have to evacuate your home, it is good to put the supplies you think you would need the most in a portable container. Some people try to fit all of the supplies listed above in a large rolling trashcan with a lid or a large rolling cooler. Another option is to store the items in several small coolers or boxes. Think about what supplies you need, what you can reasonably carry or store in your car, and how many people will be available to help you transport the supplies.

3) Develop and practice an emergency plan

All the planning in the world won't do much good if you don't practice ahead of time. Not only does this enable you to go through your

plan while calm, so you can think clearly, but it also enables you to fine-tune the plan before you have to put it into action.

- Identify emergency evacuation routes and shelters in your community and near your workplace.
- Decide where family members should meet if you are separated in an emergency.
- Identify a backup location to meet at, in case the first location is impossible to reach.
- Identify a point-person in the family who will serve as the central contact to call in case of confusion.
- Choose an out-of-state friend or relative to serve as a backup contact, in the event that local lines are tied up or out of service.
- Provide every member of the family with a cell phone or prepaid phone card to make sure they can make a call in an emergency.
- Consider family members with special needs while making plans. (For example, who will help someone in a wheelchair?) Don't forget your pets, either. (For example, where can you leave pets if you have to evacuate to a hotel that does not allow them?)
- Practice the plan at least once a year.

When disaster strikes

- Listen for official news and instructions on what to do next.
- Communicate with family members according to your plan.
- If the disaster takes place near your home, follow instructions on whether to evacuate.
- Check on neighbors, especially those who are elderly or have young children.
- If you have gas appliances such as a stove or water heater, smell for gas leaks. Do not light matches, candles, or turn on electrical switches if you smell gas. Open windows and doors and leave the house immediately.

Your first-aid kit

Minor injuries can be treated at home if you have the right supplies on hand. You can purchase most of these items at your local pharmacy or supermarket, and then place them

in a sealed container to keep them clean. A fishing tackle box, for instance, would work well as a first-aid kit. Remember to store your first-aid kit in a location you can reach quickly in an emergency.

Wound care

- One roll of absorbent cotton
- Gauze pads (4 inches square)
- Adhesive tape (1 inch and narrower)
- Adhesive bandages in various sizes
- Butterfly bandages
- Wound cleansers (soap, gels, or wipes)

Medications

- Analgesic, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen (adult and child) or aspirin (for adult use only)
- Antihistamine for allergic reactions
- Antiseptic ointment or cream (such as bacitracin or triple antibiotic ointment)
- Calamine lotion or hydrocortisone cream (1%)
- Activated charcoal for inadvertent overdoses
- Saline eye drops
- Antacid for stomach upset
- Antidiarrheal medication
- Oral glucose preparation for low blood sugar

Other supplies

- Ace bandages
- Cold/hot packs
- Cotton swabs
- Flashlight
- Scissors and safety pins
- Surgical gloves (disposable)
- Thermometer
- Tweezers

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