

DEVELOPING A FAMILY DISASTER PLAN

The first step in developing your family's disaster plan is to identify the disaster hazards in your community. Take time with your family members to identify disasters that can happen in your community or to your family. Examples are: tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, transportation accidents, chemical spills, snow/ice, power failure, and so forth. Your community may have the possibility of some or all of these events listed above occurring. The point is for you to identify and educate your family about those disasters common to your community. The purpose is not to frighten family members but to help them identify the possibilities and develop the appropriate response.

List the disaster hazards that can happen in your community. After identifying the disaster hazards, your family should determine their needs in case such an event occurs.

Examples are: water, food, tools, shelter, equipment, transportation, communications, et cetera. Your family should identify what supplies they would need. A list should be created "by" your family "for" your family. The special needs and wants of your family should be considered. List those items your family will need to survive three days in the event of a disaster:

Time should be given to writing your family's disaster plan. Putting your plan on paper helps if your family members forget all of your plan's details. Share your family disaster plan with your friends and neighbors. It may challenge them to develop a family disaster plan of their own. Sharing your family's disaster plan will also give you and your friends or neighbors an opportunity to develop plans together. The plans can support each other, share equipment or supplies, et cetera. Sharing family disaster plans will also present you an opportunity to develop pre-event relationships.

The task of turning off the gas and electricity to help prevent fires is very important. The use of a wrench and how to turn off the gas should be a training event for your family.

Knowing where to find the gas turn off valve and the main breaker in the electrical switch box is a basic task during an emergency. Other equipment should be examined and explained during training times. How to place batteries in a radio or flashlight; how to light a lantern, candles, or camp stove; and how to read a map or compass should be covered during family training times.

Planning for a rendezvous site for your family in the event of an emergency should also be part of your family's disaster plan. Should your family need to evacuate your home during an emergency, where would you meet? Discussion before a crisis occurs will aid your family in moving quickly to a place where all will be safe. Meeting in a neighbor's yard or on the street corner could save the lives of family members.

In the event your neighborhood is destroyed or restricted, where can your family safely meet? A local store, a church, or a friend's home could become a rendezvous site outside your neighborhood. Your family should know where they are to meet outside your neighborhood. Should a catastrophic event occur in your community, city, or even county, your family members may not be able to communicate with each other. Often, during large crisis, the public is not able to place telephone calls outside the affected area.

Your family should identify an out-of-state contact person. A family member or friend identified as a contact person may become the one person who can provide information about your family. The out-of-state contact person can also help address the overload that occurs on the telephone system following a crisis. Family

and friends can contact your designated out-of-state contact person instead of trying to reach your family during the time that phones are needed for emergencies. Someone in your family, church, or neighborhood should consider becoming a ham radio operator. With a small investment of time and the passing of a simple

test, a person can operate a ham radio station. During a crisis a ham radio can become the only means by which your family or neighborhood can communicate with the outside world. Contact your local electronic equipment dealer for information about ham radios.

Developing Your Family Disaster Supply Kit

- A. **Water.** Your family disaster supply kit should include one gallon of water a day for each person for at least three days. If your community is prone to large disasters your family should store enough water for seven days. Special needs should be considered and additional water supply may need to be placed in your family disaster supply kit.
- B. **Canned foods.** Your family disaster supply kit should include canned foods for three to seven days. Canned meats, fruits, vegetables, juices, soup, and milk are examples of the type of canned foods to be included in your disaster supply kit. Staples such as salt, pepper, and sugar, as well as high-energy - items such as peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, and trail mix - should be included. These will help sustain your family during an emergency.
- C. **Comfort foods.** You should include foods like cookies, hard candy, sweetened cereals, lollipops, instant coffee, and tea bags. This will help your family deal with the emergency as well as sustain them.
- D. **Vitamins** - Your family should prepare to use vitamins during the crisis. Loss of sleep and rest, greater-than-normal work loads, and unusual stress can be addressed with the use of vitamins.
- E. **First-aid kit.** A first-aid kit with proper supplies should be included in your family's disaster kit. There is a possibility of injuries and burns to you and/or the members of your family caused by the collapse of buildings. Your family's first aid kit should also include any prescription medication your family is taking on an ongoing basis. Aspirin or non-aspirin pain relievers, antacids, anti-diarrhea medication, laxatives, and other items should also be included in your first aid kit.
- F. **Tools and equipment.** Your family disaster supply kit should include a gas cooker, gas, pots, and pans. Eating utensils (forks, spoons, and knives) with a hand-operated can opener should be included. Matches, signal flares and a fire extinguisher (ABC) will be important items in your family's disaster kits. A radio and flashlight with extra batteries will provide security and knowledge for your family until help can arrive. Pliers, wrenches, tape, rope, plastic sheets, sewing kits, and tent are items to be included in your disaster kit. Toilet paper, towelettes, personal hygiene items, plastic bags, and a plastic bucket with lid will also be useful during an emergency. Household chlorine bleach and disinfectant should also be included to help sanitize and disinfect family member's hands and items they handle.
- G. **Other items.** Paper, pencils, whistle, compass, and a map should be included in your family disaster kit. Keeping a list, writing directions, leaving notes, and finding your way could help sustain your family during an emergency. Important documents and papers should be enclosed in a large plastic Ziploc bag.
- H. **Clothing and bedding.** Your family disaster kit should include items of clothing and bedding. These include but are not limited to: sturdy shoes, work boots, rain gear, hat, gloves, blankets, sleeping bags, thermal underwear, and coats.
- I. **Special Items.** Your family disaster kit should also include any special items your family could need, such as: baby items, dentures, eyeglasses, contact lenses, and so forth. Important family documents, entertainment items (games, books), cash and other items needed by your family should be included.
- J. **Gasoline for the automobile.** Family policy should be not to allow the automobile's gasoline to go below half a tank.

Practicing Your Family Disaster Plan

Invested time in practicing of your family disaster plan with each family member. Having a good plan on paper will not protect your family. Each family member should be familiar with every component of the family plan. How to use the tools and equipment, where the kit is stored, how to retrieve the kit, how to prepare the food, et cetera are important lessons for family members.

Share your family disaster plan. Your willingness to talk with friends and neighbors will help other families discover how important it is for families to be prepared for disasters.

Sharing your family's plan will also help you prepare to work with friends or neighbors. Teaming with other families will provide opportunities to take advantage of their expertise or equipment following a disaster in your community. This will also aid your family in building relationships pre-event and provide ministry opportunities post-event. Do not forget to update your family disaster plan to reflect changes within your family, home, work, schools, et cetera.

Shelter for Your Family

When a crisis occurs in your community, careful consideration must be given to sheltering your family. Depending on the size and nature of the crisis, where you shelter your family will be guided by a number of factors. Is your home damaged? To what extent is the home damaged? Do you need to evacuate the neighborhood? Can you travel outside of the area? Do you have utilities?

Sheltering in your home could be a viable option for your family. Following damage from events like an earthquake, tornado, or hurricane, inspect your home for damage. Check for fires and other hazards. Use a flashlight; do not light matches, candles, or turn on electrical switches. Sniff for gas leaks. If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak turn off the gas at the main valve. Open the windows and get everyone out of the house.

Always seek professional (utility company) assistance to turn on the utilities again should you turn them off because of damage or a suspected leak.

Shut off other damaged utilities. Clean up any spills of medications, bleach, flammable liquids, and so forth. If your house has sustained major damage, get out immediately and seek professional help to inspect your house.

You may be able to stay in your home but not use the utilities.

Should you need to evacuate the area, use routes that you have identified in your disaster plan. Your family disaster plan should also include a place for your family to evacuate to. Other family members, friends, or the motel your family will use should be predetermined.

Other options for your family are public shelters sponsored by the American Red Cross or your church. Be prepared to take clothes, medications, blankets or sleeping bags, and items to entertain family members.

If your family owns a camper or tent, you can use them to shelter your family until evacuation is possible or until outside help arrives. If necessary, your family can use a van or automobile for shelter until better accommodations are available. Do not run the engine or radio in the vehicle. The dangers of causing the battery to die or carbon monoxide poisoning are too great to allow the vehicle to run with your family inside.