

PUBLIC HEALTH NOTES



Be Prepared

Disasters happen anytime and anywhere, and when they strike, you may not have much time to respond. A highway spill of hazardous material could mean instant evacuation. A winter storm could confine your family at home. An earthquake, flood, tornado or any other disaster could cutoff basic services—gas, water, electricity and telephones—for days.

If you had to evacuate your home today, would you have the right supplies? Preparing for emergencies makes sense. A Family Disaster Supplies Kit is a container of supplies that you have gathered in advance so your family can endure an evacuation or home confinement.

You should stock six basic things in your home in case of a disaster. They are: *water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies, and special items*. Keep the items that you would most likely need during an evacuation in easy-to-carry containers—marked with an asterisk. Possible containers include a large, covered trash container, camping backpack, or a duffle bag. To get a copy of “Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit” go to www.fema.gov/pdf/library/fdsk.pdf

Suggestions and Reminders:

- Store your kit in a convenient place known to all family members.
- Keep a smaller version of the Disaster Supplies Kit in the trunk of your car.
- Keep items in airtight plastic bags.
- Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh.
- Rotate your stored food every six months.
- Re-think your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update clothes, etc.
- Ask your physician and your pharmacist about storing prescription medications.

In order to create a workable family disaster plan:

- Call your county Emergency Government or the local Red Cross about disasters most likely to occur in your community, how people are warned about impending disasters and how to prepare for each.
- Meet with family members and discuss the types of disasters that could occur.
- Explain how to prepare and respond.
- Discuss what to do if advised to evacuate.
- Practice what you discussed.

Remember to practice and maintain your plan. If you are prepared for potential disaster situations, the entire family will handle it better. For more information on disaster and emergency preparedness visit www.redcross.org or go to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://emergency.cdc.gov>