



# Disaster Planning Is Up To You

The recent severe storms and tornadoes that ravaged the nation should serve as a reminder to everyone that each household needs to have a disaster preparedness plan.

The first 72 hours after a disaster are critical. Electricity, gas, water and telephones may not be working. In addition, public safety services such as police and fire departments may not be able to reach you immediately during a serious crisis. Each person should be prepared to be self-sufficient - able to live without running water, electricity and/or gas, and telephones - for at least three days following a disaster. To do so, keep the following on hand and rotate supplies to keep them fresh:

- **Food:** Maintain enough nonperishable food for each person for at least 72 hours.
- **Water:** Store enough so each person has a gallon a day for 72 hours, preferably for one week. Store in airtight containers and replace it every six months. Store disinfectants such as iodine tablets or chlorine bleach, eight drops per gallon, to purify water if necessary.
- **First aid kit:** Make sure it is well stocked, especially with bandages and disinfectants.
- **Fire extinguisher:** Your fire extinguisher should be suitable for all types of fires. Teach all family members how to use it.
- **Flashlights with extra batteries:** Keep flashlights beside your bed and in several other locations. Do not use matches or candles until you are certain there are no gas leaks.
- **Weather Radios:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio, with battery backup, portable radio or portable television with extra batteries: Telephones may be out of order or limited to emergency use. The NOAA weather radio, portable radio or portable television may be your best source of information.
- **Miscellaneous items:** Extra blankets, clothing, shoes and money. Wear sturdy shoes just in case you need to walk through rubble and debris.
- **Alternative cooking sources:** Store a barbecue or camping stove for outdoor camping.  
**Caution:** Ensure there are no gas leaks before you use any kind of fire as a cooking source and never use charcoal indoors. Gasoline-powered appliances should be filled away from ignition sources.
- **Special items:** Have at least 72 hours of medications and food for infants and those with special needs. Don't forget diapers.
- **Tools:** Have an adjustable or pipe wrench for turning off gas and water, and a shovel or broom for cleaning up.

- **Pets:** Assemble an animal emergency supply kit and develop a pet care buddy system with friends or relatives to make sure someone is available to care for or evacuate your pets if you are unable to do so. Be sure each of your pets has a tag with your name and phone number. Whether you decide to stay put in an emergency or evacuate to a safer location, you will need to plan for your pets.

Pay attention to directions from emergency managers, police and others and obey instructions in the event of an evacuation. Obtain a NOAA weather radio to receive alerts and learn the language of weather warnings:

- A *watch* is issued by the National Weather Service when the risk of a hazardous weather or hydrologic event has increased significantly, but its occurrence, location, and/or timing is still uncertain.
- A *warning* is issued when a hazardous event is occurring or has a very high probability of occurrence. Warnings advise of a threat to life or property.
- An *advisory* is issued when a hazardous event is occurring or has a very high probability of occurrence. Advisories describe events that cause significant inconvenience.

Mobile homes and travel trailers, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes and should be evacuated. These homes can overturn quite easily, therefore these residents should plan to seek shelter in nearby buildings.

Flying debris from severe weather causes the most deaths and injuries. In areas not prone to flooding or storm water surges, basements and in-ground shelters provide the highest level of protection against airborne or falling debris. If your house does not have a basement, you can install an in-ground shelter beneath a concrete slab-on-grade foundation or a concrete garage floor. If no other alternatives are available, take shelter in an interior room.

An alternative is a "Safe Room," an above-ground shelter location on the first floor of the house. More information and construction guidelines are available on the FEMA Internet site, [www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/saferoom/residential.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/saferoom/residential.shtm).