

Your Family Disaster Plan

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Where will your family be when disaster strikes? They could be anywhere - at work, at school, or in the car. How will you find each other? Will you know if your children are safe?

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services - water, gas, electricity or telephones - were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away.

Families can - and do - cope with disaster by preparing in advance and working together as a team. Follow the steps listed below to create your family's disaster plan. Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility.

Four (4) Steps to Safety

1. Find out what could happen to you:
 - Contact your local emergency management or civil defense office and American Red Cross chapter - be prepared to take notes.
 - Ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen. Request information on how to prepare for each.
 - Learn about your community's warning signals: what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
 - Ask about animal care after disaster. Animals may not be allowed inside emergency shelters due to health regulations.
 - Find out how to help elderly or disabled persons, if needed.
 - Next, find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or daycare center and other places where your family spends time.

2. Create a disaster plan
 - Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, severe weather and earthquakes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.
 - Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.
 - Pick two places to meet:
 - Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
 - Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone must know the address and phone number.
 - Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your contact's phone number.
 - Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets.

3. Complete this checklist
 - Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.).
 - Teach children how and when to call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.
 - Show each family member how and when to turn off the water, gas and electricity at the main switches.
 - Check if you have adequate insurance coverage.
 - Get training from the fire department for each family member on how to use the fire extinguisher (ABC type), and show them where it's kept.
 - Teach each family member how to use the fire extinguisher (ABC type), and show them where it's kept.
 - Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.
 - Conduct a home hazard hunt.
 - Stock emergency supplies and assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit.
 - Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.
 - Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room.
 - Find the safe spots in your home for each type of disaster.

4. Practice and maintain your plan
 - Quiz your kids every six months so they remember what to do.
 - Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills.
 - Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six months.
 - Test and recharge your fire extinguisher(s) according to manufacturer's instructions.
 - Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

Emergency Supplies

Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your needs for at least three days. Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit with items you may need in an evacuation. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffel bags or covered trash containers.

Include:

- A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that won't spoil.
- One change of clothing and footwear per person, and one blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications.
- Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash or traveler's checks.
- Sanitation supplies.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- An extra pair of glasses.

Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Keep a smaller kit in the trunk of your car.

Utilities

Locate the main electric fuse box, water service main and natural gas main. Learn how and when to turn these utilities off. Teach all responsible family members. Keep necessary tools near gas and water shut-off valves. Remember, turn off the utilities only if you suspect the lines are damaged or if you are instructed to do so. If you turn the gas off, you will need a professional to turn it back on.

Home Hazard Hunt

During a disaster¹ ordinary objects in your home can cause injury or damage. Anything that can move, fall, break or cause a fire is a home hazard. For example, a hot water heater or a bookshelf can fall. Inspect your home at least once a year and fix potential hazards. Contact your local fire department to learn about home fire hazards.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Working with neighbors can save lives and property. Meet with your neighbors to plan how the neighborhood could work together after a disaster until help arrives. If you're a member of a neighborhood organization, such as a home association or crime watch group, introduce disaster preparedness as a new activity. Know your neighbor's special skills (e.g., medical, technical) and consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as disabled and elderly persons. Make plans for childcare in case parents can't get home.

If Disaster Strikes

- Remain calm and patient - put your plan into action
- Check for injuries - give first aid and get help for seriously injured people
- Check for damage in your home
 - Use flashlights - do not light matches or turn on electrical switches, if you suspect damage.
 - Check for fires, fire hazards and other household hazards.
 - Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly.
- Shut off any other damaged utilities
- Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline and other flammable liquids immediately

Remember to

- Confine or secure your pets.
- Call your family contact-do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.
- Check on your neighbors, especially elderly or disabled persons.
- Make sure you have an adequate water supply in case service is cut off.
- Stay away from downed power lines.
- Listen to your battery powered radio for news and instructions - evacuate, if advised to do so. Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.

Evacuation

Evacuate immediately if told to do so:

- Listen to your battery-powered radio and follow the instructions of local emergency officials.
- Wear protective and sturdy shoes.
- Take your Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Lock your home.
- Use travel routes specified by local authorities-don't use shortcuts because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous.

If you're sure you have time:

- Shut off water, gas and electricity before leaving, if instructed to do so.
- Post a note telling others when you left and where you are going.
- Make arrangements for your pets.



Homeland Security

Family Communications Plan

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another and review what you will do in different situations.

Out-of-Town Contact Name _____ Telephone Number: _____
 Email: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Fill out the following information for each family member and keep it up to date.

Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____
Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____
Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____
Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____
Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____
Name: _____	Social Security Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____	Important Medical Information: _____

Where to go in an emergency. Write down where your family spends the most time: work, school and other places you frequent. Schools, daycare providers, workplaces and apartment buildings should all have site-specific emergency plans.

Home

Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Neighborhood Meeting Place: _____
 Regional Meeting Place: _____

Work

Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Evacuation Location: _____

School

Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Evacuation Location: _____

Work

Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Evacuation Location: _____

School

Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Evacuation Location: _____

Other place you frequent:

Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Evacuation Location: _____

School

Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Evacuation Location: _____

Other place you frequent:

Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Evacuation Location: _____

Important Information	Name	Telephone #	Policy #
Doctor(s):			
Other:			
Pharmacist:			
Medical Insurance:			
Homeowners/Rental Insurance:			
Veterinarian/Kennel (for pets):			

Other useful phone numbers: **9-1-1** for emergencies.

Police Non-Emergency Phone #: _____

Specific Information for People with Disabilities

Create a support network to help in an emergency.

Tell these people where you keep your emergency supplies.

Give one member of your support network a key to your house or apartment.

Contact your city or county government's emergency information management office. Many local offices keep lists of people with disabilities so they can be located quickly in a sudden emergency.

Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to help identify your disability.

If you are dependent on dialysis or other life sustaining treatment, know the location and availability of more than one facility.

If you use a battery-operated wheelchair, life-support system, or other power-dependent equipment, call your power company before rolling blackouts happen. Many utility companies keep a list and map of the locations of power-dependent customers in case of an emergency. Ask them what alternatives are available in your area. Contact the customer service department of your local utility company(ies) to learn if this service is available in your community.

If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter, have an extra battery. A car battery also can be used with a wheelchair but will not last as long as a wheelchairs deep-cycle battery .. If available, store a lightweight manual wheelchair for backup.

Show others how to operate your wheelchair.

Know the size and weight of your wheelchair¹ in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.

If you are Blind or have a visual disability, store a talking or Braille clock or large-print timepiece with extra batteries.

If you are Deaf or have a hearing loss, consider getting a small portable battery-operated television set. Emergency broadcasts may give information in American Sign Language (ASL) or open captioning.

Specific Information for Seniors

- Plan how you will evacuate or signal for help.
- Plan emergency procedures with home health care agencies or workers.
- Tell others where you keep your emergency supplies.
- Teach others how to operate necessary equipment.
- Label equipment like wheelchairs, canes or walkers.
- List of prescription medications including dosage in your supply kits.
- Extra eyeglasses and hearing aid batteries.
- Extra wheelchair batteries or other special equipment in your supply kit.
- A list of the style and serial numbers of medical devices such as pacemakers in your emergency kit.
- Copies of medical insurance and Medicare cards.

Food Safety in a Power Outage

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Sudden power outages can be frustrating and troublesome, especially when they are prolonged. Perishable foods should not be held above 40 degrees for more than 2 hours. If a power outage is 2 hours or less¹ you need not be concerned, but how do you save your food when the refrigerator is out for longer times? Being prepared can help. By planning ahead, you can save your perishables.

What do I need?

- One or more coolers. Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers can do an excellent job as well.
- Shelf-stable foods, such as canned goods and powdered or boxed milk. These can be eaten cold or heated on the grill.
- A digital quick-response thermometer. A digital thermometer should be a necessity in your kitchen anyway. With these thermometers you can quickly check the internal temperatures of food for doneness and safety.

What to do

- Do not open the refrigerator or freezer. Tell your little ones not to open the door. An unopened refrigerator will keep foods cold enough for a couple of hours at least. A freezer that is half full will hold for up to 24 hours and a full freezer for 48 hours.
- If it looks like the power outage will be for more than 2-4 hours, pack refrigerated milk, dairy products, meats, fish, poultry, eggs, gravy, stuffing and left-overs into your cooler surrounded by ice.
- If it looks like the power outage will be prolonged, prepare a cooler with ice for your freezer items.

Q's and A's

What should be discarded after a power outage?

As soon as the power returns, check temperatures. If the food in the freezer has ice crystals and is not above 40 degrees you can refreeze. Perishable foods in the refrigerator should not be above 40 degrees F. for more than two hours. Use this chart to see what has to be discarded and what can be kept.

What if I go to bed and the power is still not on?

Before you go to bed, pack your perishables into your coolers if you haven't already done so and put in as much ice as you can. Also, when you go to bed, leave a bedroom light switched on. When the power goes back on it will wake you, so you can check the condition of your foods in the freezer.

What if the power goes out while I'm at work or out of the house and it has been more than a few hours before I get home?

Try to determine how long the power has been out. Check the internal temperature of the food in your refrigerator with your quick-response thermometer. A liquid such as milk or juice is easy to check. Spot check other items like steaks or leftovers also. If the internal temperature is above 40 degrees, it is best to throw it out.

What if the power goes out and comes back on while I am out?

If your freezer is fairly full and you know it was not longer than 24 hours, the food should be OK. There will be loss of quality with refreezing, but the food will be safe. If the refrigerator was out for more than 2-4 hours, you are best to discard the perishables.

Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit

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Disasters happen anytime and anywhere. And when disaster strikes, 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 cut off basic services-gas, water, electricity and telephones-for days.

After a disaster, local officials and relief workers will be on the scene, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it may take days. Would your family be prepared to cope with the emergency until help arrives?

Your family will cope best by preparing for disaster before it strikes. One way to prepare is by assembling a Disaster Supplies Kit. Once disaster hits, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. But if you've gathered supplies in advance, your family can endure an evacuation or home confinement.

To Prepare Your Kit

Gather the supplies that are listed. You may need them if your family is confined at home. Place the supplies you'd most likely need for an evacuation - these supplies are listed with an asterisk (*) - in an easy-to-carry container. Possible containers include:

- A large, covered trash container
- A camping backpack
- A duffle bag

1. Water

- Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers and ill people will need more.
- Store one gallon of water per person per day {two quarts for drinking, two quarts for food preparation/sanitation}*.
- Keep at least a three-day supply of water for each person in your household.

2. Food

- Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Select food items that are compact and lightweight.
- Include a selection of the following foods* in your Disaster Supplies Kit:
 - Ready-to-eat canned meats. Fruits and vegetables
 - Canned juices, milk, soup (if powdered, store extra water)
 - Staples-sugar, salt, pepper
 - High energy food-peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix
 - Vitamins

Foods for infants, elderly persons or persons on special diets
Comfort/stress foods-cookies, hard candy, sweetened cereals, lollipops, instant coffee, tea bags

3. First Aid Kit

Assemble a first aid kit for your home and one for each car. A first aid kit should include:

- Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- 2-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- Hypoallergenic adhesive tape
- Triangular bandages (3)
- 2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Needle
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Thermometer
- Tongue blades (2)
- Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant
- Assorted sizes of safety pins
- Cleansing agent/soap
- Latex gloves (2 pair)
- Sunscreen

Non-prescription drugs

- Aspirin or non-aspirin pain
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid (for stomach upset)
- Syrup of Ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center)
- Laxative
- Activated charcoal (use if advised by the Poison Control Center)

4. Tools and Supplies

- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates and plastic utensils*
- Emergency preparedness manual*
- Battery operated radio & extra batteries*
- Flashlight & extra batteries*
- Cash or traveler's checks, change*
- Non-electric can opener, utility knife
- Fire extinguisher: small canister, ABC type
- Tube tent
- Pliers
- Tape
- Compass

- Matches in a waterproof container
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Needles, thread
- Medicine dropper
- Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water
- Whistle
- Plastic Sheeting
- Map of the area (for locating shelters)

Sanitation

- Toilet paper, towelettes*
- Soap, liquid detergent*
- Feminine supplies*
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses)
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Personal hygiene items*
- Disinfectant
- Household chlorine bleach

5. Clothing and Bedding

*Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person.

- Sturdy shoes or work boots*
- Rain gear*
- Blankets or sleeping bags*
- Hat and gloves
- Thermal underwear
- Sunglasses

Specific Information for Children

- Include your children in family discussions and planning for emergency safety.
- Teach your children their basic personal information so they can identify themselves and get help if they become separated from a parent or guardian. Prepare an emergency card with information for your child, including their full name, address, phone number, parent's work number and out of state contact.
- Teach children to dial their home telephone number and Emergency 911.
- Know the policies of the school or daycare center your children attend. Make plans to have someone pick them up if you are unable to get to them.
- Make sure each child knows the family's alternate meeting sites if you are separated in a disaster and cannot return to your home.
- Make sure each child knows how to reach your family's out-of-state contact person.
- Teach children what gas smells like and advise them to tell an adult.
- Include a family picture and a favorite toy, game or book for each child in their go-bag.
- Include your child's emergency card and include information on reunification locations and out-of-area contact.
- Provide comfort food and treats for each child in your family disaster supplies kit.
- Keep a recent photo of your children in your go-bag.

Is Your Childcare Provider Prepared for a Natural Disaster?

By Sue Truman, Account Services Coordinator, Life Era. © 2000 LifeEra, Inc. All rights reserved.

Experts warn that in a major disaster phone lines will be jammed, transportation will be difficult and supplies will be limited. Childcare providers need to know what to do and how to be prepared to have children with them for an extended period of time.

Disaster Preparedness for Child Care Providers

The following information is a starting point. Your local emergency disaster agency or fire department will have more detailed information about what child care providers need to consider for their area.

Make a disaster plan

Each child care provider's disaster plan will be different depending on the following:

- What disasters are most likely to occur in your area - earthquake, flood, hurricane, volcano, extreme cold, etc?
- Is the provider caring for very young children or children with special needs? How can providers plan for extra help in the event of a disaster?
- Is the provider a family home provider alone with the children? If so, someone in the neighborhood, who is usually home during the day, should be designated to check on them in the event of a disaster.
- Making a plan is a team effort. The most comprehensive plans include input from local emergency management staff, child care licensors, parents and providers.
- FEMA's (The Federal Emergency Management Agency) website, www.fema.gov, is full of information to help you make a disaster plan.

Build a disaster supplies kit

Child care providers should be prepared with enough supplies for 72 hours including extra clothes, diapers, food, battery operated radio, flashlight, water, first aid kit, plastic bags, etc. Some childcare providers have "11 comfort kits" for all children. These are stored in large zip lock bags and include extra food and juice, a stuffed animal or toy from home and a picture of family members.

Conduct earthquake or disaster drills

If you are in an area where earthquakes occur, teach children how to drop, cover and hold. Know where the safest places are in each room to go should an earthquake occur.

- Clearly mark and/or identify exits.
- Conduct a drill at least every month.

Perform a home or center hazard hunt

Find out what the structural hazards are in the home or day care center.

- Child care providers tend to store heavy objects up high out of reach of young children, but in an earthquake, these can become serious hazards. Store large items on lower shelves and lock them up.
- Secure tall bookcases and tall cabinets to the wall.

- Move beds and cribs away from windows.
- Know how to shut off main utilities if needed including gas, water and main electrical switch.

Update emergency contact cards

In a large disaster, phone lines are jammed. Parents need to establish a family contact outside the area that can serve as a communication relay between parent and the child care provider.

Update CPR and First Aid Training

Medical response teams will not be able to respond in a major disaster, so it's important for child care providers to refresh their first aid training.

Resources

Contact your local child care licenser for information about disaster preparedness training and materials in your area.

Disaster Preparedness for Pets

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Hurricanes, floods, wildfires, hazardous material spills—disasters can strike anytime, anywhere. If you think you will never have to evacuate unless you live in a flood plain, near an earthquake fault line or in a coastal area, you may be tragically mistaken.

It is imperative that you make preparations to evacuate your family and your pets in any situation. In the event of a disaster, proper preparation will pay off with the safety of your family and pets.

If You Evacuate, Take Your Pets

The single most important thing you can do to protect your pets is to take them with you when you evacuate. Animals left behind in a disaster can easily be injured, lost, or killed. Animals left inside your home can escape through storm-damaged areas, such as broken windows. Animals turned loose to fend for themselves are likely to become victims of exposure, starvation, predators, contaminated food or water, or accidents. Leaving dogs tied or chained outside in a disaster is a death sentence.

- If you leave, even if you think you may be gone only for a few hours, take your animals. Once you leave, you have no way of knowing how long you'll be kept out of the area, and you may not be able to go back for your pets.
- Leave early—don't wait for a mandatory evacuation order. An unnecessary trip is far better than waiting too long to leave safely with your pets. If you wait to be evacuated by emergency officials, you may be told to leave your pets behind.

Don't Forget ID

Your pets should be wearing up-to-date identification at all times. It's a good idea to include the phone number of a friend or relative outside your immediate area—if your pet is lost, you'll want to provide a number on the tag that will be answered even if you're out of your home.

Find a Safe Place Ahead of Time

Because evacuation shelters generally don't accept pets (except for service animals), you must plan ahead to ensure that your family and pets will have a safe place to stay. Don't wait until disaster strikes to do your research.

- Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets. Ask about any restrictions on number, size, and species. Ask if 11no pet11 policies would be waived in an emergency. Make a list of pet-friendly places and keep it handy.

Call ahead for a reservation as soon as you think you might have to leave your home.

- Check with friends, relatives, or others outside your immediate area. Ask if they would be able to shelter you and your animals or just your animals, if necessary: If you have more than one pet, you may have to be prepared to house them separately.
- Make a list of boarding facilities and veterinary offices that might be able to shelter animals in emergencies; include 24-hour telephone numbers.

- Ask your local animal shelter if it provides foster care or shelter for pets in an emergency. This should be your last resort, as shelters have limited resources and are likely to be stretched to their limits during an emergency.

If You. Don't .Evacuate

If your family and pets must wait out a storm or other disaster at home, identify a safe area of your home where you can all stay together.

- Keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers, and make sure they are wearing identification.
- Have any medications and a supply of pet food and water inside watertight containers, along with your other emergency supplies.

As the Disaster Approaches

Don't wait until the last minute to get ready. Warnings of hurricanes or other disasters may be issued hours, or even days, in advance.

- Call to confirm emergency shelter arrangements for you and your pets.
- Bring pets into the house and confine them so you can leave with them quickly if necessary. Make sure each pet and pet carrier has up-to-date identification and contact information. Include information about your temporary shelter location.
- Make sure your disaster supplies are ready to go, including your pet disaster kit.

In Case You're Not Home

An evacuation order may come, or a disaster may strike, when you're at work or out of the house.

- Make arrangements well in advance for a trusted neighbor to take your pets and meet you at a specified location. Be sure the person is comfortable with your pets, knows where your animals are likely to be, knows where your disaster supplies are kept, and has a key to your home.
- If you use a pet-sitting service ¹ it may be able to help, but discuss the possibility well in advance.

After the Storm

Planning and preparation will help you weather the disaster¹ but your home may be a very different place afterward, whether you have taken shelter at home or elsewhere.

- Don't allow your pets to roam loose. Familiar landmarks and smells might be gone, and your pet will probably be disoriented. Pets can easily get lost in such situations.
- For a few days, keep dogs on leashes and keep cats in carriers inside the house. If your house is damaged, they could escape and become lost.
- Be patient with your pets after a disaster. Try to get them back into their normal routines as soon as possible, and be ready for behavioral problems that may result from the stress of the situation. If behavioral problems persist, or if your pet seems to be having any health problems, talk to your veterinarian.

Evacuation Planning

You may not be in a flood zone or have to flee wildfire, but even a hazardous material incident on a nearby street could force you to evacuate. It pays -to be prepared!

Disaster Supply Checklist for Pets

Every member of your family should know what he or she needs to take when you evacuate. You also need to prepare supplies for your pet. Stock up on non-perishables well ahead of time, add perishable items at the last minute, and have everything ready to go at a moment's notice. Keep everything accessible, stored in sturdy containers (duffel bags, covered trash containers, etc.) that can be carried easily.

In your disaster kit, you should include:

- Medications and medical records stored in a waterproof container and a first aid kit. A pet first aid book is also good to include.
- Sturdy leashes, harnesses, and carriers to transport pets safely and to ensure that your pets can't escape. Carriers should be large enough for the animal to stand comfortably, turn around, and lie down. Your pet may have to stay in the carrier for hours at a time while you have taken shelter away from home. Be sure to have a secure cage with no loose objects inside it to accommodate smaller pets. These may require blankets or towels for bedding and warmth, and other special items.
- Current photos and descriptions of your pets to help others identify them in case you and your pets become separated and to prove that they are yours.
- Food and water for at least three days for each pet, bowls, cat litter and litter box, and a manual can opener.
- Information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems, and the name and number of your veterinarian in case you have to board your pets or place them in foster care.
- Pet beds and toys, if you can easily take them, to reduce stress.
- Other useful items include newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags, grooming items, and household bleach.

Other Evacuation Tips

- All mobile home residents should evacuate at the first sign of a disaster.
- Evacuate to the safest location you can that's as close as possible to home. Long-distance evacuation can be a problem when highways are crowded.
- When planning for hurricanes, identify your evacuation zone and level to determine if and when you would have to evacuate. Be prepared for one category higher than the one being forecast, because hurricanes often increase in strength just before making landfall.
- Your local humane organization or local emergency management agency may be able to provide you with information about your community's disaster response plans.

Helping Friends and Co-Workers after a Disaster

By Karen Clevering, Clinical Content Editor, Working Solutions. ©2003 Working Solutions. All rights reserved.

If you are concerned about a loved one or co-worker who has been affected by a natural disaster, there are some things you can do help them cope.

When Friends and Co ... Workers Experience Disaster

When someone you know has been affected by a natural disaster or tragedy, it may be very difficult to know what to do or what to expect. Read the following guidelines about individuals coping with disaster from the Center for Mental Health Services.

- No one who sees a disaster is untouched by it.
- It is normal to feel anxious.
- Profound sadness, grief, and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Acknowledging feelings helps a person recover.
- Focusing on strengths and abilities will help an individual heal.
- Accepting help from community programs and resources is healthy.
- Each person has different needs and different ways of coping.

Talking With Co-Workers and Friends

In addition to providing shelter and physical help for your friends and coworkers, it is important that you are available to listen and support. By sharing feelings and encouraging discussion, you are helping your friend or co-worker understand his feelings, learn to express them, and find ways to cope.

Because it may be difficult for individuals to think about everything that needs to be done at this time, check-in with your friend or co-worker regularly and offer to help. Give concrete examples of what you can do. Here are just a few examples:

- Provide a meal on a specific day
- Replace lost or destroyed items
- Clean the house
- Help complete paperwork for insurance forms or make phone calls
- Shelter pets until the house is in order or until there is a more stable environment
- Babysit their kids for an afternoon

Individuals who are coping with severe stress respond better to direct offers of help.

When a co-worker returns to work, talk with your manager about how you may be able to help adjust the workload and ease back into the schedule. It may take some time for him to return to his normal routine, especially if he is still sorting through relocation challenges or insurance claims.

Talk to your manager about other ways that your workplace can provide support and assistance. You may offer to help make phone calls or complete forms during your breaks.

When to Seek Help

Sometimes the trauma of the disaster may be more than a person can handle alone. According to the Center for Mental Health Services, the behaviors listed below are signs that the individual needs additional assistance coping with the disaster.

- Difficulty communicating thoughts
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty maintaining balance
- Easily frustrated
- Increased use of drugs/alcohol
- Limited attention span
- Poor work performance
- Headaches/stomach problems
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Disorientation or confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Reluctance to leave home
- Depression, sadness
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Mood-swings
- Crying easily
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Fear of crowds, strangers, or being alone

When talking with your friend who exhibits severe signs of stress, consider broaching the subject with the following suggestions from the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine:

- Ask to speak to the person privately.
- Ask, "Are you having some difficulties? Do you want to talk about it?"
- Suggest the individual contact a counselor or his company's EAP professional.

Encourage your friend to deal with the stress in healthy ways. Share with your friend these suggestions about easing stress from the Center for Mental Health Services. Suggest that your friend:

- Talk about his feelings, such as anger and sorrow even though they may be difficult.
- Not hold himself responsible for events out of his control.
- Promote physical and emotional health by staying active in daily life patterns and making necessary adjustments.
- Maintain normal routines as much as possible.
- Spend time with family and friends. Participate in memorials, rituals, and use symbols as a way to express feelings.
- Use existing support groups of family, friends, and church.

You shouldn't hesitate to contact a professional or family member if you believe the individual needs immediate help or attention.

Conclusion

Experiencing a disaster can bring up a mixture of feelings and emotions. If a friend or co-worker has been directly affected, you can support him by listening to his fears and anxieties and helping with everyday tasks that might seem overwhelming. While all individuals cope with loss and tragedy differently, watch for signs that this person may need more assistance.