

Planning



1. Planning ahead is the first step to a calmer and more assured disaster response. Determine what kinds of natural and man-made disasters and emergencies could occur in your community. Make a list of them, then discuss each one and what you should do as a group in each situation. For each type of emergency, establish responsibilities for each member of your household and plan to work together as a team. Because some family members might not be at home at the time of an emergency, designate alternates in case someone is absent.
2. Be sure everyone in the family can recognize the different sounds made by smoke, heat, and motion detectors, burglar alarms, fire alarms, and community sirens and warning signals, and know what to do when they hear them.
3. Discuss what to do if evacuation from your house is necessary. Be sure everyone in the family knows that in that case, they must not hesitate, but must get out as soon as possible and after they are outside someone should call for help. Agree on an outdoor meeting place for the family, such as a particular neighbor's front porch.
4. Be sure everyone in the family knows how to call 911 (if your community has that service) and other local emergency numbers; and how to call on different kinds of phones, such as cell phones. Gather and post other emergency numbers, such as poison control, the family doctor, a neighbor and an out-of-town person who are your family's emergency contacts, a parent's work number and cell number, etc. Post all emergency numbers near every telephone in the house and make copies for everyone to carry with them.
5. Because emergency responders will need an address or directions on where to send help, be sure all family members know how to describe where they can be found. Post your address near each telephone in the house. When dealing with the stress of an emergency, even adult family members could fail to recall details correctly.
6. Plan an out-of-town evacuation route and an out-of-town meeting point, in the event all family members aren't together at the same time to evacuate. The meeting point might be the home of a family member in another city or a hotel or landmark known to all family members.
7. Practice evacuating your home twice a year. Drive your planned evacuation route and plot alternate routes on a map in case the chosen roads are impassable or grid-locked.
8. Practice earthquake, tornado, and fire drills at home, work, and school periodically.
9. Be sure all family adults and older children know that in case of emergency, it is their responsibility to keep the family together, to remain calm, and explain to younger family members what has happened and what is likely to happen next.