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Consulting & Training Services – Family Disaster Plan*

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning.

It can force you to evacuate your neighbourhood or confine you to your home.

What can you do to protect your family and household?

What would you do if basic services – water, gas, electricity or telephone – were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they can't reach everyone right away.

Do the research ~

- Contact your local Red Cross to ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen in your community, and request preparation information.
- Contact Emergency Management & Training for information on seminars or training in your community.
- Find out how to help elderly or disabled persons, if needed.
- Read the existing disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or day care center and other places where your family spends time.
- Ask about animal care after a disaster. Animals are usually not allowed inside emergency shelters because of health regulations.
- Ensure everyone knows how and when to shut off the household utilities.

Take the steps ~

- **Meet with your family.** Discuss the dangers of fire, severe weather and earthquakes (or your area's most likely risks) with children. Assure them that preparation and sharing responsibilities will assure everyone's safety.
- **Post emergency numbers** (fire, police, ambulance, etc.) by telephones and teach children how and when to call 9-1-1.
- **Decide upon two places to meet:**
 1. Someplace right outside your home (in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire),
 2. A spot outside your neighbourhood in case you are unable to return home (in the case of an evacuation). Teach everyone the address and phone number there.
- **Determine the best escape routes from your home.** Find two ways out of every room. Practice emergency exiting and gathering at the meeting place.

- **Ask an out-of-the-area friend to be your “family contact”.** (After a disaster, it’s often easier to call long distance. All family members should know this person’s telephone number and should call this contact to tell them where they are.
- **Establish an evacuation plan** and discuss it with your family.
- **Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors** on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms. Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least twice a year.
- **Find the safest places in your home** for each type of disaster.
- **Keep an ABC-type fire extinguisher on each level of your home.** Ensure everyone in the household knows the location of each fire extinguisher, and has adequate training to use them. Test and recharge our fire extinguishers(s) according to manufacturer’s instruction.
- **Conduct a home hazard search.** During a disaster, 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 / secure potential hazards.
- **Stock emergency supplies** and assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit (see below). Replace stored water and food every six months.
- **Know how and when to shut off utilities.** Locate the main electric fuse box, water service main and natural gas main. 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.*
- **Take a first aid and CPR class.**
- **Make emergency arrangements for your pets.**
- **Ensure you have adequate insurance coverage.**

Know your neighbours ~

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

Emergency Supplies ~

What do you do until local officials and relief workers arrive?

After a disaster, help will be on its way, but it may arrive immediately. It may take hours or even days. Plan to be prepared to cope until the experts get there.

A highway spill of hazardous material could mean instant evacuation.

A winter storm or other disaster could confine your family at home – perhaps without the basic service of gas, water, electricity and telephone service.