

emergency preparedness



Homeland
Security

www.ready.gov



Preparing
Makes Sense for
Older Americans.
Get Ready
Now.


Ready

Prepare. Plan. Stay Informed.

1 Get a Kit Of Emergency Supplies

The first step is to consider how an emergency might affect your individual needs. Plan to make it on your own, for at least three days. It's possible that you will not have access to a medical facility or even a drugstore. It is crucial that you and your family think about what kinds of resources you use on a daily basis and what you might do if those resources are limited or not available.

Basic Supplies: Think first about the basics for survival – food, water, clean air and any life-sustaining items you require. Consider two kits. In one kit put everything you will need to stay where you are and make it on your own for a period of time. The other kit should be a light-weight, smaller version you can take with you if you have to leave your home. Recommended basic emergency supplies include:

- ▶ Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- ▶ Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food and a can opener if kit contains canned food
- ▶ Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- ▶ Flashlight and extra batteries
- ▶ First aid kit
- ▶ Whistle to signal for help
- ▶ Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- ▶ Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- ▶ Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- ▶ Local maps
- ▶ Pet food, extra water and supplies for your pet or service animal

Include Medications and Medical Supplies:

If you take medicine or use a medical treatment on a daily basis, be sure you have what you need on hand to make it on your own for at least a week. You should also keep a copy of your prescriptions as well as dosage or treatment information. If it is not possible to have a week-long supply of medicines and supplies, keep as much as possible on hand and talk to your pharmacist or doctor about what else you should do to prepare.

If you undergo routine treatments administered by a clinic or hospital or if you receive regular services such as home health care, treatment or transportation, talk to your service provider about their emergency plans. Work with them to identify back-up service providers within your area and the areas you might evacuate to. If you use medical equipment in your home that requires electricity to operate, talk to your health care provider about what you can do to prepare for its use during a power outage.

Additional Items: In addition, there may be other things specific to your personal needs that you should also have on hand. If you use eyeglasses, hearing aids and hearing aid batteries, wheelchair batteries, and oxygen, be sure you always have extras in your home. Also have copies of your medical insurance, Medicare and Medicaid cards readily available.

Include Emergency Documents: Include copies of important documents in your emergency supply kits such as family records, wills, power of attorney documents, deeds, social security numbers, credit card and bank information, and tax records. It is best to keep these documents in a waterproof container. Include the names and numbers of everyone in your personal support network, as well as your medical providers. Also be sure you have cash or travelers checks in your kits in case you need to purchase supplies.

2 Make a Plan For What You Will Do in an Emergency

The reality of a disaster situation is that you will likely not have access to everyday conveniences. To plan in advance, think through the details of your everyday life. If there are people who assist you on a daily basis, list who they are, and how you will contact them in an emergency. Create your own personal support network by identifying others who will help you in an emergency. Think about what modes of transportation you use and what alternative modes could serve as back-ups. If you require handicap accessible transportation be sure your alternatives are also accessible. For every aspect of your daily routine, plan an alternative procedure. Make a plan and write it down. Keep a copy of your plan in your emergency supply kits and a list of important information and contacts in your wallet. Share your plan with your family, friends, care providers and others in your personal support network.

Create a Personal Support Network: If you anticipate needing assistance during a disaster, make a list of family, friends and others who will be part of your plan. Talk to these people and ask them to be part of your support network. Share each aspect of your emergency plan with everyone in your group, including a friend or relative in another area who would not be impacted by the same emergency who can help if necessary. Make sure everyone knows how you plan to evacuate your home or workplace and where you will go in case of a disaster. Make sure that someone in your personal support network has an extra key to your home and knows where you keep your emergency supplies. Practice your plan with those who have agreed to be part of your personal support network.

Develop a 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. Consider a plan where each family member calls, or e-mails, the same friend or relative in the event of an emergency. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact, not in the impacted area, may be in a better position to communicate among

The likelihood that you and your family will recover from an emergency tomorrow often depends on the planning and preparation done today. While each person's abilities and needs are unique, every individual can take steps to prepare for all kinds of emergencies from fires and floods to potential terrorist attacks. By evaluating your own personal needs and making an emergency plan that fits those needs, you and your loved ones can be better prepared. This guide outlines commonsense measures older Americans can take to start preparing for emergencies before they happen.

Preparing makes sense for older Americans **Get Ready Now.**



separated family members. You may have trouble getting through, or the phone system may be down altogether, but be patient. For more information on how to develop a family communications plan visit www.ready.gov.

Deciding to Stay or Go: Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the emergency, the first important decision is whether you stay or go. You should understand and plan for both possibilities. Use commonsense and available information to determine if there is immediate danger. In any emergency, local authorities may or may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should monitor television or radio news reports for information or official instructions as they become available. If you're specifically told to evacuate or seek medical treatment, do so immediately. If you require additional travel time or need transportation assistance, make these arrangements in advance.

Consider Your Pets: Whether you decide to stay put in an emergency or evacuate to a safer location, you will need to make plans in advance for your pets and service animals. Keep in mind that what's best for you is typically what's best for your animals. If you must evacuate, take your pets with you, if possible. However, if you are going to a public shelter, it is important to understand that only service animals may be allowed inside. Plan in advance for shelter alternatives that will work for both you and your pets; consider loved ones or friends outside of your immediate area, pet-friendly shelters and veterinarians who would be willing to take in you and your pets in an emergency. For more information about pet preparedness, visit www.ready.gov.

Staying Put: Whether you are at home or elsewhere, there may be situations when it's simply best to stay where you are and avoid any uncertainty outside. Consider what you can do to safely shelter-in-place alone or with friends, family or neighbors. Also consider how a shelter designated for the public would meet your needs.

There could be times when you will need to stay put and create a barrier between yourself and potentially contaminated air outside. This process is known as

"sealing the room." Use available information to assess the situation. If you see large amounts of debris in the air, or if local authorities say the air is badly contaminated, you may want to take this kind of action. For more information about "sealing the room," visit www.ready.gov.

Evacuation: There may be conditions in which you will decide to get away, or there may be situations when you may be ordered to leave. Plan how you will get away and anticipate where you will go. Choose several destinations in different directions so you have options in an emergency. Ask about evacuation plans at the places where you spend time including work, community organizations and other places you frequent. If you typically rely on elevators, have a back-up plan in case they are not working.

Fire Safety: Plan two ways out of every room in case of fire. Check for items such as bookcases, hanging pictures, or overhead lights that could fall and block an escape path. Check hallways, stairwells, doorways, windows and other areas for hazards that may keep you from safely leaving a building during an emergency. Secure or remove furniture and objects that may block your path. If there are aspects of preparing your home or workplace that you are not able to do yourself, enlist the help of your personal support network.

Contact Your Local Emergency Information Management Office: Some local emergency management offices maintain registers of older people so they can be located and assisted quickly in a disaster. Contact your local emergency management agency to see if these services exist where you live or visit www.ready.gov to find links to government offices in your area.



3 Be Informed
About What Might Happen

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling an emergency supply kit and making an emergency plan are the same regardless of the type of emergency. However, it's important to stay informed about what might happen and know what types of emergencies are likely to affect your region. For more information about specific types of emergencies, visit www.ready.gov or call 1-800-BE-READY.

Be prepared to adapt this information to your personal circumstances and make every effort to follow instructions received from authorities on the scene. Above all, stay calm, be patient and think before you act. With these simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected.

Preparing Makes Sense for Older Americans. Get Ready Now.

This information was developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in consultation with AARP, the American Red Cross and the National Organization on Disability.



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Be Red Cross Ready

Fire Prevention & Safety Checklist

The most effective way to protect yourself and your home from fire is to identify and remove fire hazards. Sixty-five percent of home fire deaths occur in homes with no working smoke alarms. During a home fire, working smoke alarms and a fire escape plan that has been practiced regularly can save lives.

- If a fire occurs in your home, **GET OUT, STAY OUT** and **CALL** for help.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas. Test them every month and replace the batteries at least once a year.
- Talk with all household members about a fire escape plan and practice the plan twice a year.

Prevent home fires



Steps You Can Take Now

- Keep items that can catch on fire at least three feet away from anything that gets hot, such as space heaters.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Talk to children regularly about the dangers of fire, matches and lighters and keep them out of reach.
- Turn portable heaters off when you leave the room or go to sleep.

Cooking Safely

- Stay in the kitchen when frying, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- Stay in the home while simmering, baking, roasting or boiling food. Check it regularly and use a timer to remind you that food is cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire—like pot holders, towels, plastic and clothing—away from the stove.
- Keep pets off cooking surfaces and countertops to prevent them from knocking things onto the burner.

Caution: Carbon Monoxide Kills

- Install carbon monoxide alarms in central locations on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas.
- If the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, move quickly to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door.
- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area.

Practice fire safety at home



Smoke Alarms

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas.
- Teach children what smoke alarms sound like and what to do when they hear one.
- Once a month check whether each alarm in the home is working properly by pushing the test button.
- Replace batteries in smoke alarms at least once a year. Immediately install a new battery if an alarm chirps, warning the battery is low.
- Smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years. Never disable smoke or carbon monoxide alarms.
- Carbon monoxide alarms are not substitutes for smoke alarms. Know the difference between the sound of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.

Fire Escape Planning

- Ensure that all household members know two ways to escape from every room of your home.
- Make sure everyone knows where to meet outside in case of fire.
- Practice escaping from your home at least twice a year and at different times of the day. Practice waking up to smoke alarms, low crawling and meeting outside. Make sure everyone knows how to call 9-1-1.
- Teach household members to **STOP, DROP** and **ROLL** if their clothes should catch on fire.

In case of fire ...



Follow Your Escape Plan!

Remember to **GET OUT, STAY OUT** and **CALL 9-1-1** or your local emergency phone number.

- If closed doors or handles are warm, use your second way out. Never open doors that are warm to the touch.
- Crawl low under smoke.
- Go to your outside meeting place and then call for help.
- If smoke, heat or flames block your exit routes, stay in the room with doors closed. Place a wet towel under the door and call the fire department or 9-1-1. Open a window and wave a brightly colored cloth or flashlight to signal for help.

Use Caution with Fire Extinguishers

- Use a portable fire extinguisher **ONLY** if you have been trained by the fire department and in the following conditions:
 - The fire is confined to a small area, and is not growing.
 - The room is not filled with smoke.
 - Everyone has exited the building.
 - The fire department has been called.
- Remember the word **PASS** when using a fire extinguisher.
 - Pull the pin and hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you.
 - Aim low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.
 - Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.
 - Sweep the nozzle from side to side.

Let Your Family Know You're Safe

If you experience a home fire or any disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well Web site available through RedCross.org to let your family and friends know about your welfare. If you don't have Internet access, call **1-866-GET-INFO** to register yourself and your family.



For more information on disaster and emergency preparedness, visit RedCross.org.

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Earthquake Safety Checklist

An earthquake is a sudden, rapid shaking of the earth caused by the breaking and shifting of rock beneath the earth's surface. Earthquakes strike suddenly, without warning, and they can occur at any time of the year, day or night. Forty-five states are at moderate to very high risk of earthquakes, and they are located in every region of the country.

Are you at increased risk from earthquakes?

- Contact your local emergency management office, local American Red Cross chapter, state geological survey or department of natural resources.
- Mobile homes and homes not attached to their foundations are at particular risk during an earthquake.
- Buildings with foundations resting on landfill and other unstable soils are at increased risk of damage.

Did you know?

Doorways are no stronger than any other part of the structure. During an earthquake, get under a sturdy piece of furniture and hold on. This will provide some protection from falling objects that can injure you during an earthquake.

How can I prepare?



- Become aware of fire evacuation and earthquake plans for all of the buildings you occupy regularly.
- Pick safe places in each room of your home, workplace and/or school. A safe place could be under a piece of furniture or against an interior wall away from windows, bookcases or tall furniture that could fall on you.
- Practice drop, cover and hold on in each safe place. If you do not have sturdy furniture to hold on to, sit on the floor next to an interior wall and cover your head and neck with your arms.
- Keep a flashlight and sturdy shoes by each person's bed.
- Make sure your home is securely anchored to its foundation.
- Bolt and brace water heaters and gas appliances to wall studs.
- Bolt bookcases, china cabinets and other tall furniture to wall studs.
- Hang heavy items, such as pictures and mirrors, away from beds, couches and anywhere people sleep or sit.
- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Install strong latches or bolts on cabinets. Large or heavy items should be closest to the floor.
- Learn how to shut off the gas valves in your home and keep a wrench handy for that purpose.
- Learn about your area's seismic building standards and land use codes before you begin new construction.
- Keep and maintain an emergency supplies kit in an easy-to-access location.

What should I do during an earthquake?



If you are inside when the shaking starts ...

- Drop, cover and hold on. Move as little as possible.
- If you are in bed, stay there, curl up and hold on. Protect your head with a pillow.
- Stay away from windows to avoid being injured by shattered glass.
- Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you are sure it is safe to exit. If you must leave the building after the shaking stops, use stairs rather than an elevator in case there are aftershocks, power outages or other damage.
- Be aware that fire alarms and sprinkler systems frequently go off in buildings during an earthquake, even if there is no fire.

If you are outside when the shaking starts ...

- Find a clear spot and drop to the ground. Stay there until the shaking stops (away from buildings, power lines, trees, streetlights).
- If you are in a vehicle, pull over to a clear location and stop. Avoid bridges, overpasses and power lines if possible. Stay inside with your seatbelt fastened until the shaking stops. Then, drive carefully, avoiding bridges and ramps that may have been damaged.
- If a power line falls on your vehicle, do not get out. Wait for assistance.
- If you are in a mountainous area or near unstable slopes or cliffs, be alert for falling rocks and other debris. Landslides are often triggered by earthquakes.

What do I do after an earthquake?

- After an earthquake, the disaster may continue. Expect and prepare for potential aftershocks, landslides or even a tsunami. Tsunamis are often generated by earthquakes.
- Each time you feel an aftershock, drop, cover and hold on. Aftershocks frequently occur minutes, days, weeks and even months following an earthquake.
- Check yourself for injuries and get first aid, if necessary, before helping injured or trapped persons.
- Put on long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes and work gloves to protect against injury from broken objects.
- Look quickly for damage in and around your home and get everyone out if your home is unsafe.
- Listen to a portable, battery-operated or hand-crank radio for updated emergency information and instructions.
- Check the telephones in your home or workplace to see if you can get a dial tone. Make brief calls to report life-threatening emergencies.
- Look for and extinguish small fires. Fire is the most common hazard after an earthquake.
- Clean up spilled medications, bleach, gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately.
- Open closet and cabinet doors carefully as contents may have shifted.
- Help people who require special assistance, such as infants, children and the elderly or disabled.
- Watch out for fallen power lines or broken gas lines and stay out of damaged areas.
- Keep animals under your direct control.
- Stay out of damaged buildings.
- If you were away from home, return only when authorities say it is safe to do so. Use extreme caution and examine walls, floors, doors, staircases and windows to check for damage.
- Be careful when driving after an earthquake and anticipate traffic light outages.

Let Your Family Know You're Safe

If your community experiences an earthquake, or any disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well Web site available through RedCross.org to let your family and friends know about your welfare. If you don't have Internet access, call 1-866-GET-INFO to register yourself and your family.



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Flood Safety Checklist

Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters. Conditions that cause floods include heavy or steady rain for several hours or days that saturates the ground. Flash floods occur suddenly due to rapidly rising water along a stream or low-lying area.

Know the Difference

Flood/Flash Flood Watch – Flooding or flash flooding is possible in your area.

Flood/Flash Flood Warning – Flooding or flash flooding is already occurring or will occur soon in your area.

What should I do?



- Listen to area radio and television stations and a NOAA Weather Radio for possible flood warnings and reports of flooding in progress or other critical information from the National Weather Service (NWS).
- Be prepared to evacuate at a moment's notice.
- When a flood or flash flood warning is issued for your area, head for higher ground and stay there.
- Stay away from floodwaters. If you come upon a flowing stream where water is above your ankles, stop, turn around and go another way. Six inches of swiftly moving water can sweep you off of your feet.
- If you come upon a flooded road while driving, turn around and go another way. If you are caught on a flooded road and waters are rising rapidly around you, get out of the car quickly and move to higher ground. Most cars can be swept away by less than two feet of moving water.
- Keep children out of the water. They are curious and often lack judgment about running water or contaminated water.
- Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood danger.
- Because standard homeowners insurance doesn't cover flooding, it's important to have protection from the floods associated with hurricanes, tropical storms, heavy rains and other conditions that impact the U.S. For more information on flood insurance, please visit the National Flood Insurance Program Web site at www.FloodSmart.gov.

What supplies do I need?



- Water—at least a 3-day supply; one gallon per person per day
- Food—at least a 3-day supply of non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
- Extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Medications (7-day supply) and medical items (hearing aids with extra batteries, glasses, contact lenses, syringes, cane)
- Multi-purpose tool
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items
- Copies of personal documents (medication list and pertinent medical information, deed/lease to home, birth certificates, insurance policies)
- Cell phone with chargers
- Family and emergency contact information
- Extra cash
- Emergency blanket
- Map(s) of the area
- Baby supplies (bottles, formula, baby food, diapers)
- Pet supplies (collar, leash, ID, food, carrier, bowl)
- Tools/supplies for securing your home
- Extra set of car keys and house keys
- Extra clothing, hat and sturdy shoes
- Rain gear
- Insect repellent and sunscreen
- Camera for photos of damage

What do I do after a flood?



- Return home only when officials have declared the area safe.
- Before entering your home, look outside for loose power lines, damaged gas lines, foundation cracks or other damage.
- Parts of your home may be collapsed or damaged. Approach entrances carefully. See if porch roofs and overhangs have all their supports.
- Watch out for wild animals, especially poisonous snakes that may have come into your home with the floodwater.
- If you smell natural or propane gas or hear a hissing noise, leave immediately and call the fire department.
- If power lines are down outside your home, do not step in puddles or standing water.
- Keep children and pets away from hazardous sites and floodwater.
- Materials such as cleaning products, paint, batteries, contaminated fuel and damaged fuel containers are hazardous. Check with local authorities for assistance with disposal to avoid risk.
- During cleanup, wear protective clothing, including rubber gloves and rubber boots.
- Make sure your food and water are safe. Discard items that have come in contact with floodwater, including canned goods, water bottles, plastic utensils and baby bottle nipples. When in doubt, throw it out!
- Do not use water that could be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice or make baby formula.
- Contact your local or state public health department for specific recommendations for boiling or treating water in your area after a disaster as water may be contaminated.

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