

Preparing for Emergencies

Emergencies will take their toll on you both physically and emotionally. We can minimize the trauma better if we organize and plan ahead of time. Doing so does take time and effort, but in talking with individuals who have weathered the storm, taking steps ahead of time can put you more in control and therefore, more at ease. Although this list is not everything, having these items organized and in place can make a difference for you and your family. Whether it's a sudden injury or a disaster in your area—being prepared will reduce your stress and your fears.

Preparing for an injury or a sudden illness

When first responders or hospital personnel are providing aide, having accurate information about you will save time and could save your life. There are two main items of importance you can prepare ahead of time:

1. Have in your car/your wallet/smart phone an identified individual (s) to contact in case of emergency.
2. Prepare an accurate list of all medications and supplements, their accurate measurement, and frequency of taking them on a daily basis. If you have a family, have this list include all members.

Larger Emergencies: PERSONAL / BUSINESS ITEMS

Prepare two copies of the following items; one for at your home and a second for another location (safe deposit box, another family member's home)

- Your Estate Plan: This includes ensuring that your children are properly cared for should something happen to you. If not legally stated, minors become a ward of the State for their safety.
- Identification of each individual
 - Passports
 - Birth, marriage and death certificates
 - Social Security Cards
 - Other (citizenship, naturalization papers, etc)
- Health Care information
 - Account information
 - Listing of your physicians
 - Current copies of prescriptions (drug, eyeglasses, etc.)
- Credit Cards
 - Copy of each credit card and accounts
- Bank Accounts and investments
 - Copy of each bank account
 - Copy of each investment account
- Tax information
 - Copy of your tax bill statement. This would include your property description number.
- Utility information
 - Copy of each of your accounts. This proves that you own the property in question.
- Income
 - Retirement accounts
 - Pay stub information

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- Home / Auto Insurance
 - Copy of your accounts
 - Video or pictures of the interior of your home and ALL of its contents.
 - All insurance companies have software that will help you to do this ahead of time. Ask for it.
 - Certificate of Titles
- Jewelry
 - Copies of valuations and pictures.
- Create an inventory (top 20 things you'd want removed from your home quickly) and keep the list where you or a neighbor could get to it.

THINGS to TAKE during an Evacuation

(Much of this should be put together as an Emergency Bin ahead of time)

- Personal/Business Items
- For each room in your home, photograph/video the contents of your home. Create an inventory of items you'd want to take should you need to be evacuated quickly.

Additional items to take with you (plan for a minimum of 3 days).

- Medicines.
- Baby food, formulas, clothes.
- Credit cards, checkbook, cash.
- Clothing (underwear!), shoes, personal needs.
- Glasses, contacts.
- Batteries, flashlights, radios.
- First aid kit.
- Personal phone books (create a copy of your computer address book too)
- Keepsakes.
- Communication items such as your laptop, cell phones, Blackberry, camera, and the chargers for each of these.
- Water and food supplies for three days..

THINGS to DO if an evacuation is possible.

- Back your car into the driveway facing the direction of escape. Shut doors and roll up the windows. Leave a key in the ignition.
- Close garage windows and doors, but leave them unlocked and disconnect automatic garage door openers.
- While preparing to evacuate, confine pets to one room or animal crates and make plans to care for them in case you must evacuate to a motel. Know ahead of time evacuation points in your community for large animals.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Wear protective clothing, sturdy shoes, cotton or wool clothing, long sleeved shirt, gloves and handkerchief to protect face.
- Leave a note lodged in the front door, or tell someone when you left and where you are going. (Check the Safely Out kits you can purchase ahead of time – see website at the end of this document)
- Shut off gas at the meter or propane tank. Leave a garden hose connected, but turned off, near each deck.

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- Open fireplace damper and close fireplace screens.
- Move flammable furniture to center of home away from windows and sliding-glass doors.
- Turn on a light in each room to increase the visibility of your home in heavy smoke.
- Place combustible patio furniture inside.
- Wet or remove shrubs within 15 feet of your home.
- Leave your front door unlocked.

Other things to think about:

- Make sure you have a plan on where you will end up as a family.
- If there is a possibility that an evacuation will occur, make sure you fill your vehicle's gas tank to full.
- Have fire extinguishers on each level of your home and in your vehicles.
- Make sure your fire detectors are all in working condition.
- Make sure you use resources that can help you to communicate with family and friends. Email is huge! Create "lists" on your email of people who you need to keep in touch with so it's easier to convey information.
- Have cell phone numbers on all people you are trying to keep in touch with.
- Many times during a disaster, phone calls cannot be processed into the involved area, although the individual in the disaster area may be able to call out of state. If you have an out of state relative or friend, make them the "contact point" for people to get information on you.
- Don't wait until the last second. Remember that our roads are limited. If you have a trailer/camper, get that to a destination that could be helpful to you later.
- If you have a laptop, create under "Favorites" media locations that will help you to keep posted on the affected area: city and county law enforcement, city and county fire departments, local newspapers, any place that you will find updates. Don't rely on a television access for your information.
- Land line phones should always be your first use of communication preference. Cell phones do NOT usually go to the local emergency dispatch. Learn to identify yourself and the city in which you are at whenever calling 991 services. "This is Lisa Huard, I am in South Lake Tahoe."

More resources:

- a. [Red Cross](#)
- b. [FEMA - Make a Plan](#)
- c. [Citizen's Voice - Safely Out](#)
- d. [Emergency Guide - Writeable PDF](#)

Please contact me with other information you might have that could be added to this list. Remember, preparing for emergencies is an on-going process.