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U.S. Emergency Preparedness Guide

Prepare. Protect. Help One Another.



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Preparation Helps Families Stay Strong

Emergencies can interrupt daily life with little warning. A simple plan, basic supplies, and a way to stay informed can help you protect your household and support others until help arrives.

Why preparation matters

- You can stay calmer and make clearer decisions.
- You can care for children, older adults, and pets.
- You can manage short disruptions in power, water, or communication.
- You can check on neighbors and share trustworthy information.

Start with small steps

Plan for the emergencies most likely where you live. Start with three days of supplies, and expand toward ten days when possible.



Make a plan



Prepare a kit



Know the alerts



Check your home

What's Inside

This easy-to-follow guide helps U.S. households prepare and support one another during disruptions.

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Read, save, print and share this guide. Complete the family worksheets on pages 8 and 11.

Emergency Supplies Checklist

Build your supplies a little at a time. A three-day starter kit can help with short disruptions; extend your supply when your resources allow.

Core essentials

- [ ] Water for people and pets
- [ ] Easy-to-open shelf-stable food
- [ ] Flashlight and spare batteries
- [ ] Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- [ ] First-aid kit and medications
- [ ] Important documents in a waterproof folder
- [ ] Phone chargers and charged power banks
- [ ] Pet supplies, hygiene, and sanitation items

Useful supplies to recognize



Water



Food



Flashlight



Radio

Food and Water Basics

Keep enough safe drinking water and familiar shelf-stable food for everyone in your household, including people with dietary needs and pets.

A simple starting point

- Plan for at least 1 gallon of water per person per day.
- Start with a three-day supply and build toward ten days.
- Choose ready-to-eat foods that do not need refrigeration.
- Remember babies, older adults, dietary needs, and pets.
- Rotate supplies and check food expiration dates.

Water planning example

1 person	3 gallons for 3 days | 10 gallons for 10 days
2 people	6 gallons for 3 days | 20 gallons for 10 days
4 people	12 gallons for 3 days | 40 gallons for 10 days

If local authorities issue a boil-water or do-not-drink notice, follow those local instructions.

Make a Family Communication Plan

If phone or internet service is limited, every household member should know whom to contact, where to meet, and what to take if evacuation becomes necessary.

Write down these details

- [ ] Important phone numbers, including an out-of-area contact
- [ ] A safe local meeting location
- [ ] A backup meeting location if you cannot return home
- [ ] Medications, allergies, accessibility and medical needs

Keep a go-bag ready

- [ ] Extra clothing and basic toiletries
- [ ] Flashlight, charger and power bank
- [ ] Copies of key documents in a waterproof folder
- [ ] Comfort supplies for children and pets

Practice the plan

Choose a meeting place and talk through your plan together. If you must evacuate, follow local emergency instructions.

Power Outages and Reliable Information

Electricity failures can affect refrigeration, phones, lights and other essential systems. A few precautions can help keep your household safer.

During an outage

- Use flashlights rather than candles when possible.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
- Use portable generators outdoors only, at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents.
- Keep carbon monoxide detectors working and charge devices when possible.

Stay informed

- Listen to trusted local alerts and weather updates.
- Keep a paper list of important phone numbers.
- Share verified emergency instructions with neighbors.
- Check the source before passing along alarming claims.

Reliable U.S. emergency information

Visit Ready.gov, Weather.gov, your local emergency management office or AmericanRedCross.org for current public-safety guidance.

Help One Another

Prepared communities are stronger communities. Checking on others can reduce isolation and help families get support when it matters.

Remember to check on

- Children and caregivers
- Older adults
- People with disabilities or medical needs
- Neighbors with pets or limited transportation

My important contacts

Household contact

Out-of-area contact

Doctor or pharmacy

Neighbor or support person

Share practical help without putting yourself in danger. For life-threatening emergencies, call 911.

Public safety references: Ready.gov | Weather.gov | AmericanRedCross.org

Medical Needs and Accessibility Planning

Households with medical, mobility, hearing, vision, or communication needs should prepare for interruptions in power, transportation, and routine care.

Prepare ahead of time

- Keep a current medication list and your prescribing doctor's contact information.
- Refill essential prescriptions early when severe weather or outages are expected.
- Store backup chargers, batteries, or power options for devices such as hearing aids, phones, or medical equipment.
- Keep copies of insurance cards, identification, and emergency care instructions.

Think through access needs

- Who can help with transportation if you need to leave quickly?
- What supplies do you need for mobility, communication, or daily care?
- If you rely on electricity for medical equipment, know your backup options and local support resources.



Medication list



Emergency contacts



First-aid items



Medical information card

Evacuation and Shelter Planning

Some emergencies require you to leave quickly. Others may require you to stay home. Prepare for both situations so your household can act calmly.

If you may need to evacuate

- Know more than one route out of your neighborhood or community.
- Keep your vehicle fueled when severe weather or wildfire risk is high.
- Take your go-bag, medications, important documents, and pet supplies.
- Follow local evacuation orders immediately and tell a trusted contact where you are going.

If you are sheltering at home

- Bring in loose outdoor items and secure your home if time allows.
- Stay inside the safest room or area recommended for the hazard.
- Use radios, alerts, and official local guidance to know when conditions change.

Take before you leave

Keys, wallet, ID, medications, chargers, copies of key documents, water, and a small supply of food.

Shelter checklist

Water, food, first-aid items, flashlights, weather radio, blankets, pet items, and a paper contact list.

Preparedness Review Worksheet

Use this page to review your progress, update important details, and schedule your next household preparedness check-in.

Quick review

- [ ] My emergency supply kit is stocked and checked.
- [ ] My household contact list is updated.
- [ ] My family communication plan has been reviewed.
- [ ] My medications, pet items, and documents are ready to grab.

Write in these details

Primary meeting place

Backup meeting place

Date supplies were last checked

Next review date

Special needs, allergies, or reminders

Keep it current

Review this guide every few months and after major weather events, moves, or household changes. Small updates now can save time later.