

PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Family First Emergency Plan

Ask yourself this question:

Where will you be during an emergency or disaster in your community?

If you answered, “At the emergency”,

You should develop a **Family First Emergency Plan**.

The **Family First Plan** recognizes that first responders are often called away during a disaster. It provides family members with the information and supplies necessary to survive on their own.

As first responders, we understand the importance of communications during any emergency. Communications with your family during times of emergency should be your first priority. **Develop a family communication plan** to include:

- Maintain at least one hardwired land line phone in your home. Cordless devices will not function during a power outage.
- Have a battery operated or hand crank AM/FM radio with weather band. The radio will provide essential emergency updates, weather warnings and Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages.
- Develop a list of non-emergency phone numbers. Include direct phone numbers for your work location (fire stations, patrol areas, ambulance garage, shop areas, etc.) and cell phone numbers for your direct supervisors and co-workers. Keep a copy of this list at home, work and in your vehicle.
- Determine an out of the area contact person and phone number. This number can be used to provide information about a family member’s location if primary phone communications are lost. Choose a friend or family member who would not be affected by the same emergency affecting your family.
- Establish a timeline for checking in with the family. Since it may not be practical for responders to check in as often as the family would like, set a schedule and make a point to check in. Every two hours may be reasonable for the majority of responders.
- Have a cell phone charger for your vehicle or purchase a hand crank cell phone charger.

Once you have completed the communications plan, **develop a home safety plan**. This plan will include information on how the family should react for direct types of emergencies (fire, power outage, severe winter, etc.).

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- Create a fire safety plan and practice a home fire drill. The plan should include operable smoke detectors, two escape routes from each room, an outside meeting place and the ability to call 911 from outside the home (cell or cordless phone, neighbor's house).
- Determine alternate lighting and heat sources. Many homes require power to operate heating systems. Identify how your family will heat your home during a prolonged power outage. If an alternate heat source is not available, identify where the family can relocate. Have alternate light sources available, such as flashlights or lanterns. If your plan includes the use of a portable generator, identify a safe operating location outside the home to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Be familiar with the location of utility shutoffs. When necessary, power should be terminated at the main breaker. Locate all water shutoff valves. You may be able to isolate a water leak without shutting down the system. Natural gas meters will require a wrench to terminate gas service. Propane gas and oil tanks have a shutoff valve located at the tank.
- In the event of a tornado warning, have preplanned a safe location at the lowest level of your home to wait out the storm.
- If your home is prone to flooding, have a plan for controlling utilities and evacuate as soon as possible.
- If you are told to shelter in place bring children and pets indoors immediately. Close and lock all outside doors and windows. Locking may provide a tighter seal. If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds or curtains. Turn off the heating, ventilation or air conditioning system. Turn off all fans, including bathroom fans operated by the light switch. If possible, take your family to an interior room. If you are instructed to seal the room, use duct tape and plastic sheeting, such as heavy-duty plastic garbage bags, to seal all cracks around the door into the room. As much as possible, reduce the flow of air into the room. Listen to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Do not evacuate unless instructed to do so. When you are told that the emergency is over open windows and doors turn on ventilation systems and go outside until the building's air has been exchanged with the now clean outdoor air. Follow any special instructions given by emergency authorities to avoid chemical or radiological contaminants outdoors.

Lastly, **prepare an emergency kit**. Remember, you are not outfitting a fallout shelter. However, your kit should be able to sustain the family for three days. Your kit may be several small kits (food, first aid, clothes, etc.) located throughout the home. If told to evacuate, be prepared to gather these kits quickly.

- Water is used for drinking and sanitation. You will need to have a three day supply. Each person in your family needs one gallon per day. If you use bottled water, rotate the supply as water does expire. Keep empty gallon jugs that can be filled for an emergency (foldable water bags are available for easy storage) and purchase water

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purification tablets for your kit. In a worst case event, familiarize yourself with procedures for draining water from your hot water tank.

- Non perishable food supply for three days. Pre-packaged emergency food bars can be dedicated to a food supply kit. However, these food bars have a five year shelf life. You may wish to stock your pantry with extra food that you use day to day. If you use food from your pantry, select high energy low protein foods that are easily digested without a lot of water. Store these items in one location and have a canvas bag ready to move the food items. If you use canned foods, store a can opener in the canvas bag.
- Prepare or purchase a family size first aid kit. If you are told to evacuate, take all medications needed by the family.
- Emergency clothing can be stored in a duffel bag. It is not a fashion show; only pack the essentials. Remember to change these items annually as children and/or adults change sizes.
- Remember special items for children and pets. A small handheld game will go a long way if relocated to a shelter.
- Lastly, have a small emergency kit in each vehicle. The kit should include at least a blanket, flashlight, first aid kit and jumper cables.

Many very basic emergency preparedness items are identified above. As a first responder, prepare your family first. During an emergency in your community be part of the solution, not the problem. Over the next six to eight months develop or fine tune your **Family First Emergency Plan**.

For additional preparedness information, visit the following websites:

www.readypa.org

www.redcross.org

www.ready.gov

<http://cog.centreconnect.org/emerg-mgmt/>

Stay safe!

Prepared in collaboration with Centre Region Council of Governments Office of Emergency Management