**TOOLBOX TALK EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**



Nobody expects an emergency or disaster, especially one that affects them, their friends and families. Yet the simple truth is that emergencies and disasters can strike anyone, anytime, and anywhere. You and those around you could be forced to evacuate when you least expect it.

This Toolbox Talk is designed to help you plan for that possibility. The best way to protect yourself is to expect the unexpected and develop a well-thought-out emergency action plan to guide you when immediate action is necessary.

**What is an emergency?**

An emergency is an unforeseen situation that threatens the public, disrupts or shuts down operations; or causes physical or environmental damage. Emergencies may be natural or manmade and include the following:

* Floods,
* Hurricanes,
* Tornadoes,
* Fires,
* Toxic gas releases,
* Chemical spills,
* Radiological accidents,
* Explosions,
* Civil disturbances.

How do you protect yourself, and those around you? The best way is to prepare to respond to an emergency before it happens. Few people can think clearly and logically in a crisis, so it is important to do so in advance, when you have time to be thorough.

**MAKE A PLAN**

Plan what you, your family, friends, coworkers…, will do to protect against, prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from manmade and natural threats and hazards. In all cases, use common sense to assess the situation as it unfolds. Put together a plan by discussing these 5 questions below with your family, friends, or household to start your emergency plan. Also, ensure that your family knows the following:

1. How will I receive emergency alerts and warnings?
2. What are the unique family needs I must consider (disabilities, specific health needs, infants/children, elderly, pets, etc.)?
3. What is my shelter plan? What is my shelter-in-place plan?
4. What are my primary and secondary evacuation routes?
5. What is my family/household communication plan?

**What to keep in mind before, during, and after a disaster**

The most important thing to consider during a disaster is your own, your family’s, and your community’s safety. The National Weather Service has a guide for hurricanes and floods; FEMA has a guide for wildfires; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a guide for extreme heat safety.

**A few potentially life-saving things to remember during a flood:**

1. Never wade in floodwaters. They often contain harmful runoff from sewer systems and can cause serious illness and health issues.
2. If it’s safe to do so, turn off electricity at the main breaker or fuse box in your home or business before a hurricane to prevent electric shock.
3. If you lose power, never operate a generator inside your home. Generators emit carbon monoxide, a colorless and odorless gas that can be fatal if inhaled.

**Staying Safe During Civil Unrest.**

In times of widespread political demonstrations and civil unrest, your best course of action is to avoid any areas in which marches and similar activities may occur.

Keep in mind that demonstrations can take place with little or no notice and, in extreme cases, quickly turn violent. Exercise caution if you find yourself unexpectedly in the vicinity of large gatherings. In such situations, always be aware of your surroundings. If suddenly surrounded by a crowd, avoid confrontation by keeping your head down and moving with the flow of people.

If possible, find a safe enclosed area. Make a note of all exits in case you must leave in a hurry. Once the crowd has passed, exit the area moving in the opposite direction.

Do your best to stay informed as events unfold. Social media may provide rapid coverage of events, but keep in mind that it can be less accurate than established media sources. Try to access as many resources as possible.

Although civil unrest is by nature unpredictable, staying calm and monitoring the situation are key to keeping yourself and your loved ones safe in high-risk situations.

**RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES TO INCLUDE IN A BASIC KIT:**

Customize your emergency supply kits to your and your family’s specific needs. Your kits must be able to sustain you and your family for a minimum of 72 hours. Your immediate needs are for fresh water, non-perishable high-energy food, and clean air. Periodically check expiration dates of your non-perishable food, water, and medications. If you live in a cold climate, include in your kits warm clothes and sleeping bags for each member of the family. Consider assembling two kits: one kit for staying where you are; and another smaller kit that you can easily transport if you need to evacuate.

* Water. At least one gallon per person per day, for drinking and sanitation (commercially available canned water stays fresher longer than bottled water).
* Food. At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.
* Prescription Medications and any needed OTC medications.
* Hand-crackable or battery-powered radio, cellphone charger, and extra batteries.
* Flashlight and extra batteries.
* First Aid kit.
* Whistle to signal for help.
* Filter mask or cotton t-shirt, should it become necessary to help filter the air. Make sure the filter mask or other material fits snugly so the air you breathe is being filtered through that material.
* Moist towelettes for sanitation.
* Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
* Manual can opener, preferably as part of a multi-tool, for canned food.
* Plastic sheeting (heavy weight) and duct tape to shelter-in-place and seal windows, doors, and vents from outside contamination.
* Garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
* Unique family needs, such as feminine hygiene products, infant formula, diapers, etc.
* Important identification documents and financial, property, insurance, and other legal documents. Place documents in a waterproof container.
* Pet considerations, such as 3 days-worth of food and water, medications, leash, travel case, and pet documents.
* Cash. It is important to establish an emergency fund of cash

**Being prepared for a crisis can mean the difference between loss and survival.**

From natural disasters to catastrophic accidents to terrorist attacks, emergencies and disasters fill our world. While many find it uncomfortable to consider such difficult situations, ignoring their existence can increase the likelihood that they will occur and the consequences that follow. There’s no benefit in ignoring risks and hoping you can figure things out after disaster strikes.