**Emergency Preparedness Tips**

**Six Emergency Preparedness Tips You May Not Know**

**1. Establish Multiple Family Meeting Spots:**

It's important to stick together in an emergency, so establish a few places where your family can reunite if you've been separated to stay safe. You need to pick four places in total:

**An indoor meeting spot:** In the event of natural disasters like tornadoes, hurricanes, and other storms, set a dedicated place in your home everyone can go to. A small, windowless room like a closet or bathroom, a safe room, or a basement are good examples.

**A neighborhood meeting spot:** In case you and your family must leave your home, or you all get separated in the commotion, pick a spot in the neighborhood everyone knows to meet at. A big tree, mailbox, the end of a driveway, or a neighbor's house will do.

**A regional meeting spot:** Say you and your partner are at work when disaster strikes, and your kids are at school. In that case, you should have a non-residential meeting spot somewhere in the area where everyone can meet up. It can be a library, place of worship, community center, or even a relative's house.

**An out of town meeting spot:** Some disasters call for an evacuation, so it's a good idea to have a safe meeting place out of the region. The homes of relatives or family friends are perfect, but you could also choose an easy-to-get-to hotel or other landmark that everyone is familiar with.

Make sure all these places are accessible by everyone in your family, including people with pets and those with disabilities. If you live in the city and don't have a car, make sure you take time to establish multiple back up routes, to your meeting spots.

**2. Have a Family Communication Plan in Place:**

When disaster strikes, communication is everything. Emergency personnel will be stretched thin trying to mitigate damage and help those who are truly in need, so they won't have time to help you find or reach out to people. However, with a family communication plan in place, you can make things easier and safer for those you care about.

First, create a paper copy of important information for each member of your family. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend each paper have the following information:

* The name, date of birth, social security number, phone number, and important medical information for each family member
* Insurance information
* Medical contacts
* Work and School information for each family member
* An out-of-town contact
* All your planned meeting places

Make copies and keep them in your emergency kit, car, purse, wallet, and/or backpack. There's even a foldable, wallet-sized one you can always fill out and carry with you. Keep one posted or stashed in an easy-to-access place in your home too. It's also not a bad idea to put some of this information in a phone or other device, but don't rely on it.

Once everyone has the information they need, set up a phone tree so people know who to call when something happens. Everyone's might be different, so find a free template or draw up your own and get everyone in your family to fill it out together. Ideally, everyone should have two people they always contact in an emergency. Then those two people each have two people to contact, and so on.

**3. Make Sure Everyone in Your Family Carries an "ICE" Card:**

An "ICE" card, or "in case of emergency" card, is a small piece of paper that lists important information about you and your health in case you're incapacitated. At minimum, your ICE card should list your name, sex, blood type, vital medical information (like prescriptions you take or any allergies you have,) and emergency contact information for at least two people.

It's not a bad idea to make a couple and keep one in each of your bags, and there should be one in your car. Additionally, you should fill out the health and medical information on your smartphone if possible. At the very least, list one contact in every family member's phone as "In Case of Emergency" or "ICE," so someone can instantly identify who your emergency contact is.

**4. Make a Go-Bag for Everyone in Your Household:**

You're probably familiar with the concept of the go-bag and you may even have one already. But one bag for an entire family is not ideal. Every member of your family, including kids, seniors, and especially the disabled, should have their own that's tailored to their individual needs. That way if people get separated, they still have everything they need.

For a basic go-bag or emergency kit, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends you include bottled water, non-perishable food, a battery-powered radio and a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, a flashlight, extra batteries, first aid kit, whistle, dust mask, moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties (for personal sanitation), a wrench or pair of pliers, can opener, local maps, and cell phone charger. A prepaid cell phone is also a great addition. After that, take each person's individual needs into consideration.

If someone needs medication, try to have at least three-days to a week's worth stowed away, as well as a copy of their prescriptions. You may need to let your doctor know you're doing this, just so they'll write you a prescription (or a refill) for the extras or provide sample packs you can stash away. Make sure you pack formula and diapers for babies. Pack food and extra water for pets (or pack their own go-bag) since shelters will be overwhelmed and may not be able to take them in. If someone wears contacts or glasses, have an extra pair of glasses and contacts plus solution in their bag. An old pair or prescription is fine—it's better to kind-of see than not see at all.

Write down credit and debit card numbers and security codes on a piece of paper to keep in your bag, and make sure every bag has a little cash in it. Card systems might go down, so have bills in small denominations ($1, $5, and $10) and some change. And, if you can help it, try to keep your go-bag from looking like a go-bag. If your bag looks like it contains survival equipment, it can make you a target to those who weren't prepared and have grown desperate.

Lastly, let each family member add something personal to each of their bags that makes them feel comfortable. It could be a favorite candy, some tea, a toy or game, or even a book. Personal toiletries like lotion, deodorant, extra wet wipes, extra socks, and extra underwear are a good idea too. A little comfort goes a long way in tough times, so make sure everyone has something that helps them relieve stress and feel a little normal.

**5. Keep Important Documents Ready to Grab and Go:**

Many disasters have the potential to wipe away all your belongings, including all of your vital documents and records if you're not careful. They should be stored away safely, like in a waterproof, fireproof safe, but they also need to be packaged together in a way that lets you grab them all in an instant. Include vital identification records like birth certificates and passports, medical information, and financial and legal documents you can't easily replace.

You can also store electronic copies of all your important documents encrypted on hard drives you keep in your safe and go-bag. You should also consider keeping a regularly backed up flash drive loaded with other important files (photos, work documents, etc.)

**6. Plan an Emergency Outfit:**

Emergencies can happen at any time, including when you're relaxing or sleeping at home. But chances are, your jammies aren't the best thing to leave the house in, especially if there's nasty weather. It's a good idea to lay out some clothes and accessories on top of your go-bag, or just inside it if there's room. Same for everyone in your family.

Your emergency outfit should include a good pair of shoes or boots that provide good traction in all-weather types, pants (not shorts), a long-sleeved t-shirt, a jacket, a hat, and a pair of gloves. Make sure everything is made out of cotton or wool, so they breathe well and will burn off without melting in case of fire. It's also a good idea to keep a cotton handkerchief or bandana (or a few) to cover your face, and goggles to protect your eyes in case of smoke or dust. Now you can hop right out of bed and switch to survival mode almost instantly.

For more useful emergency preparedness tips and information, be sure to check out [Ready](https://www.ready.gov/) (it's available in 13 different languages). They cover disaster preparedness for everything from hurricanes to cyber-attacks.