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Emergency Preparedness

*Don't wait until a disaster hits
to plan. Be ready now!*



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Chapter 1: Why be prepared?

Disasters are an actual occurrence that can happen anywhere in the world at any time.

Experiencing a disaster is traumatic enough. Having the disadvantage of being unprepared will result in unnecessary stress in a crisis.

There are many benefits to being prepared for an emergency.

Being prepared will aid in reducing the fear, stress, and anxiety that generally occur during a situation. In addition, by being prepared and familiarizing yourself with procedures carried out during these situations, you will ensure these feelings are less.

Increased stress and anxiety may result in an inability to respond effectively during a crisis. If you cannot think and respond appropriately, it is unlikely that you will be able to take care of your family and yourself effectively. Being prepared with the correct equipment and familiar with requirements and procedures for various emergencies will increase your chances of reacting appropriately to such situations.

By being prepared and knowing ahead of time what may occur in certain situations, you may also successfully minimize the impact of a crisis. For example, if you familiarize yourself with the characteristics of a cyclone, you will be able to secure objects and seek shelter if you find yourself in such a situation. Thus you will be able to minimize the amount of damage incurred by the cyclone successfully.

Chapter 2: How can I be prepared?

There are many ways to plan for an emergency effectively. However, being well prepared will ultimately result in effectively responding to an emergency and aid in decreasing the damage caused during a disaster.

To be prepared, you must first be aware of disasters in the state or country. Knowledge of danger, warning signs, and being familiar with local procedures in an emergency is crucial.

Familiarizing yourself with the types of disasters in your area will ensure sufficient knowledge to plan for emergencies. It will also assist you in preparing a disaster kit.

A few factors are beneficial to know before a disaster.

Research disasters common in the area where you live. You may find helpful information online. For example, you could contact the weather bureau and ask them to send you information. Also, speak with neighbors and friends to see if they know the prior history of disasters.

Once you know about any relevant disasters, you may begin planning procedures for yourself and your family. Below are some ideas to have when preparing for a disaster:

1. **Escape routes:** Draw a floor plan to determine exit points for different situations and aim for two exits from each room.
2. **Where to group:** To ensure everyone evacuates safely, designate an appropriate area to gather once they get out of the house.
3. **Communication:** If a disaster were to strike, it would be when the whole family is together. Discuss a designated

meeting place and how you will communicate in various situations.

4. **Existing Procedures:** Know any emergency procedures in your workplace or your children's school. Guidelines may help you organize a means of contact or a designated meeting area.
5. **Create a disaster supplies kit:** The kit will ensure you are prepared in the event of a disaster and will prevent you from searching around to gather relevant items. Searching for items during a catastrophe when you might not think effectively due to stress and anxiety can result in missing things. Chapter three discusses disaster supplies kits.
6. **Water Supply:** Know how to turn off your home's water or gas supply. It will be helpful in the event of an evacuation.
7. **Designating 'shelter' rooms:** Taking refuge may refer to shelter in one's home or outside a particular area. It is always beneficial to plan and establish 'safe' rooms in the house for various situations. It is also wise to plan external forms of shelter (such as staying with a relative or in a hotel, etc.) if you are required to leave your home.
8. **Insurance:** Ensure you purchase insurance to provide enough coverage to replace your possessions if a disaster causes damage to your home or contents. Make an inventory of your possessions; writing a list and taking pictures or videos are the most effective. It's also beneficial to purchase health and life insurance.
9. **Essential documentation:** Ensure all vital documentation is stored in a safe place away from home (e.g., in a safe deposit box). If you are going to keep the contents in your home, keep them in plastic baggies inside a fireproof safe.
10. **Make plans for pets:** When you have pets have a game plan for their care during a disaster. Ensure your pet has food, water, and an identification tag. Ensure your pet's medical records are up to date and have current immunizations or vaccinations. Contact your local animal shelter for specific advice about your area.
11. **Learn First Aid:** Complete a first aid course to be able to assist in any medical situation during a disaster.

Chapter 3: Making a disaster supply kit.

Assembling a disaster supply kit ensures you are prepared and organized during a disaster.

You may be required to survive without the help of everyday comforts such as electricity or running water during a disaster. Therefore, preparing for such circumstances ahead of time is crucial.

Start packing your disaster kit with the basics first. Here's a list of items to be filled in a disaster supply kit:

1. **Food and Water:** If you cannot obtain food or water from external sources during a disaster, be prepared. Stockpile a minimum of three days' worth of water and food for each family member. Depending on the disaster plan, have enough food for at least two weeks.

Commercially bottled water is the most reliable way to store water in a disaster supply kit. Current recommendations for water intake are two liters of water per day per person. Consider this when preparing your disaster supply kit to ensure you store enough water for all family members. While commercially bottled water is the safest way of storing water for an emergency, there are other options.

You may choose to prepare your bottles of water. If this is the case, try to purchase appropriate containers from a camping supplies store and be sure to clean thoroughly. If you are selecting pre-used containers, aim for bottles that hold sodas. Do not use milk or juice containers because they will contain residue that may cause the growth of harmful bacteria in your water storage. Once you have cleaned your containers, fill them with water and seal the lid tightly.

When packing food supplies for the family, avoid foods high in salt

(as these will make you thirsty and want to drink more). In addition, ensure you select canned or dry foods that do not require refrigeration. If canned foods are in your kit, ensure you pack a can opener!

If a family member has special food requirements, consider this and include appropriate food.

1. **Flashlight with Extra Batteries:** Remember, in a disaster, you may find yourself without the luxuries of everyday life, including electricity. Be prepared by having a flashlight or some type of lighting device.
1. **Portable, battery-operated television or radio:** Having one of these items in the kit will let you stay up-to-date with the current situation and procedures. Ensure these items don't depend on electricity and are battery-powered.
2. **First Aid Kit:** this is non-negotiable in any disaster kit. Minor injuries or something more extreme, you may find yourself unable to make it to a hospital, or the hospital is overcrowded. Therefore, ensure you have packed a first aid kit to tide you over until you can get to a hospital.
3. **Sanitary Items:** May include toilet paper, paper towels, baby wipes, or female sanitary products.
4. **Cooking utensils:** You may need to cook away from the comforts of a home setting in case of evacuation. You will need to pack the basics, a frying pan, spoon, spatula, etc. Don't go overboard and pack everything; you may be required to carry your disaster supply kit. If you have a portable cooking device, it would be worth the space, such as a fondue set (for indoor use) or a camp stove (for outdoor use). Pack a box of matches with the cooking items in a watertight container. They will be helpful in any situation.
5. **Photocopies of IDs:** Have these in case the originals are lost or damaged.
6. **Extra clothes and blankets:** The type of clothing you pack will depend on the climate you live in during the disaster.

Pack appropriate clothing to last a few days in case of an evacuation. You will be grateful in the event of an evacuation.

7. **Money:** Be prepared and have some cash on hand. In case of a power outage or bank closure, ATMs or credit card facilities may no longer be available in an emergency.
8. **Medications:** Pack medications or medical equipment; if you or anyone in your family suffers from medical conditions, it may be challenging to obtain these in the event of a disaster. Have regular checkups and up-to-date medicines in the disaster supplies kit.

The list is an essential guide for a well-equipped disaster kit. Every family has different needs; make sure to personalize your disaster kit. As your family changes and grows, update the equipment to cater to your family's needs.

Once you have created a disaster kit, it is crucial to maintain it. Keep it stored and sealed in an area where food remains dry and cool to maximize the life of the canned and dried foods. Remember to regularly check the items in your disaster kit and dispose of any canned foods with dents and expired foods. Replace all food and water in the kits every six to eight months and replenish disposed items.

Chapter 4: Dealing with an evacuation.

A typical emergency procedure is an evacuation. Knowing techniques and having a plan will ensure you can remain calm and in control in case of an evacuation.

During an evacuation, authorities will notify you commonly through television and radio. The amount of time you have to prepare and leave will depend on the severity of the disaster. Sometimes this may be a day or two, but in many cases, it may be immediate, going no time to prepare supplies. Preparation is imperative.

The following list will assist in preparing for an evacuation.

1. Keep the car gassed up if there are signs of an emergency. Gas stations may be closed as they may be preparing to evacuate. Preparation beforehand is necessary. If you do not have a car, make sure you have transportation arrangements.
2. Follow all instructions provided by the authorities.
3. Collect your disaster kit as discussed in chapter three.
4. Leave as soon as possible to avoid delays due to traffic, weather, etc.
5. Wear comfortable, solid shoes and protective clothing, such as long pants.
6. Unplug electrical goods, secure loose objects outside, and lock the house.
7. While driving, remain alert, stick to main roads, and watch for fallen power lines and debris.

If you find yourself required to evacuate without sufficient time to plan or pack, the following quick checklist will assist in grabbing a few items that may be helpful. Only stop to gather these items if there is time, do not put your safety in jeopardy to do so. If authorities have requested you leave your residence immediately, you must follow

their instructions.

1. Pack your cell phone, wallet, and a list of important contact numbers. Have the numbers written down in case your phone dies, and you will still have access to them.
2. Pack bottled water and ready-to-eat food, two days worth per person.
3. Pack a small bag with underwear, extra clothes, toiletries, and any medication you require.
4. Grab your car keys and home keys.
5. Pack a flashlight, battery-operated radio, first aid kit, and extra batteries.

Even though these items only cover the basics, they will make an evacuation much more bearable. A premade disaster supplies kit is always beneficial to avoid being caught unprepared for an evacuation. The equipment will enable you to evacuate at the drop of a hat without gathering necessary items. Refer to chapter three for creating a basic disaster kit.

Chapter 5: Dealing with an emergency, shut off your utilities.

In many emergencies, authorities may request you shut off the utilities servicing your home for safety reasons. Being familiar with shutting the utilities off ensures you can effectively handle the situation calmly and rationally. The type of disaster will determine the utilities you will be required to shut off:

1. **Shutting off the gas:** Gas shut off to prevent the spread of fire following a disaster. There are different shut-off methods for other states and countries. Contact your gas provider to ensure you are familiar with shutting off the gas for your home. Share the procedure with all family members- everyone must know how to do this. If you have to turn the gas off, ensure you have a professional turn it back on.
2. **Water:** Broken water mains could contaminate the water, and it may be necessary to shut off the water to your home. To shut off the water supply to your home, locate you're main house valve for your water supply and simply turn it to shut or off. Ensure the valve is completely closed. Turn the water back on once authorities announce it is safe. As water valves tend to rust, ensure you regularly check them and replace them if necessary. Routinely checking the valves will make opening and closing the valve easier in an emergency.
3. **Electricity:** You may be requested to shut off your electricity if gas leaks. Electrical sparks can ignite the gas and cause an explosion. Locate the circuit box to shut off the electricity to your home. Shut off each circuit in the circuit box and the main circuit breaker. Show all responsible members of your family how to shut off the breakers.

Chapter 6: Managing during a disaster.

During a disaster, things become very chaotic and confusing. The following information is to try and ease the confusion you may experience during this time.

Taking Shelter: Before a disaster, you should discuss designated shelter rooms to remain safe during a disaster. Shelter rooms will differ depending on the type of disaster.

Mass shelters are available to the public if you are required to leave your home and have not made alternative arrangements. Mass shelters need you to live with many people within a designated space. Staying in a shelter is not the most pleasant experience; however, it will provide you with a safe roof over your head. Shelters provide food, water, and sanitary requirements. Take your disaster kit with you for a family member with unique needs. Pets are not typically allowed in community shelters.

Managing Water: Despite often seeing it on television, it is essential to remember that you should not ration water unless instructed to do so by authorities. Each family member should drink according to their intake needs. Your disaster kit should have considered water requirements of two liters per person per day. To minimize water waste and make the best use of your stored water, try to remain inside, calm, and avoid unnecessary activities. Drink bottled water, if possible, to prevent the risk of contamination. If you do not have bottled water, the following sources may help you obtain water:

- Melt ice cubes
- Drain water from a heater or pipes
- Juice from canned fruit

Use caution when draining water from pipes. If you have any doubts

about drinking the water, treat the water before drinking. Treatment methods are as follows:

1. **Boiling:** Boiling water will eliminate microorganisms and is a safe, convenient way of treating water. Boil the water for one minute, calm down and pass it between two containers to improve the taste before drinking.
2. **Distillation:** This method will eliminate microorganisms and remove any other chemicals from the water.

To distill water:

- Boil the water in a pot with a lid.
- Tie a cup to the handle and let the cup hang right up when the lid is upside down.
- Place the lid upside down while the water is boiling, with the cup not touching the water.
- Boil for twenty minutes, remove the lid and drink the distilled water that has accumulated in the cup.

3. Chlorination: If you cannot boil water adding simple household bleach will aid in the chlorinating process. Only use bleach that is not scented, color safe, or combined with a cleaning agent and contains 5.25 to 6 percent sodium hypochlorite. For every 3.7 liters of water, add 1/8 of a teaspoon of bleach. Allow water to sit for fifteen minutes. The mixture should smell of chlorine lightly; if it doesn't, repeat the steps. Discard if the water does not produce a chlorine smell after the second dose.

Managing Food: When ordering your food supply during a disaster, follow food hygiene safety, and wash your hands. Ensure food is in covered containers and that all utensils are kept clean. It would be best to dispose of garbage outside in a sealed bag.

Chapter 7: Types of disasters and how to deal with them.

Many different types of disasters may occur. While a disaster can happen anywhere, some areas are more prone to a particular disaster than others. This chapter lists common disasters that occur and how to deal with them.

Floods: are rising water levels, generally due to heavy storms. Floods can happen anywhere; if a flood is likely to occur where you live, stay up to date on the situation by observing news reports on the television or radio.

If you venture out during a severe storm, be aware of flash floods and large amounts of water that appear almost instantaneously. Move to high ground immediately or evacuate your home if a flood occurs. Try to bring in outdoor furniture or possessions, place the table at the highest possible point in the house and unplug all electrical plugs from walls. Regardless of how shallow water appears, do not walk or drive through flooded areas. If you find flood waters rising around your car, abandon the car and make your way to higher ground.

Rising flood waters are hazardous; in many instances, people have been swept away and drowned. If you see a person in danger of being swept away, help to the best of your ability without jeopardizing your safety. Try to help them out of the water by holding a long rod or stick. If you pull a person out of flood waters, the following first-aid procedure may help save them.

- Lay the person on their stomach or back and apply pressure to force the water out.
- If a person is unconscious, apply mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.
- Warm the person up, either with a blanket or body heat.

- Notify emergency services.

Hurricanes: An extreme type of storm or cyclone that generally forms in the tropics and is accompanied by intense, windy storms. Due to extensive rainfall and floods, hurricanes often produce tornadoes, storm surges, and heavy damage. If your area is experiencing a hurricane, listen for up-to-the-minute updates on the tv and radio. Due to the intense winds caused by a storm, tie down any loose objects outside or store them indoors until the wind subsides.

A hurricane may become so severe that authorities request you evacuate your home and follow all instructions.

Suppose you cannot evacuate your home and remain indoors at all times and away from any windows or doors. Close all internal doors, block all external doors, and shelter in a small room on the lowest level of a house. Lie flat on the floor, cover under a sturdy table and protect your head.

Thunderstorms: are a common occurrence, but people forget that they have the potential to be extremely dangerous. Thunderstorms produce lightning and can generate tornados, extreme winds, rain, and flooding. During a thunderstorm, stay indoors; if you are outside, wait for the storm to pass by sitting in a vehicle.

Suppose you receive a warning that a storm is coming. Secure loose things or bring them inside until the storm has passed. High winds can cause displacement of outdoor items, causing damage to the surroundings.

Plumbing fixtures can conduct electricity and avoid showering during a storm. The chances of lightning striking fixtures are rare but are not worth the risk. Home phone cords can conduct electricity and should be used only for emergencies during a storm. Cordless and cell phones do not conduct electricity and are safe to use.

If lightning strikes a house, a power surge can cause severe damage

to any appliances still plugged in. Therefore, unplugging appliances during a storm is always a good idea to reduce the risk.

Earthquakes: are ground vibrations that can often lead to severe damage to surroundings. If you are in an earthquake, follow the below precautions:

Indoors- Take cover under furniture or crouch in a corner, cover your face and head with your arms and remain indoors until all shaking has stopped. Avoid all doors, windows, and anything that could fall.

Outdoors- move away from buildings or structures that could have falling debris. Once vibrations have stopped, get somewhere safe, and be mindful of aftershocks. The aftershocks are generally not as severe as the initial quake but may have weakened structures already affected by the earthquake. Therefore, stay well clear of damaged areas.

Earthquakes can form a tsunami in coastal areas. If one occurs, move inland immediately to higher ground. After a tsunami has passed, stay away from flooded areas until authorities declare it safe to return.

Fire: Whether this disaster is individualized or large-scale, fire escalates quickly and is extremely dangerous. The heat and smoke resulting from a fire are also extremely dangerous.

Take some precautions to protect yourself from having a fire in your home. Install fire alarms on each floor of your home, check that they are working correctly, and replace them every ten years. To assist in evacuation procedures during a fire, ensure windows and doors are maintained and that there are fire ladders if you live in a multi-story building.

Suppose a fire occurs in your home; having an escape route from each room is crucial. During your evacuation, remain low to the ground to minimize inhalation of smoke and other toxic gases caused by the fire. Before opening doors, check for heat at the top of the

door; if it is too hot, find another way to leave. If the door is not too hot, open slowly and confirm the escape route is clear before exiting. If the escape route is clear, leave the room and close the door.

If your clothes catch fire during an evacuation, drop to the ground to extinguish the fire. Do not run. Running will accelerate the burning; make sure to stop, drop and roll.

The following first aid tips will be helpful if someone gets burned:

For minor burns no more than two to three inches in diameter:

- Rinse the burn in cold water or apply a cold pack.
- Cover the burn with gauze.

For large burns:

- Seek medical treatment immediately.
- Do not attempt to remove clothing or put burns under water.
- Cover the burns with a cool, moist bandage.
- Begin resuscitation if the person has stopped breathing.