

Are You Prepared?

That crippling snow storm could come any day. Spring could bring flash floods and tornados. Heavy winds could damage the electrical power grid. Disasters, both natural and manmade, could come to our community in many forms. We have faced emergencies before, and most likely, we will again. Are you prepared?

Public health, state and local emergency management agencies, law enforcement, and a host of community partners continually plan and prepare for the next emergency that could threaten our safety and wellbeing. While it's reassuring to know, it's not enough. Despite the best made plans, it takes time to get help to those in need after a disaster of any size. Experts recommend being able to care for ourselves for up to three days after an emergency. Can you?

Unfortunately, about half of all adults in the United States do not have the resources and plans in place for a possible emergency. Preparing emergency kits for your family is an important first step in keeping them safe and healthy during an emergency. Backpacks and plastic storage bins make excellent containers for emergency kits.

An emergency kit should contain enough food and water for at least three days. One gallon of water per person per day should be planned for. Store purchased bottled-water is probably the most convenient, but you can also fill your own containers. Non-perishable, easy-to-prepare foods like canned meats and soups, dry pasta, and powdered milk should be placed in the emergency kit. Basic utensils and a manual can opener should be included. Don't forget to pack a 3-day supply of food and water for each pet. A cat or dog will generally need 1 gallon of water for three days.

Each emergency kit should contain at least 3-day supply of all medications and needed medical supplies. Personal care items such as soap, toothbrush and toothpaste, and baby wipes should be included. A small first aid kit, emergency blanket, and a multipurpose tool that can act as a knife, file, pliers, and screwdriver are useful additions to an emergency kit. A flashlight with extra batteries, battery or solar-powered radio, and charger for cell phone and other personal electronics should be in the kit as well.

Often overlooked, copies of important documents such as insurance cards and immunization records as well as a list of medical conditions and current medications should find a place in the emergency kit. Extra cash and an extra set of car and house keys helps round out the emergency kit.

Since you do not know where you will be when an emergency occurs, consider making an emergency kit for home, work, and the car. Remember to check the expiration dates on food, water, medicine, and batteries at least two times each year.

For more information about emergency kits and emergency preparedness, contact the Adams County Health Department at 937-544-5547.

William E. Hablitzel, M.D. is the Adams County Health Commissioner. He can be reached at the Adams County Health Department, 923 Sunrise Avenue, West Union, Ohio, 45693