



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Emmons County Public Health**

# Youth Safety

Flooding is the most common disaster in the U.S. and can cause a variety of problems to urban and rural communities. However, by utilizing these suggestions, you can learn how to stay safe before, during and after a flood.

## FLOOD PREPAREDNESS

The first step to being prepared is to have a plan and to exercise that plan. Know what is expected of you, your kids, and the school in the event of an emergency. You can help expedite this process by sharing the following communication plan items with the school:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone Numbers
- Email
- Individuals who can/can't pick up your children
- Out of town contact name and number

## PREPAREDNESS KIT

Your preparedness kit is a collection of items that you may need in the event of an emergency. Please note you can have multiple preparedness kits for different situations. You may keep a preparedness kit in your car, as well as have one in your home, depending on needs.

- Water: 1 gallon per person, per day
- Food: at least 72 hours worth
- Flashlight
- Radio: NOAA Weather radio, if possible
- Extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Medications
- Family/Emergency contact info
- Extra house/car keys
- Cell phone charger
- Personal documents
- Extra cash
- Emergency blanket
- Maps
- Manual can opener
- Toys/Stuffed animals

## PET PREPAREDNESS

Pets are important components of any family, and may be severely injured if not cared for during an emergency. Your pets may require just as many items in a preparedness kit, as you. Below are some items to get you started:

- Pet first aid kit
- Food
- Water
- Bowls
- Extra collar
- Extra leash
- Medical records
- 2-week medication supply
- Crate or sturdy container
- Blanket
- Recent photo
- Toys/Bones
- Disposable litter trays
- Litter or paper toweling

NOTE: Many disaster shelters will only accept service animals. Prior to an emergency, you may want to research pet friendly organizations and ask if pet restrictions could be lifted in the event of an emergency. You may need to ask friends/family outside the affected areas to care for your pets. Make sure all pets are up to date with any medical needs.

## **HELPING CHILDREN THROUGH AN EMERGENCY**

Flooding, or any type of emergency scenario, can negatively impact children. The events disrupt their lives and can seriously frighten them because of their vulnerability and lack of communication and coping skills. As parents/friends/family for these children, you will need to help them through this difficult time.

### **MAKE TIME FOR CHILDREN**

Emergency events can be consuming and distracting for adults. However, a hug or a reassuring word, can help a child feel safe and secure in an emotionally-charged situation. Remember that they may not completely understand the situation and you may need to explain it to them.

### **SPEAK SIMPLY AND HONESTLY ABOUT THE SITUATION**

By explaining what is happening, you are helping to remove some of the fear of the unknown. Use simple words, and don't sugar coat or exaggerate a grim situation. For example: "We are leaving our home for a while because the water is getting higher and it is going to come into our house. We are going to stay in a hotel for a while."

### **MAINTAIN RITUALS OF COMFORT AND CONSISTENCY**

Does your family have activities they do every day at a certain time? An emergency disrupts the familiar and will generate stress for all who are involved. Identify your family's group and individual rituals and then participate in them to try to get back to a sense of normalcy, as it will help children feel secure. If at all possible, give the child something to do - this helps them be part of the emergency response.

### **REASSURE CHILDREN ABOUT THE FAMILY'S SAFETY**

Because children may not fully comprehend the situation they are in, or how that situation affects their level of fear or anxiety, it is up to you to help reassure him/her. Use statements such as: "The water is dangerous. But we will be safe. The Red Cross will find us a safe place to stay until the water goes back down. Mommy feels very sad about leaving home, and that is why she is crying. I could use a hug."

### **PUT WORDS OF ACCEPTANCE TO YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS/EXPERIENCES**

Remember that you do not need to fix how your child feels, but you should be a good listener and supporter. Say something such as "It's okay to cry. (The family pet) will stay at uncle's house and she will be fine. She'll come back to our house when we return, too. Uncle will take very good care of her."

### **BE AWARE OF MASKING BEHAVIOR**

Look for activities or responses that may seem out of character for your child such as nightmares, aggression, bed wetting, stomach distress, increased/decreased clinging, crying, withdrawal, problems at school. All of these responses can be alerts that a child is frightened.

### **GIVE CHILDREN SOMETHING PRODUCTIVE AND AGE-APPROPRIATE TO DO**

Make them part of the response effort. Something as small as helping to make sandwiches, carrying buckets or filling sandbags can help children feel part of the family response, and closer to everyone during a stressful time.

### **MODEL ACTIVITIES OF COURAGE AND DETERMINATION**

Draw attention to positive responses to adversity: "Mom and dad are doing all they can. They are putting sandbags around our house and helping our neighbors. We are all working together."

### **TAKE TIME TO CALM YOURSELF**

Allow yourself a break. Even just a couple-minute walk will be helpful to give your mind time to relax. Seek professional help if needed during, or after, the event.

**SOURCE:** CDC, NDSU Extension Service, [www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)