

Evacuate

Stay and Shelter

Staying Safe After the Disaster

Why Talk About Evacuation?

At any time of the year, at any time of the day or night, a disaster or threat of a disaster could force people to leave their homes. People evacuate a dangerous place to go to a safer place, and they usually need to act in a hurry. Preparing before an emergency by learning about the community's warning systems and evacuation routes and by making evacuation plans and discussing them with household members is the best way to be ready in case an evacuation is necessary. Making plans at the last minute can be upsetting, create confusion and cost precious time.

Why Talk About Sheltering?

Sometimes, a disaster or threat of a disaster mandates that people find shelter in their home or in a designated safe place. Safe shelter requires having a safe place to go and having the time to get there. It is important to know which room to shelter in and what to do to stay safe while there. At other times, people are forced to evacuate the immediate area, or even the entire region and to shelter at a public facility. Knowing in advance what to expect and preparing for all sheltering scenarios will make sheltering experiences safer and more comfortable.

What If You Have Pets?

Because evacuation shelters generally do not accept pets, except for service animals, you must plan ahead to ensure that your family and pets will have a safe place to stay. Do your research early. Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets. Ask if policies would be waived in an emergency. Make a list of pet friendly places and friends / relatives who would be available to take in your family and your pets. Make a list of boarding facilities and veterinary offices that might be able to shelter animals in emergencies. If you cannot get out of our mountainous area, but need to evacuate from your home, you may need to provide camping facilities for yourself and your pets. Be prepared with the right equipment.

Evacuation Checklist

If you are in an area that is being evacuated:

- Evacuate immediately if told to do so by authorities.
- Listen to a local radio or television station and follow the instructions of local emergency officials.
- Wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and sturdy shoes.
- Lock your home.

- Take your pets with you when leave, provided you can do so without endangering yourself.
- Use evacuation routes as specified by neighborhood communications and/or first responders.
- Once out of the neighborhood, use travel routes specified by local authorities. Avoid shortcuts and do not drive through moving water. Follow posted detour signs.
- Take your Disaster Supply Kit
- Prepare your home before evacuating if time permits.
 - Turn off electricity at the main fuse or breaker.
 - Turn off propane gas service valves; leave natural gas on unless otherwise advised.
 - If flooding is expected, consider using sand bags to keep water away from your house.

Taking shelter, having a safe place to go and having the time to get there, are often critical elements in protecting yourself and your household in times of disaster. Sheltering can take several forms.

Shelter At Home

Sheltering at home is appropriate when conditions require that you take protection in your home, place of employment, or other location where you are when a disaster strikes. How and where to stay at home depends entirely on the emergency situation. Sometimes disasters make it unsafe for people to leave their residencies for extended periods. You may be isolated, unable to leave or for rescue workers to arrive. In these cases, you may need to be self-sufficient for an extended period of time. It is critical that you have prepared a Disaster Supply Kit that can sustain you and your family for up to 2 weeks.

Shelter Facility

Taking shelter can also mean that you have been displaced from your home and you and your family are temporarily residing in a Shelter Facility, such as one provided by the Red Cross. Or, you may be “sheltering” in a temporary facility of your own making, such as a tent. Again, be sure that you have an adequate Disaster Supply Kit to sustain you, your family and your pets.

Staying Safe After a Disaster

After a disaster occurs, you may be in your home, in a public shelter in your community, camping outside in a self-made shelter or far away from your home. No matter where you are, it is probable that many other people are experiencing what you are going through. You will be glad that you and the other members of your household made a plan and practiced it.

No matter where you are after a disaster, you should:

- **Remain calm and patient.** Staying calm and patient will help you move safely and avoid delays or accidents caused by irrational behavior. Many people will be trying to accomplish the same things you are for the safety of their families. Patience will help everyone get through a difficult situation more easily.
- **Put your Family Disaster Plan into action.**
- **Listen to local radio or television or HAM Radio** for news and instructions.
- **Check for injuries.** Take care of yourself first. Then, give first aid and get help for seriously injured people until emergency responders arrive. Whenever possible, have CERT members or Medically Trained Personnel provide assessment, triage, first aid and transportation of injured person.
- **Help people who require special assistance** – infants, elderly people, those without transportation, large families who may need additional help, people with disabilities and the people who take care of them.
- **Use your Disaster Supply Kit**

If you are at home, or when you return home, you should:

- **Wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes.** Disaster areas and debris contain many hazards. The most common injury following disasters is cut feet.
- **Check for damage in your home.** Disasters can cause extensive damage, sometimes in places you least expect. Look carefully for any potential hazards.
- **Use battery-powered lanterns or flashlights** when examining buildings.
- **Do NOT use candles.** Candles can easily cause fires. They are quiet and easily forgotten. They can tip over during earthquake aftershocks or in a gust of wind. Candles invite fire play by children.
- **Look for fire hazards,** such as broken or leaking gas / propane lines, flooded electrical circuits, or submerged furnaces or electrical appliances.
- **Check for gas / propane leaks.** If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone outside quickly. Turn off the gas or propane at the outside main valve if you can and if phone service is available, call the gas company from a neighbor's home.
- **Look for electrical system damage.** If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell burning insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, call an electrician first for advice. Electrical equipment should be checked and dried before being returned to service.
- **If you have no electricity, take precautions to keep food safe.**
- **Check for damage to sewage and water lines.** If you suspect sewage or septic lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and drains. If water pipes are damaged, avoid using water from the tap and drink melted ice cubes or water from your disaster storage.
- **Clean up spills immediately.** Especially important to clean up are spilled medicines, bleach, gasoline, and other flammable liquids.
- **Watch for loose plaster and ceiling that could fall.**

- **Take pictures of the damage**, both of the building and its contents, for insurance claims.
- **Watch animals closely.** Keep all your animals under your direct control. Pets may become disoriented, particularly if the disaster has affected scent markers that normally allow them to find their homes. Pets may be able to escape from your home or your fence may be broken. Be aware of hazards at nose and paw or hoof level, particularly debris, spilled chemicals, fertilizers and other substances that might not seem to be dangerous to humans. In addition, the behavior of pets may change dramatically after an earthquake or fire. Be aware of their well-being and take measures to protect them from hazards, including displaced wild animals, and to ensure the safety of other people and animals.
- **Let your out-of-town contact know you have returned home and then do not use the telephone again during the emergency period unless it is to report a life-threatening emergency.** Telephone lines are frequently overwhelmed in disaster situations. They need to be clear for emergency calls to get through.
- **Make sure you have an adequate water supply** in case water is unavailable. Have at minimum 3 – 7 day supply; 3 – 7 gallons per person. More is better, especially for those of us who live in the mountains. Don't forget water that is needed for your animals and for sanitation.
- **Stay away from downed power lines** and report them immediately. If you see downed power lines, set out a flare or otherwise stop traffic and stay on the scene to warn others until authorities arrive on the scene.