

FAQ: How can I prepare for emergencies?

In an emergency, certain necessities of life may be hard to come by, and you may need special tools to deal with unusual situations. These are a few things you should consider putting in your home emergency kit:

- Photocopies of important records (credit and ID cards, deeds, property records, insurance policies, home inventory)
- A small amount of cash or traveler's checks
- Medical necessities (medication, wheelchair and hearing-aid batteries, contact lens solution, etc.)
- Supplies for your pets (food, a leash or container, veterinary records)
- Food and water for at least three days (including supplies for any pets). A good rule of thumb for water is one gallon per day per person.
- Cooking necessities (a can opener, paper plates, and plastic utensils)
- Portable, battery-powered or hand-cranked radio
- Flashlight
- Extra batteries
- First-aid kit and instruction book
- Matches
- Whistle
- Extra clothing
- Pliers or wrench to turn off utilities
- Local maps
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items (moist towelettes, toilet paper, feminine supplies, garbage bags)
- Blankets
- Fire extinguisher

Keep your supplies (particularly food) in air-tight plastic bags, and keep your complete emergency kit in one or two closeable, easily portable containers (such as a camping backpack, duffel bag, ice chest, or unused trash can with a lid). The kit should be stored in a cool, dry place that will be easily accessible in an emergency.

Review your emergency kit at least once per year. Make sure that everything is still fresh and in working order, and update it if your family needs have changed.

Emergency supplies are important, but sometimes a little knowledge is more valuable than anything you might have in your emergency kit. Here are a few tips for making sure your “knowledge kit” is in order.

- Find out what kinds of disasters can strike your home. Has there ever been a flood where you live? A mud slide? A major earthquake?
- Learn the danger signs. How to find out if a fire is close enough to endanger your home?
- Learn first aid, CPR, and how to operate a fire extinguisher.
- Talk to the experts. Do you know how to shut off your gas and electricity? Because building standards vary, you should consult an expert to find out what action to take in your home.
- Develop a plan of action. Together with your family, decide what you would do if disaster struck. Make sure your plan includes escape routes and a means of staying in contact, and that everyone has all the information they need (where supplies are stored, how to shut off the gas, etc.).