

## **Disaster Preparedness**

Compiled by Melissa (Missy) Bradley, MS, NCC, BCETS, FAAETS

*The following recommendations have been gathered from the agencies listed below at their public websites. For further details, check the agencies below and stay informed by contacting any of the agencies listed or your local Emergency Management Agency.*

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)  
[www.wmata.com/riding/safety/evac.swf](http://www.wmata.com/riding/safety/evac.swf)  
[www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov) – National Weather Service  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) - The Weather Channel  
[www.nhc.noaa.gov](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov) - National Hurricane Center  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) – The American Red Cross  
[www.nod.org](http://www.nod.org) - National Organization on Disability  
 US Department of Commerce  
[www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov) - US Geological Survey  
[www.iwin.nws.noaa.gov/iwin/nationalwarnings.html](http://www.iwin.nws.noaa.gov/iwin/nationalwarnings.html) - National Warnings  
 West Coast & Alaska Tsunami Warning Center  
[www.homesafetycouncil.org](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org) - Home Safety Council  
[www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov) - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov) - Department of Energy  
[www.hopkins-biodefense.org](http://www.hopkins-biodefense.org) - Johns Hopkins University  
[www.epa.gov/swercepp](http://www.epa.gov/swercepp) - Environmental Protection Agency  
[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov) - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
[www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org) - The Humane Society of the United States  
[www.uan.org/index.cfm?navid=27](http://www.uan.org/index.cfm?navid=27) - Emergency Animal Rescue Service (United Animal Nations)  
[www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) - United States Postal Service  
[www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org) - Rand Public Safety & Justice  
[www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com) - Web M.D.  
[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) - Internal Revenue Service  
[www.operationbrotherskeeper.org](http://www.operationbrotherskeeper.org) - Operation Brother's Keeper – Volunteer program to help with evacuation  
[www.lbhs.gov](http://www.lbhs.gov) - Institute for Business and Home Safety  
[www.dss.mil/training/csg/security/T5terror/Intro.htm#Introduction](http://www.dss.mil/training/csg/security/T5terror/Intro.htm#Introduction) - Anti-Terrorism and Force Protection  
[www.3maw.usmc.mil/FamilyReadiness/FATPG/Hostage.asp](http://www.3maw.usmc.mil/FamilyReadiness/FATPG/Hostage.asp) - 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Official Website  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) – Federal Emergency Management Agency\* - or [www.governmentguide.com](http://www.governmentguide.com)

\* You may obtain a 204-page booklet (in a pdf) online from FEMA called “Are You Ready? An In-depth Guide To Citizen Preparedness.”

### **Section I For All Disasters**

**Evacuate** when instructed by emergency personnel. The Weather Channel states that evacuation, when called for, is your number one safety recommendation. Evacuate early when told to do so. Check out [www.operationbrotherskeeper.org](http://www.operationbrotherskeeper.org) to find out more about how you can assist others in your community.

**Read this information** and other emergency material frequently enough so you will remember what you need to do in case of an emergency. Tape this inside a cabinet or closet in your home.

**Take responsibility** for your safety and preparedness. After Katrina, we saw that the system doesn't always work as well as it could. Find out about your community's preparedness and plan accordingly. Empower yourself and your family with knowledge and a plan.

**Assess the vulnerability** of your home and family's to natural disaster and make plans accordingly. Consider ALL possible threats for the areas of home, work and school.

As of June 2006, **only 10 states out of 50** in the United States were “disaster-ready” according to the Department of Homeland Security. In June 2006, the states were: Florida, Tennessee, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas and Vermont. “Preparedness” indicates states having sufficient plans to respond to disasters: evacuations, medical care, sheltering of victims, public alerts and other emergency priorities.

**Check you insurance policies very carefully.** Best selling author and financial specialist, Suze Orman, states that 64% of homes are underinsured by 27% or more. Readjust your coverage as construction costs climb. Have “replacement” coverage on your contents – otherwise, they will only give you the depreciated value. Are

you covered for all natural disasters prone to your area? Does your insurance cover your living expenses if you and your family have to stay in a hotel? Are you covered for flood? Most homeowner's policies do not cover this automatically. Visit the National Flood Insurance Program at [www.fema.gov/nfip](http://www.fema.gov/nfip)

**Develop a plan** with your family. Be familiar with the safety plan for your workplace and your children's school. Consider how you would get from one to the other, if necessary. Your disaster plan may be useful for many types of threats. TALK, PLAN, LEARN, CHECK SUPPLIES, TELL and PRACTICE.

**Establish a time**, at least quarterly, when you talk through the plan, check equipment and practice the plan with your family. This can take about 15-30 minutes once a month. Children (and adults) learn by doing. Mark your calendars as a reminder. Rehearse your plan in a calm and empowered way and have a discussion after a "drill" and workout possible problems.

**Have emergency numbers with you at all times.** Store them in your cell phone or put a reduced laminated copy in your billfold. Make sure everyone in the home has a copy or access to these numbers. You may keep a copy on the inside closet that is closest to an outside door, or taped inside a kitchen cabinet.

**If you need to evacuate, whom will you and your family inform?** It is best to use out-of-town individuals because they are less likely to also be directly impacted by the disaster. Give this number to all of your family members. Make sure it is known you are evacuating and call again when you get settled somewhere. Make sure you have daily contact with them after evacuating. Let neighbors and friends know who your contacts are. Some people have established a family "blog."

**If your family gets separated**, where will you meet? Choose a place immediately outside your home and another one outside your neighborhood.

**Do you or a member of your family have special medical needs?** Have modified plans to evacuate elderly, children, disabled and anyone with special needs. Have at least a week's supply of medication on hand. During a catastrophic disaster – of any kind – medical treatment may not be available or greatly limited. Be prepared to go it alone and hope you won't have to.

**Don't forget the animals.** If you have family pets, have immunization papers, food, water, leash, muzzle and medication (if applicable). Confine pets to one room in order to reduce the amount of time required to evacuate if needed. Have leashes on them when a situation is threatening. Go to [www.hsus.gov](http://www.hsus.gov) and download forms for planning for pets (of all kinds) and livestock. Consider having a microchip identification implanted in your pet. Get an emergency decal for your window (information on the microchip & decal available at [www.uan.org/index.cfm?navid=27](http://www.uan.org/index.cfm?navid=27)).

**Know how to** disengage automatic garage door openers.

**Have your most important documents scanned** and placed on a computer disk for easy portability and give to a trustworthy individual in another city or state. Important documents might be: medical information; medication names, the dosage and prescription number; important phone numbers and email addresses; Driver's License, birth certificates and social security numbers of all family members; account numbers and addresses; medical, homeowners, automobile and life insurance information & policies; pictures or videotapes of every room in your home and your vehicles – to jog your memory when trying to file a claim. Keep your most important papers in a vault or a container such as a brief case for easy retrieval in case of evacuation.

**You may wish to scan** copies of treasured family photographs and send a copy to that trusted individual.

**Have a current photograph** of all family members and pets to distribute to authorities in case you become separated.

**Have a local map** in your important papers to be able to seek alternative routes.

**Staying connected** as a community and family and planning for a possible natural disaster together, gives a sense of empowerment and can lessen the sense of isolation and fear. Even communities many miles removed

from the effected area can also feel a sense of empowerment through volunteering to help others. Become informed about your community's warning signals, alerts, evacuation routes and emergency shelters.

**Have a professional (such as a structural engineer) check your home** for more ways you can be protected or made safer. When buying or building a new home, look for the new designation of "Fortified Home" (Fortified...for Safer Living Homes). A fortified home uses materials that can withstand wind and water damage much higher than conventional homes. Since 14 states do not even have minimum building codes (MS still doesn't and LA only put them in place AFTER Katrina), do not expect your home to withstand intense wind. When building, use steel connectors for your home. Your existing home can be updated with little and fairly inexpensive changes (under \$1,500.00): caulk all outside crevices; have outside doors open out rather than in (for high wind risk reduction); fortified garage doors with more steel; when securing loose shingles, use high grade "cementing" (not concrete) to affix shingles; use fortified outdoor paint when you repaint; More expensive changes can be replacing windows with impact-resistant windows and using ring-shanked nails when replacing the roof of your home. These changes can save you tens of thousands of dollars over several years (in reduced insurance costs and damage).

**Stay informed** without being over-exposed to media coverage. Have a battery-powered radio with NOAA weather radio channels with a minimum of three sets of batteries.

**Learn basic first aid skills**, such as how to administer CPR, applying a tourniquet and other basic life sustaining skills when offered at your local Red Cross, university or hospitals.

**Check with local emergency response professionals** (i.e. fire and police department, The American Red Cross, FEMA and medical centers) for classes in emergency management, preparedness and special training for volunteers. You and appropriate members of your family learn how to use a fire extinguisher and make sure you have enough fire extinguishers for the size of your home and vehicles.

**Have a basic emergency first aid kit** that includes:

Bandaging material (strips of cloth, gauze, triangular bandages, band-aids, ACE bandages), insect and snake bite kit, alcohol wipes, antibiotic ointment, aspirin (real aspirin for heart attack & stroke), plain scissors, tweezers, Q-Tips, antibacterial soap, safety pins, adhesive tape, stick or ruler, tourniquet material, pocket notebook & pencil and instruction manual (may be available in a commercially available kit).

**Be prepared by having on hand:**

Flashlight and shoes next to every bed; strike anywhere matches; water purifying supplies (can be purchased at camping equipment stores), sleeping bags, pillows, blankets and towels (one of each per person); have baby-wipes; antibacterial hand cleaner; flashlights and batteries (or a Vector flashlight which has a hand-crank to recharge batteries); a battery-powered or Vector TV (as small as 5"); extra (charged) cell phone batteries; cash (in small bills) and credit cards; three or more gas cans filled with fuel (stored safely); traditional phone (not handheld); basic tools: Phillips-head screwdriver, regular screwdriver, rope; nails, pliers, hammer and saw; high-energy, non-perishable foods for a week; personal care products (toothbrush, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, etc.); water to bathe, flush toilets and drink, food that needs no refrigeration or cooking - two gallons (minimum) of water per day, per person (don't forget your pets); a non-electric can opener; utensils, and a few paper products; protective gloves and disposable dust masks; a few tarps.

**Plan for your vehicles** by keeping a full gas tank. Have a mini-kit in your car with flares, booster cables, maps and basic tools and make sure the spare tire is workable. Develop more than one escape route.

**If you cannot evacuate from home, work or school:** determine the safest room in the building you are in. Safe places may also exist in your community (if you cannot evacuate further). If you can't evacuate yourself, have a plan on transportation possibilities.

**If you are traveling**, make sure you assess where the exits are located, consider the possible threats and be informed. Most hotels have evacuation instructions located in the room (where the information for room service is usually located).

**If you live in a manufactured home**, check tie downs. If you cannot evacuate the manufactured home during a weather threat, know where you may seek shelter within 2-5+ minutes of your home (depending on the type of disaster).

**Think about where you and your family can be safe in your home:** in the bedroom? In the bathroom? In the basement? In the kitchen? In the garage? In the den or living room? Other rooms? If building or remodeling, consider installing a “safe room.”

**Identify potential hazards.** Turn off the water and gas before evacuating. Buy and learn to use a fire extinguisher for home and vehicles.

**Consider the purchase** of an auxiliary or portable generator.

**Adjust** refrigerators and freezers to the coldest setting when there is a possibility of losing your electricity.

**Have written checklists and instructions** (during emergencies, the highest functioning part of the brain does not remember easily) for turning off the water, gas and electricity and any other procedures and emergency and non-emergency phone numbers. Laminate the instructions and attach to the inside of the closet nearest to the main entrance. Make sure all appropriate family members understand how to complete the procedures.

**Have phone numbers on hand:** local Red Cross, Hospital, Fire Department (non-emergency number), Police (non-emergency number), utility companies.

**Lessen your risk** of fire by using flashlights, rather than candles. Propane lanterns may also be used, with care.

**Watch out for** downed power lines, deep or fast flowing water, debris and animals (such as snakes, alligators and more) that have been driven out of their natural habitat. Have a snake bite kit.

**If you have not evacuated and the electricity goes out:** Keep your refrigerator/freezer doors closed. A full freezer can keep foods safe for approximately 48 hours. A half-full freezer can keep foods safe for approximately 24 hours (if the doors are kept shut).

**If you are in a public place or on mass transit systems:** (trains, planes and buses) make sure you are aware of exits. Follow the instructions of the transportation officials.

**Test and check smoke alarms** quarterly, if not monthly. Mark your calendar to remind you.

**Have an extra set of car keys.**

**Rotate and replace emergency food** every six months. Dehydrated foods that are available at camping supply stores can last for years unopened and do not need to be rotated.

**When checking buildings after a disaster**, always use a flashlight, rather than matches, torches or lanterns because of the risk of gas leaks or other explosive risks.

**Building owners** should consider having disaster kits on every floor. Recommended contents: flashlights, batteries, first aid kit and emergency telephone connecting only to a main office or 911.

**Have a plan and a code word** with your child and the school with who can pick up your child in case of a disaster.

**Reduce potential projectiles.** If you have warning, store patio furniture, birdhouses, toys, grills and garden tools.

**In *most* emergencies** you should not use the elevator. Take the stairs. Don't dawdle and chat, get out of the building as quickly as possible (see the **exceptions** in this document).

**Keep your cell phone charged** and have an extra (charged) battery.

**If you own a firearm**, be sure you are well practiced and well trained in its use. Also, be fully informed of applicable laws so that in the event you are forced to use it, you will do so in a safe and legally responsible manner.

**Tax relief** is available for individuals and businesses for all kinds of disasters. Check with your tax professional or [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

**Financial recovery** after a disaster can be extremely challenging. The American Red Cross, in conjunction with The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the National Endowment on Financial Education can assist you. Go to [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or contact your local Red Cross. Your employer may be able to provide an advance on your paycheck and emergency funds may also be available through FEMA.

**Temporary housing** after any disaster can be arranged through your local emergency services. Check your homeowner's insurance to see if they provide temporary assistance for hotels if your home is uninhabitable.

**Before rebuilding after a disaster**, consult with resources such as: Institute for Business and Home Safety, [www.ibhs.org](http://www.ibhs.org).

## **Section II Hurricanes**

**Activate your emergency plan** when the threat of a hurricane approaches. Know the information in section one of this handout.

**More than 60% of the US population** lives in coastal areas – which are at risk for hurricanes. Anyone who lives in a coastal state needs a hurricane plan.

**Evacuate when told to do so by emergency officials.**

**Be prepared for floods and tornados** that often accompany hurricanes. Inland flooding is responsible for more than half the deaths associated with hurricanes.

**Cover windows** with plywood or the newer metal protectors. Hurricane shutters (1/2" plywood or the metal type) should be attached with anchors – pre-drill holes for fast preparedness. Consider purchasing special windows and doors for hurricane areas. Tape – of any kind – is not enough.

**Disconnect** appliances (except for refrigerators and freezers) before evacuating.

**Stay away** from windows and exterior doors if an evacuation has not be implemented.

**Cover yourself** by getting inside an interior closet. Have a something you can cover yourself with (such as a mattress or plywood).

**Gather water** by filling sinks and bathtubs with water (you can use if water lines break to wash or flush the toilet or to use a water purifying filter).

**Be aware** that the eye of the storm can cause people to believe the danger is over. Do not leave your home (if you did not evacuate) until the emergency personnel say it is safe to do so.

**Make sure your homeowner's (or renter's) insurance covers** the floods that usually accompany hurricanes. If you are not covered by your homeowner's plan (read the fine print carefully) call the National Flood Insurance Program at 1-800-Call-Flood ext. 445.

### **Section III**

## **Floods, Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Avalanches, Debris/Landslides, Lahars and Volcanoes**

**Know the flood history** of your property, preferably before you purchase it or move there. Floods are the most common natural disaster in the United States and kill more people in the United States than any other type of severe weather. Find out if you are in a low, medium or high-risk area.

**Flash floods** occur in all 50 states in the US, so plan accordingly.

**If there are dams and levees in your immediate area** know the community plan for evacuation in case of dam failure. 80% of the 76,000 dams in the US are built on earthfill construction and are more susceptible to failure. Live upstream.

**If there are creeks in your area** be aware that a 6 inches deep creek (particularly in a mountainous area) can swell to a 10-foot raging river in less than an hour with intense rainfall. Listen for changes in the sounds of the creek.

**If you live in a flood plain** consider owning waders and a canoe. Raise your water heater, furnace and electrical panel from the lowest lying areas (like a basement) and move to a garage level. Move furniture and valuables to higher levels of your home and have a plan to do so. Place your emergency kit on the top floor of your home. Consider owning a canoe or heavy-duty inflatable raft (know where the air pump is located).

**Know your flood access** roads and as many ways to evacuate as possible.

**Make sure you secure** gas cans, paints, poisons (such as garden supplies), explosives and any flammable supplies.

**Have a phone chain & a group of people** (who do not live in a flood area) that are willing to help you evacuate or move your belongings to the upper floor (if you have one) – if the flood is not expected to flood the upper floors.

**Do not cross** swift moving water or water more than 6 inches. A car or truck may be washed away in 18 inches of swift moving water. According to Federal program -Turn Around Don't Drown - [www.tadd/weather.gov](http://www.tadd/weather.gov) (National Weather Service) because half of all flood deaths occur in vehicles. Don't drive around barriers, across creeks, near storm drains, or high water. If your car stalls in rapidly rising water, abandon the car immediately and get to higher ground. Six inches of rapidly flowing water can knock an adult off their feet.

**Teach your children** not to play in viaducts, arroyos and storm drains.

**If you are close enough to hear thunder**, The American Red Cross states you are close enough to be struck by lightning.

**If your home floods** you will need hoses, fans, squeegees, wet dry-vacs, gloves and boots to clean up your home. Get a professional to check your electrical systems and for mold damage – which may make the home uninhabitable.

**Work as a community** to become a volunteer as a cooperative observer:  
[www.nsw.noaa.gov/om/coop/become.htm](http://www.nsw.noaa.gov/om/coop/become.htm)

**Make sure you turn off the master fuse** when the water gets close to your home.

**Be aware** that floods also flood septic tanks as well.

**Turn off air conditioners** because a power surge can damage the compressor.

**If you cannot safely evacuate the area in a tornado**, take cover in a storm cellar, an interior closet, the basement, a bathroom without windows (in the shower or tub). Make sure there is room for your family by

decluttering the safe area. Close blinds, windows and shades. Drawing shades and curtains can help protect you from flying glass.

**If you are in a high rise during a tornado**, use the stairway to get to a lower floor or go into an inner hallway if you cannot get to a lower floor.

**Understand weather lingo:** a Watch is when conditions are showing a risk of a threatening condition such as tornado or flood, and a Warning is when the threatening condition is occurring.

**The American Red Cross recommends that if you are outside during a tornado** get out of your car. Although movies have shown people getting under underpasses, the intensity of the wind can be greater there. Find a low-lying ditch and lie flat. If you are outside during a thunderstorm make yourself a low target. Take shelter under shorter trees. Do not stand near poles or tall trees.

**During a thunderstorm**, turn off running water, do not be in the tub or shower when storms are developing. Get away from windows, sliding glass doors and skylights.

**If rain has been falling heavily or steadily** for hours or days, stay tuned to radio or television.

**To protect your property**, have a professional thin out your trees to lower the risk of breakage and doing damage to you and your home.

**If you are on or near the water during a thunderstorm** – swimming or boating – take shelter immediately away from the water.

**A person who has been hit by lightning** is not dangerous to touch (a person who has been electrocuted can still be touching the electrical circuit and that would be dangerous!), but they may be burned, blind or deaf or have broken bones from the hit.

**The highest-risk areas for debris flows or landslides** are burned out forest, strip mining, volcanoes, tearing down forests for developments. In high-risk areas, consider installing flexible gas and water pipes when building or remodeling. Look for small changes in the lay of the land...know the area around you. When considering your evacuation plan, consider how you would evacuate if landslides blocked cars and emergency vehicles.

**Listen** for unusual sounds, notice cracks beginning to develop in landscapes, sounds of trees cracking, boulders knocking together – which may be indicators a landslide is coming.

**Do not keep fresh or canned foods** that have come in contact with flood water.

**If you live near a volcano** (such as Mt. St. Helens, Mt. Baker, Mt. Adams, Glacier Peak and Mt. Rainier) be prepared for Lahars. Lahars are mudflows composed of pyroclastic material (different than lava) and water (from quickly melted snow & ice) that causes a flowing river of concrete-like material which can destroy everything and everyone within miles.

**If you are at risk for a lahar**, you may receive very little warning. Know where you need to go to be safe (possibly on foot).

**Earthquakes, lahars and volcanoes** often occur in succession. When one has occurred, be prepared for one of the others and take action immediately.

## **Section IV**

### **Earthquakes and Tsunami**

“**Drop, cover and hold on**” is the phrase that is most important to remember for earthquakes. The American Red Cross recommends that children should also be taught this simple information and the importance of practicing these skills 2-3 times a year (mark your calendars). Put your forearms over your eyes to protect them after you have found a place that is safer from falling objects, such as under a sturdy table or desk, against the wall of an interior room, a closet, or the doorframe and away from bookshelves, overhead cabinets and light

fixtures. Stay away from windows and remain indoors, particularly near high rise buildings. If you are outside, drop, cover and hold on and stay away from trees and buildings.

**If you are in a car during an earthquake**, remain in your car, slow down and immediately find the nearest clear place to pull over.

**Check with building professionals** for additional ways you can make your home and office safer in high-risk areas. The American Red Cross recommends bolting water heater, shelves and cabinets to the walls with heavy bolts, installing heavy latches on cabinets and doors,

**After an earthquake** put on protective clothes such as long sleeves, long pants and sturdy shoes or boots.

**Know the tsunami history** and flooding elevation in your area.

**Have on hand** enough emergencies supplies (as stated in Section One) for three days.

**A tsunami Watch** means one has not been verified. If one exists, it may only be one hour away. If you are in a tsunami risk area, take action immediately – better safe than sorry.

**A tsunami Warning** means a dangerous tsunami may have been generated and may be very close. TAKE ACTION IMMEDIATELY.

**If a warning is verified**, closely monitor Coast Guard emergency frequencies, NOAA Weather radio or reliable emergency source after leaving the risk area.

**Leave immediately** if ordered to do so.

**Never go down to the beach** when a warning or a watch has been given.

**If you are on the beach** or near the shoreline and feel an earthquake, evacuate to higher ground immediately. If you are on a beach and the water recedes unexpectedly, leave the area immediately.

## **Section V For Wildfires (and other fire safety)**

**Create a 50-foot safety zone** around your home. The American Red Cross recommends you remove dead leaves and branches, trim trees with a 15-foot space between your home, tree crowns and power lines. Remove vines from walls. Stack firewood 100 feet away from your home.

**If you have highly explosive and flammable materials**, have a safety plan to get them away from your home if a wildfire is threatening.

**Identify water sources** such as swimming pools, ponds and hydrants. If you live in a remote area, consider buying a portable pump.

**Know your community fire safety resources.**

**Teach your family fire safety skills.** Most fire departments hold fire safety trainings in communities.

**Have fire extinguishers** in your home and know how to use them. Make sure all appropriate family members know how to use them and where they are stored.

**Testing your smoke detectors** do not only mean pushing the button to check the alarm, but by lighting a match close to the detector, extinguishing it and blowing the smoke into the detector. Put a note on your calendar to check a minimum of quarterly (monthly is most recommended).

**If you have time**, turn off propane tanks, pilot lights, the gas main, place lawn sprinklers in the yard (running), soak trees and shrubs near your home, spray water on the roof, seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut



plywood or commercial seals. Have hoses (and extensions) for every spigot outside your home. Move flammable furniture away from the windows, toward the center of your rooms. Remove curtains.

## **Section VI**

### **Extreme Heat, Cold and Snow/Ice**

**Check on those** who may not have the ability to care for themselves in the extreme weather.

**Protect yourself in extreme heat:** Stay hydrated and drink a glass of caffeine-free fluid every 30 minutes. If you have heart problems and are to limit your fluid intake, ask your doctor how much is enough during hot weather.

**If there is a blackout,** have the chilled neck coolers (very inexpensive) in your freezer and wrap around your neck to keep your body cool with no air conditioning. People on medication, particularly diuretic medication, are at particular risk during extreme heat. Keep the body hydrated, even if you don't feel "thirsty."

**Warnings of a heat stroke are:** Hot, red, dry skin (no sweating); rapid strong pulse at first and then moving to a very weak pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness, nausea, vomiting, unconsciousness or confusion; body temperature over 103°. Shallow breathing and confusion are additional signs of heat stroke. If any of the signs above are observable, get medical attention immediately!

**If you suspect someone is having a heat stroke:** Get medical attention immediately; Do not give alcohol; Cool person with cool water, shower or cool wet sheets.

**During extreme heat avoid strenuous activity,** wear lightweight and light colored clothing. Stay inside in a well-ventilated place, if there is no air conditioning.

**Stay well hydrated during extreme heat waves.** Make sure the elderly and your pets also have an appropriate amount of water. The American Red Cross does not recommend the use of salt tablets unless recommended by your physician. Avoid alcohol and caffeine.

**Eat light, small portioned and frequent meals.** Avoid high protein meals during extreme heat.

**During winter months,** carry blankets, disposable thermal blankets, kitty litter, a shovel and non-perishable snacks in your car. Keep your gas tank filled.

**If trapped on the road after a large snowstorm or ice storm,** be very cautious about running your car to stay warm. Run the car for a few minutes at a time. Make sure snow has not gathered around the exhaust.

**Ice storms** often cause severe breakage of trees and power lines, causing power outages and impassible roads. Have a good supply of warm clothes and blankets, keep your refrigerator closed to prevent thawing and have cell phone car charger. If possible, have a camping stove to heat water and food.

**Signs of hypothermia:** Body temperature is below 95°; Do not rub the skin; DO not use hot water to warm the person; Give the person warm beverages. Water cooler than 75° removes body heat more rapidly than can be replaced. DO not give alcohol or cigarettes because they slow blood flow.

## **Section VII**

### **Preparedness for Those With Disabilities and Elderly**

**Know** the information in Section One and begin to identify issues that need special attention or modification for your special needs.

**Practice drills** are particularly important for anyone with special needs. Practice drills will help you and your support network anticipate and correct potential problems.

**A customized emergency health card** is critical. This card should also include information about a Service Animal.

**For those with a Service Animal**, have a plan to respond in disaster, with and without the animal. Have appropriate supplies for the animal (such as water and food).

**Disability-related supplies** also need to be a part of the disaster preparedness kit. For example: If you communicate with a laptop, an extra (charged) battery needs to be part of the supplies.

**In preparing for an earthquake**, make sure you have a way to get to the safest place in their home and, if they use oxygen, the oxygen tank is temporarily secured so it does not roll away. There needs to be a habit of locking the wheels of the wheelchair, so you will be able to get in and move to a more secure location quicker. Because earthquakes often break up concrete and asphalt, moving around the damage may be very difficult without assistance from others, so develop a plan with that in mind.

**Know where the evacuation devices are** kept at work for those with special needs. For example: are there evacuation chairs if you cannot walk? This was a significant issue during the evacuation on 9/11.

**Teach your support network** how to best help you in the event of an emergency. If there is a log or notification process in place for your home or work, make sure your name is on the list.

**Make sure the place you work** (or live in a multi-family dwelling) is abiding by safety laws.

**An emergency kit should have three days** of all medication. Remember to rotate the medications so they do not expire.

**Give a set of keys** to your home to a trusted neighbor and family members who lives close.

**Have a daily call partner.** Anyone who lives alone, particularly those with special needs, needs a support system (possibly with others who live alone) where brief calls are exchanged daily, during a certain window of time. If the calls are not answered within a reasonable amount of time, emergency services should be called. This is important, even when there is not a disaster unfolding.

**Do not depend on any one person.** Develop and discuss an agreement with family members and neighbors to assist in case of an emergency.

**Have a cell phone charged.** If a regular cell phone is not a reasonable, consider a cell phone that there is only a charge for calls made. This type of service is not expensive, but the calls can be, but are essential if phone lines are down.

**Do not expect shelters to be able to meet your healthcare needs.** Preparation before an evacuation is extremely important.

**Practice assertiveness skills and giving clear and concise directions:** i.e. "I must have my wheelchair," "My Service Animal must go with me," "I can only function without my oxygen tank for five minutes," etc.

**If visually impaired**, you may be reluctant to go with strangers. If you have a Service Animal, they should have any official identification identifying them as a trained Service Animal so they may be evacuated with you.

**Consider having an emergency notification system**, such as the type you wear around your neck that is connected to a call center.

**A whistle** (or other signaling device) needs to be attached to a wheelchair and in every room in their home.

**Follow as many of the recommendations** in the Section One "For All Disasters" – keeping your capabilities in mind.

**If there is a psychiatric disability**, consider emergency alert bracelet or necklace stating the medication they are taking or the diagnosis (if they will comply) to alert anyone trying to assist during an emergency. A specific

personal support network is essential. Written laminated instructions could be helpful to emergency rescue. Calmly practice simple evacuation or safety measures with them.

**For those who cannot communicate verbally**, but are not cognitively impaired, have written instructions and information with the names and numbers of family and/or friends to contact. Consider emergency alert jewelry.

**For the visually impaired** have inexpensive extra canes in a couple of different rooms. Have alternative mobility cues, such as bright emergency lights that run off of batteries (if they can distinguish light) or Braille to indicate an evacuation or safe path. Plan for auditory cues to be lost after some natural disasters, such as an earthquake. Consider getting first aid/CPR/AED information in Braille (available through The American Red Cross of Northeastern New York).

## **Section VIII Chemical or Airborne Risks**

**When issued a “shelter-in-place” warning by emergency officials:**

**Close** fireplace damper, doors, and windows and turn off air conditioning and heating systems.

**Close off** cracks around doors, vents and windows by using duct tape and plastic.

**Listen** for specific instructions by emergency officials from radio or television.

**Go to** an interior room in your home that has no windows. For chemical and airborne risks, The American Red Cross recommends going to a higher room in your home, rather than a basement because chemicals weigh more than air.

## **Section IX Help Your Children Prepare**

**Don’t minimize or over-react** to the risks of disaster with children. Help them to understand what they can do to help (even if it is only listening, following instructions, etc.). Have opportunities for children to ask questions, to share and HEAR their fears.

**If you are afraid**, don’t deny it to your children. You can say, “This is a kind of scary, isn’t it? We have a plan and are doing everything we can to be safe.” Children pick up on the unspoken emotions of their primary caregivers and by appropriately acknowledging the fear AND the empowerment, children can learn that fear can be normal and they can still do things to be empowered.

**Teach your children** *how and when* to use 911.

**Teach your children** their home address, phone number and Mommy and Daddy’s real names.

**Teach your children the family safety plan** that is appropriate (and changing) for their developmental level.

**Rehearse the plan.** Children learn by doing – repeatedly. Practice in a calm but focused manner.

**Teach your children** not to play in viaducts, arroyos and storm drains.

**Prepare your child** to respond, even if they are away from you. Depending on their developmental age and maturity, develop a plan for how you will find them. Consider the small “dog tags” that get tied into their shoelaces.

**Have an emergency information form for Children With Special Needs:** This form may be downloaded from - [www.aap.org/advocacy/blankform.pdf](http://www.aap.org/advocacy/blankform.pdf)

**The American Red Cross** has a 37-page coloring book that can be downloaded for parents or teachers on Disaster Preparedness for Children at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

## **Section X Terrorist Attack**

**Preparation is key.** Follow the instruction in Section I. When the community is ill prepared for the possibilities and realities of terrorism, the feeling of helplessness is greater. Prepare and train for this type of emergency. Take classes in First Aid and Disaster Preparedness. Most classes are free or very inexpensive. Contact your local Red Cross for information about First Aid classes and Disaster Preparedness.

**Learn about “Shelter-in-place.”** More information on this is located at the back of this handout (in The Heroic Journey clinical manual).

**Be alert** for anything suspicious. Trust your intuition. When in doubt, contact local authorities (state and federal law enforcement) to report. Document your observations.

**Develop scenarios** that span the range of possibilities – biological, chemical and nuclear/radiological. Define the needs and identify potential actions with the help of Emergency Management officials. Focus on what you can do. Develop strategies.

**Keep an emergency kit in your work place (see Section One).**

**Be aware of what can occur.** Mass casualties are usually the intent of a terrorist attack. Law enforcement and (probably) military will be involved in trying to secure the area. Be patient and follow directions. The normal community resources may be greatly impacted and only be available to those most seriously impacted. Be prepared to be self-sufficient.

**If there is an explosion in the building you are in,** it is generally recommended to evacuate immediately. Those in the building may have better information than the emergency officials, depending on the nature of the explosion. Evacuation via stairs will be better than elevators since the electricity will probably be impacted. Do not expect to be evacuated via the roof of the building. It may take minutes or hours (or more) for first responders to reach you. You need to be ready to act with the assistance of first responders. Have a plan with neighbors (if it is a residential structure that is impacted) or your colleagues (if it is a commercial structure that is impacted).

**Crawl low** if there is a fire.

**Do not return to a burning building.**

**Use a wet rag to cover your mouth and nose.**

**Use goggles** to protect your eyes (even swim goggles will work).

**Carry a whistle on your key chain.** If you are trapped, find ways to make noise to signal rescuers. Shout only as a last resort because you can inhale dangerous amounts of dust, chemicals or smoke.

**Check for fires, fire hazards and gas leaks.** Do not light matches. Sniff for gas leaks around all appliances that use gas in your home and your neighbor's home. If you suspect a gas leak could have occurred, turn off the meter at the gas main.

**Confine your pets.** Put leashes on them to keep them within your control so you can keep them safe. Keep pets in an enclosed room until a decision is made about what your next action should be. You may wish to own muzzles. Crating an animal and throwing a towel over the crate can give them a sense of safety. Take your pets with you, but know they may not be allowed in a public shelter.

**Employers** need to be aware of your emergency numbers and your medical needs in case you are not able to tell them.

**Mental health personnel** may not be immediately available because they may also be in the effected area.

**Do not allow your children** to keep watching news coverage of the event. Young children do not understand that the event is not happening over and over again. Do not shelter them from appropriate information since they will know something has occurred. Reassure them, empower them and get into a routine or ritual as soon as possible to help them to feel safe through predictability. Adults also need to limit the amount of time spent watching the news. Internet or print media may not be as flooding as television coverage. Have the adults take turns monitoring the news coverage to limit the amount of information any one person must take in.

**If you have come in contact with a chemical or biological agent**, you may have to go through a decontamination process. Listen for instructions by Emergency Personnel.

**Check-Call-Care** is the procedure The American Red Cross recommends when you encounter an injured person. You may be the first responder and may have limited or no medical training. **CHECK** the scene to see if it is safe for you to approach. **CHECK** the victim for life-threatening injuries or consciousness. **CALL** for help. **CARE** for the person until help arrives.

**If the injuries are not life-threatening**, The American Red Cross recommends you cover a wound with a sterile dressing and apply direct pressure if necessary to stop bleeding. Elevate the wound above the level of the heart if you do not suspect a broken bone. If bleeding does not stop, use a pressure point to squeeze the artery to the bone.

**Keep the victim** from being overheated or over-chilled. Always treat for shock in any serious injury.

**Tend to burns** by pouring large amounts of sterile water over the wound until emergency personnel can respond.

**For bone, joint or muscles injuries**, apply ice packs to relieve swelling and reduce pain until they receive medical assistance.

**If you must move a victim** (only) because of the threat of further injury from an unsafe environment, try to stabilize and immobilize the injury before moving them.

**If you receive a suspicious letter** that has a powdery substance on the outside, has excessive postage, has no return address, has strange odors or stains, is of unusual weight size or shape, has a lot of tape, you do not recognize the handwriting or is marked with restrictive endorsements such as "Confidential" or "Personal," notify local law enforcement authorities, isolate the package away from people, change clothes – putting them in a plastic bag and wash your hands and arms.

**If you are outside and notice an unusual odor**, go inside, contact authorities, close windows and doors, close your fireplace dampers, turn off your air system and stay tuned to your emergency broadcast systems. Have tape and rolls of heavy plastic (such as disposable painter's drop cloths) on hand to put over windows, vents and fireplace opening – if authorities make the recommendation.

**In case of radioactive attack**, follow the directions of emergency management. The farther away you are from the attack, the lower your exposure. The Rand Corporation states we must evacuate within 10 minutes of an attack. Highly lethal radioactive material begins to fall out of a cloud within 10 minutes and spans for tens of miles making evacuation difficult and possibly very dangerous. Be prepared for shelter-in-place.

**In case of nuclear or radiological attack**, never look directly at a flash or a fireball. If you are close enough to see this type of attack; you have a maximum of 20 minutes to take shelter. Even those who are hundreds of miles away could be at risk.

**If you are unable to evacuate into a safe area**, remain in the shelter for a minimum of 48 hours or until authorities tell you otherwise.

**All electronics** could be wiped out in the event of a conventional, nuclear or neutron bomb. Have a backup plan that does not require any electronics.

**Contact Centers for Disease Control Emergency Response: 770-488-7100 for answers to questions.**

**Contact medical and law enforcement authorities.** If you suspect there has been a biohazard threat, there are many things you can do – such as use bleach, wash, take antibiotics, etc., but different approaches will be necessary for different types of threats.

**If you are taken hostage (or kidnapped),** it is generally recommended that you act cooperative, don't antagonize with obstinate behavior, and concentrate on surviving. Although your chances of this occurring are remote, it is always best to have a plan. You are more of a bargaining tool while alive. Be observant. Learn the details of your surroundings and the captors. Expect to be inaccurately accused. Mentally prepare yourself. Breathe, remember your family, keep your mind agile. Develop a mental routine. Follow directions, but remain "proud." Keep your voice at a normal volume. Answer questions with short answers. Eat when offered and exercise (even tensing muscle groups) to stay strong. Don't be lulled by a friendly approach ("Good cop, Bad cop" manipulation). Do not get into political discussions with them. Be patient. Negotiations can take a long time. If instructed to present demands of the hostage takers, write or talk (via video tape) that the demands are from the captors. You are at highest risk during a rescue attempt. Do not run. Drop to the floor and be still. Listen for instructions from the rescue team. Afterwards, do not make derogatory comments about the captors because it heightens the risk for other captives.