

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C.

Dear Citizens,

We live in a different world than we did before September 11, 2001. We are more aware of our vulnerabilities, more appreciative of our freedoms and more understanding that we have a personal responsibility for the safety of our families, our neighbors and our nation.

Are You Ready? A Guide to Citizen Preparedness provides practical information on how your family can prepare for any disaster. It includes up-to-date hazard specific safety tips and information about preparedness and protection. In addition to information on most natural and technological disasters, there are new chapters on "Animals in Disaster," "Extreme Heat (Heat Wave)," "Landslide & Debris Flow (Mudslide)," "Emergency Water Shortages," and newly updated information on terrorism.

We know that disaster preparedness works. We can take action now that will help protect our families, reduce the impact an emergency has on our lives, and deal with the chaos if an incident occurs near us. These actions are at the heart of everything we do at FEMA, and they are the reason President George W. Bush established Citizen Corps, a nationwide initiative encompassing public education, citizen training and volunteer programs. FEMA's vision of a nation prepared is best achieved by your participation in community and family preparedness so that we are all better protected for every disaster.

Contact your local emergency management office for information about specific hazards in your area and to volunteer to help make your community better prepared.

We know that disaster can strike at any time. We all have a personal responsibility to be ready.

Sincerely,



Joe M. Allbaugh
Director

Acknowledgement

This guide has been prepared for direct dissemination to the general public and is based on the most reliable hazard awareness and emergency education information available at the time of publication, including advances in scientific knowledge, more accurate technical language, and the latest physical research on what happens in disasters.

This publication is, however, too brief to cover every factor, situation, or difference in buildings, infrastructure, or other environmental features that might be of interest. To help you explore your interest further, additional sources of information have been compiled in the “For More Information” chapter, beginning on page 97.



Table of Contents

Why Prepare for a Disaster	1
General Preparedness Information	3
Emergency Planning and Disaster Supplies.....	4
<i>Creating a disaster plan</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Emergency planning for people with special needs.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Disaster supply kits</i>	<i>6</i>
Evacuation.....	11
Shelter	13
<i>Long-term in-place sheltering.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Staying in a mass care shelter</i>	<i>17</i>
Mitigation.....	18
Animals in Disaster	20
Recovering From Disaster.....	23
<i>Mental health and crisis counseling</i>	<i>25</i>
Natural Hazards	28
Floods	29
Hurricanes	33
Thunderstorms	39
<i>Lightning</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Tornadoes</i>	<i>42</i>
Winter Storms and Extreme Cold	46
Extreme Heat (Heat Wave).....	49
<i>Emergency water shortages</i>	<i>51</i>
Earthquakes	55
Volcanoes.....	58
Landslide and Debris Flow (Mudslide)	61
Tsunamis	64
Fire	66
<i>Wildland fires.....</i>	<i>70</i>
Technological & Man-Made Hazards.....	72
Hazardous Materials Incidents	73
<i>Household chemical emergencies</i>	<i>76</i>
Nuclear Power Plants.....	79
National Security Emergencies	83
<i>Terrorism.....</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Chemical and biological weapons.....</i>	<i>86</i>

Table of Contents (cont)

<i>Nuclear and radiological attack</i>	89
<i>Homeland security advisory system</i>	94
For More Information	97
Citizen Corps.....	99
CERT	99
Disaster Public Education Websites	100
Independent Study Courses	101

Why Prepare for a Disaster?



Disasters disrupt hundreds of thousands of lives every year. Each disaster has lasting effects—people are seriously injured, some are killed, and property damage runs into the billions of dollars.

If a disaster occurs in your community, local government and disaster-relief organizations try to help you. But you need to be ready as well. Local responders may not be able to reach you immediately, or they may need to focus their efforts elsewhere.

Being prepared and understanding what to do can reduce fear, anxiety and losses that accompany disasters. Communities, families and individuals should know what to do in a fire and where to seek shelter in a tornado. They should be ready to evacuate their homes, take refuge in public shelters and know how to care for their basic medical needs.

People can also reduce the impact of disasters (flood proofing, elevating a home—or moving a home out of harms way, securing items that could shake

loose in an earthquake) and sometimes avoid the danger altogether.

You should know how to respond to severe weather or any disaster that could occur in your area—hurricanes, earthquakes, extreme cold or flooding. You should also be ready to be self sufficient for at least three days. This may mean providing for your own shelter, first aid, food, water and sanitation.

This guide can help. It was developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the agency responsible for responding to national disasters and for helping state and local governments and individuals prepare for emergencies. It contains step-by-step advice on how to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

While this guide focuses on the physical hazards of disasters, there are also the emotional effects of losing a loved one, a home, or treasured possessions. When under stress, people can become irritable, fatigued, hyperactive, angry and withdrawn. Children and older adults are especially vulnerable to post-disaster psychological effects.

Share this reference with your household. Include everyone in the planning process. Teach children how to respond to emergencies. Give them a sense of what to expect. Being prepared, understanding your risks and taking steps to reduce those risks can reduce the damages caused by hazards.

What You Should Do

First, ask your local emergency management office which disasters could strike your community. They will know your community's risks. You may be aware of some of them; others may surprise you. Also ask for any information that might

help you prepare and possibly reduce the risks you face. Then, refer to the appropriate chapters in this handbook. Each chapter covers a specific hazard and describes how to prepare and what to do when the disaster occurs.

Next, review the “Evacuation,” “Shelter,” “Emergency Planning and Disaster Supplies” and “Recovering From Disaster” chapters. These chapters apply to a range of hazards including some not specifically addressed in this publication.

Use this guide as your foundation for disaster preparedness and safety. Since special conditions exist in every commu-

nity, local instructions may be slightly different from those described in this guide. If so, follow local instructions.

Consider getting involved in local emergency preparedness and response activities by volunteering in your community. One way is to participate as a Citizen Corps community volunteer. See the “For More Information” chapter for details on Citizen Corps and FEMA’s Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program.

