

DISASTER PLANNING

By definition, preparedness means the state of being prepared. Each individual has a personal responsibility for application. But because we are so diverse each person's "state" is remarkably different from everyone else. However, when preparing for an event or emergency, remarkably, we have a lot in common. Understanding your options can quicken your response time and lessen the initial fear and panic. Knowledge is power and in times of crisis your survival may depend on preparation and common sense.

Every year, Iowans face many natural disasters for example tornadoes, floods and snow storms. Or even the unthinkable, a man made disaster. Each has the potential to limit your access to food and water. By taking the time now and with very little effort you could inventory what you already have and build emergency supplies to provide for you and your family.

Make a Kit

Water: Store one gallon of water per person per day for drinking and sanitation, in clean plastic containers. Children, nursing mothers and ill people may need more. Warm weather and climate may require more water. If you are re-using containers such as plastic pop bottles the water should be changed out every 6 months. Never use containers that have held toxic substances. Keep at least a three day supply per person and preferably a seven day supply. Extra water should be available for pets. If supplies run low, don't ration water. Drink the amount you need today and try and find more for tomorrow. You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity or staying cool.

Emergency outdoor water sources If you need to find water outside your home, rainwater, streams, rivers and moving bodies of water, ponds and lakes, natural springs can be sources after you have purified the water. There are many ways to purify water, none is perfect.

- Boiling is the safest method of purifying water. Bring to boil for 3-5 minutes, keep in mind that some of the water will evaporate. Let cool before drinking. To improve the taste put oxygen back in the water by pouring it back and forth between two clean containers.
- Disinfect water by using household liquid bleach. Use only regular household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite. Do not use scented bleaches, colorsafe bleaches or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Add 16 drops of bleach per gallon of water, stir, and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat process and let stand another 15 minutes.
- Distillation involves boiling water and collecting the vapor that condenses back into water. To distill, fill a pot half full of water and bring to boil. Tie a cup to the handle of the pot's lid so that the cup will hang right-side-up when the lid is upside down. Make sure the cup does not dangle in the water. The water that drips into the cup is distilled.

- Avoid water with floating material, an odor or dark color. Use saltwater only if you distill it. Never use or drink flood water.

Hidden water sources in your home

- If you have not stored a clean supply of water or run out you can use the water in your hot-water tank, pipes and ice cubes. As a last resort, use the water in the toilet tank, but not in the bowl. Make sure to shut off the valve immediately after the incident to stop contaminated water from coming into your home.

Food: Store at least a three day supply of non-perishable food per person and that does not need any preparation like heating or cooking. Choose foods that your family will eat, or foods required in a special diet.

- Pack a manual can opener and eating utensils
- Ready to eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola
- Peanut butter
- Nuts
- Dried fruit
- Crackers
- Canned juices
- Non-perishable pasteurized milk
- High energy foods
- Vitamins
- Food for infants
- Food for pets
- Comfort/stress foods

Short term food supplies

You should prepare for at least a seven day supply. The easiest way to develop this is to increase the amount of basic foods you normally keep on your shelves. Buy foods that typically are found in your pantry. This will help promote routine and security. Store food, covered, in a dark, cool spot, if possible. Empty opened packages in screw-top jars or air-tight cans to protect them from pests. Inspect all food for spoilage. Mark foods with dates and replace if necessary. Special diets need particular attention. Plan for these needs. If food supplies are limited, remember that healthy adults can survive on half their usual intake if activity is limited. Pregnant women and children need to maintain normal calorie intake if possible. Canned food should not be used if it has been in flood water or dented.

Special Needs

For Baby

- Formula
- Diapers
- Bottles
- Powdered milk
- Medications
- Moist towelettes
- Diaper rash ointment

For Elderly

- Ask your doctor about storing prescription medications such as heart and high blood pressure medication. Or medications that need refrigeration, like insulin. Include allergies
- Denture needs
- Extra eye glasses and hearing aide batteries
- Hygiene needs
- How to evacuate or signal for help
- Extra batteries for wheelchairs or other equipment
- List style and serial number of any medical devices
- Copies of medical insurance and Medicare cards
- List of all doctors and emergency contacts

Clean Air: There is the potential that the air may become contaminated through an explosion or a terrorist could release germs that can make you sick if inhaled or absorbed through an open wound. Improvise with whatever is available to cover your mouth, nose eyes and any cuts or abrasions, including clothing if necessary. It is important that you try and breathe through the cloth and not let any air in around it. There are many types of masks to fit different situations. Unfortunately there are no one fits all masks but something covering vulnerable areas is better than nothing. Do whatever possible to make the best fit for children.

Have heavyweight garbage bags, or plastic sheeting, duct tape and scissors on hand. This could be used as a barrier, sealing off doors, windows and air vents from outside contamination. Turn off the air conditioner or heater. This is called “sealing a room”. Cut these barriers ahead of time and label them to save time. Remember, this is only a temporary protective measure between you and the contaminated air.

Supplies

- First Aid kit and manual
- Two pairs of sterile or latex gloves and sterile dressing
- Cleansing agent
- Antibiotic ointment

- Burn ointment
 - Adhesive bandages in a variety of sizes
 - Eye wash solution
 - Thermometer
 - Hygiene supplies
 - Toilet paper, towelettes, paper towels
 - Feminine supplies
 - Plastic garbage bags, ties
 - Plastic bucket with tight lid
 - Disinfectant
 - Household chlorine bleach
 - Portable radio, flashlights and extra batteries
 - Shovel, saw, hammer, pliers or other useful tools
 - Aluminum foil
 - Paper and pencil
 - Signal flare
 - Money and matches in a waterproof container
 - Fire extinguisher
 - Blankets and extra clothing
 - Infant and small children's needs
 - Essential medicines
- Maintain a list of important items and leave them with the emergency kits. This should include current prescriptions, dosages and medication regime. Names, addresses and phone numbers of doctors and pharmacist. Keep copies of important family records, such as insurance policies, identification and bank records in a waterproof, portable container. Again, wear medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your disability or need in case of an emergency. Giving a contact person this information can be beneficial if none of this information is available.
- Have two emergency kits available, one stationary and one portable, with water, food and supplies. Keep in mind that a portable emergency kit must be manageable; items may be limited and should be accessible, for example near a door or exit.

Plan

Work together with those in your everyday routine. Ask if there is an evacuation plan at school, work, apartment buildings and neighborhoods. If none exists, volunteer to create one with the help of those involved. Ask schools and daycare providers if they store adequate food, water and emergency supplies and how they would notify families if they were sheltering in place. If not, where would they go if they must get away?

Employers should have evacuation plans to meet the needs of all their employees. Participate in all drills, be familiar with exit routes and know designated safety zones. Too often people do not even leave their desk during drills which places burdens on everyone. Make sure emergency supplies are available if necessary. Question if they are prepared to “shelter in place”. Take a personal inventory, would you need specific medications or food if staying put?

Communities should work together during an emergency. Your community may be your neighborhood or apartment complex. Make a plan on who will check on the elderly or disabled. Make back-up plans for your children if you are unable to get home.

- Assess the situation, using common sense to keep yourself and your loved ones safe. Depending on the circumstances, the first important decision you will make is whether to stay or to go. Planning for both possibilities is best.
- Become familiar with notification systems in your area. Radio, television, and or public warning sirens which would alert persons to adverse weather that is specific to the region. In some circumstances power sources may be disabled. Keep a radio with charged batteries and knowledge of local stations that would provide any information available.
- If available, television broadcasters will provide all essential information about road closings, shelters, advice to prevent injury, and other information regarding the emergency.
- Have specific evacuation routes for you and your family if leaving the area is necessary. Each scenario will be different, for example, exit routes during a fire will not be the same for a tornado, flood, etc. Have maps of the area handy. Create a plan specific to the emergency. Make sure all family members have a common destination, increasing the opportunity for reunification if separated. Your family may not be together in an emergency. Make plans for daycare, school and work. Have a contact person out of the area that can provide communication. If possible maintain a half a tank of gas in your car. Keep prepaid phone cards or coins to call. Keep in mind that phone service may be limited. Be patient.
- If you believe the air to be contaminated close the windows and vents in the car. Do not run the air conditioner or heater.
- Check for hazards during and after a disaster. Anything that can move in your home or office can potentially become a hazard. Downed wires or water could block an exit or path. Have at least two different plans for exit.
- Have the number of your local Red Cross or local emergency disaster agency handy for assistance with food, water and shelter. Make sure to ask about provisions for people with disability.
- In the event of rapid departure there may not be time to gather important essentials, for example, medication. Maintain a current list of medications, dosage and phone numbers for your pharmacy and your

doctor along with other contact numbers. Identification and cash can also be beneficial. Keep this in a handy place for easy access.

- Plans should also be in place for service animals and pets. Keep your veterinarian's number on your contact list along with identification tags. If evacuating with your pets have your dogs on lead and cats in a pet carrier. Take a litter pan and litter in the carrier. Service animals should never be separated from their owners. Shelters will be available to accommodate service animals. If leaving pets or animals behind, give them the opportunity to escape. Tied or caged animals have little hope of survival without mobility.
- Talk to your neighbors about how you can work together during an emergency
- Know who the elderly are in the neighborhood, who has specialized equipment and if there is anyone that has medical expertise that can help in a crisis.
- Make sure daycare and school has emergency response plans.
- Know how they will communicate with families during an emergency.
- Find out if they will be prepared to shelter in place if need be, or where they will go if they must get away.
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Preparing for an Emergency with the Disability Community

Traditional definitions of disability are those that are noticeable, for example those in a wheelchair, deaf or blind. People with disabilities include those with heart disease, emotional and psychiatric conditions, arthritis, significant allergies, asthma, multiple chemical sensitivities, respiratory conditions, and some visual, hearing and cognitive disabilities.

If you don't plan, things will not be in place when it is needed.

- Create a support network to help in an emergency
- Tell these people where you keep your emergency supplies
- Give a member of your support team a house key
- Contact local emergency management office and get information about a registry. Many local offices keep lists of people with disability so they can be quickly located in an emergency
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets that identify your disability
- If you are dependent on life sustaining equipment know the location and availability of more than one facility that can help.
- Show others how to work our wheelchair. Know the size and weight and whether it will collapse for transportation.

Additional Supplies for People with Disabilities

- Prescription medicines, list of medications including dosage, list any allergies.

- Extra eyeglasses and hearing aid batteries
- Keep a list of the style and serial number of medical devices
- Medical insurance and Medicare cards
- Wearing a medical alert tag or bracelet increases information and mobility. If you are dependent on medical devices know the location and availability of more than one facility ahead of time that can be of assistance. You should contact your provider immediately in case of a power outage. Some medical equipment has battery backup. Know how long the backup will last and maintain a re-charging schedule even if they are not in use. Generators are necessary for some equipment, however should only be used outside because they use oxygen.
- Evacuation from the workplace changes with each organization. Have a thorough understanding of the procedures in your place of business regarding each event. If you need assistance choose a few co-workers that you trust to help if you need it. Having several options will increase the odds of someone being available at a moments notice. Elevators may not be an option and evacuation chairs are a possibility for those with mobility limitations. These chairs vary in quality. There are no current standards for their design and construction or placement in a building. People with disability must make their own plans during an emergency. They must know their abilities and options, practice their plans, and know where assistive devices are located and how to use them. Most importantly, learn to instruct for evacuation if necessary. Show friends and co-workers how to operate your wheelchair so they can move it if necessary. Provide the size of the chair in case it needs to be transported.
- People with disability may need modified alert systems. Adapt each system to meet your needs, for example, modified radio receivers that have a strobe light to alert a person with a hearing impairment. Or make a plan with a neighbor or co-worker to assist in an emergency and ask for help. Providing a key could also be beneficial.
- Contact your local emergency information office now. Let them know of your disability and plan. Many offices maintain a register of people with disability so they can be located and assisted quickly in a disaster. If there is not a register available, offer to work with others to create one. Become an advocate, that is part of being prepared.
- Special, necessary or even vital daily items (medicines, power supplies, medical devices) are not likely to be available in emergency shelters.
- Basic availability to restrooms and showers.

Specific Terrorist Threats

Each situation is significantly different and you should follow the instructions of authorities on the scene. Be calm, and think before you act. With simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected.

Biological Threat

A biological attack is the deliberate release of germs or other substances that can make you sick. Many agents must be inhaled, enter through a cut in the skin or eaten to make you sick.

An example of biological threat would be the anthrax that was mailed through the postal service which is not contagious; another would be small pox which can be passed from one individual to the next. A biological attack may or may not be immediately noticed. It is more likely that local health care workers will report an unusual illness or wave of sick people seeking medical attention. You will probably hear about this from the media. Because of this, officials may not know what to do immediately. However you should try and be as informed as possible.

- Are you in or near the area authorities believe to be in danger?
- What are the signs or symptoms?
- Are there any medications or vaccines available and where?
- Who should get them?
- Where should I go if I have symptoms?

If you come in contact with an unusual or suspicious substance, first get away. Cover your mouth with layers of cloth, paper towels or anything you can breathe through. Wash with soap and water, contact authorities.

If a biological attack has been declared and a family member becomes sick it is important to seek medical advice but don't assume that it is a result of a biological attack. Use common sense, practice good hygiene to avoid spreading germs and seek medical advice.

Chemical Threat

A chemical attack is the deliberate release of a toxic gas, liquid or solid that can poison people or the environment. This attack is easier to detect and warning signals include watery eyes, twitching, choking, or having trouble breathing. Be suspicious if there are many sick or dead birds, fish or small animals.

- If you see signs of attack, define the area or where it is coming from, if possible.
- Get away immediately
- If the chemicals are in a building try to avoid going pass the contaminated area if possible. But it is better to move as far away as possible. You must quickly decide what is the fastest escape or shelter in place.

If you have been exposed to chemicals, immediately remove your clothing and wash. Look for a hose, fountain, or any source of water and wash with soap. Take care not scrub the chemical into your skin. Seek emergency attention immediately. Chemical attacks consist of toxic gas, liquid or solid that can poison humans and the environment. Signs of a chemical attack include watery eyes, difficulty breathing, choking, twitching or loosing coordination. Many sick or dead birds, fish or small animals should also raise suspicion. If you believe an area is contaminated, quickly assess the situation, determining where the contamination is and get away from the area. Shield yourself as best you can by creating a barrier between you and the chemical threat. Consider if you can leave the area or if it would be better to go inside a building and follow the plan to “seal the room”.

Nuclear Threat

A nuclear blast is an explosion with intense light and heat, a damaging pressure wave and widespread radioactive material that can contaminate the air, water and ground surfaces for miles around.

A nuclear blast is an explosion that creates intense heat, light and damaging pressure waves and widespread radioactive material that will contaminate land, water and air in large areas. If there is a flash or fireball, take cover, preferably below ground to shield and shelter you from radiation. Time and distance will minimize your exposure to radiation. A dirty bomb contains radioactive material, but in a contained area. While the blast will be obvious, the contamination will not, until trained personal make that determination. With any radiation think shielding, distance and time.

Explosions

- If there is an explosion, take shelter immediately.
- Exit the building or area as soon as possible.
- Do not use the elevator.
- Check for fire or hazards.
- Take your emergency kit if possible.

Fire

- Exit the building as soon as possible.
- Crawl low if there is smoke.
- Use a wet cloth to cover your nose and mouth if possible.
- If caught behind a closed door, test the door with the back of your hand to check if the door is hot.
- If the door is hot, find another way out.
- If the door is not hot, slowly open the door and make your way out.
- Do not use elevators.
- If you catch fire, stop, drop and roll to put out the fire.
- If you are home, go to the designated meeting place, account for your family members.
- Never go back in a burning building.

Trapped in Debris

- If possible, use a flashlight or whistle to alert rescuers. Or tap on walls or pipes
- Avoid unnecessary movement.
- Cover your nose and mouth with anything that you have.
- Shout when necessary, avoid inhaling dust.

Returning to your home after a disaster

- Before returning to an area that has been evacuated make sure that officials determine the area is safe. Keep updated on emergency information through radio, television, and internet.
- Put on heavy shoes or boots to protect against broken glass and debris.
- Check for injured or trapped people and animals, provide first aid if trained.
- Check food and water supply before using them. Food that requires refrigeration may have spoiled in electricity has gone out. Do not eat any food that has come into contact with flood water. Do not drink tap water unless officials give the all clear.
- Extinguish all open flames.
- Gas leaks, shut off main valve if not already directed to be turned off by local officials. If you smell gas, turn of main valve, open windows to the house and leave immediately.
- Check for water leaks. If suspect water leaks, shut off main water value.
- Shut off utilities if instructed by local officials. Always have utilities turned on by a professional. If time permits, turn off utilities before leaving.
- Stay away from downed electrical wires.
- Determine if buildings are safe to enter. Do not carry lanterns or flames in the house in case of gas leak.
- Check the sewage lines are intact before flushing.
- Clean up any spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline or flammable liquids immediately.

Materials adapted from

American Red Cross Disaster Services
“Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities”

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
“Ready America”
“Ready Gov”
“Emergency Preparedness Guide, Protecting Your Family and Your Home.”

Job Accommodation Network/JAN
“Worksite Accommodation Ideas for Persons
With Brain Injury”
Kendra M. Duckworth, MS

FEMA
“Emergency Procedures for Employees with Disabilities in Office
Occupancies”

Athens-Clarke County, Georgia
“Emergency Action Planning Guide, How to Plan of Action”

US Department of Education
“Emergency Evacuation of People with Physical Disabilities”

US Department of Labor
“Preparing the Workplace for Everyone”

Center for Disability Issues and the Health Professions
“Emergency Evacuation Preparedness, Taking Responsibility for
Your Safety, A Guide for People with Disabilities and Other Activity
Limitations”
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