



Being Prepared

MAKE A PLAN

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes. It is important to plan in advance: how you will contact one another; how you will get back together; what you will do in different situations.

- Identify an **out-of-town contact**. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town. An out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.
- Be sure every member of your family **knows the phone number** and has a cell phone, **coins**, or a **prepaid phone card** to call the emergency contact. If you have a cell phone, program that person(s) as "ICE" (In Case of Emergency) in your phone. If you are in an accident, emergency personnel will often check your ICE listings to get a hold of someone you know. Tell your friends and family you've listed them as emergency contacts.
- Teach family members how to use **text messaging**. Text messages can often get around network disruptions when a phone call might not be able to get through.
- Subscribe to **Emergency Notification Alert Services**.
- Join Austin Disaster Ready's mailing list to receive e-mails on bad weather, road closings, local emergencies...www.austinhsem.com.

Depending on circumstances, the first important decision is whether you stay where you are or evacuate. Use common sense and available information to determine if there is an immediate danger. Local authorities may not be able to immediately provide information on what is happening and what you should do. Watch TV, listen to the ▼

BUILD A KIT

You may need to survive on your own after an emergency. This means having your own food, water, and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least three days. Local officials and relief works will be on the scene, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it might take days. Basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment, and telephones may be cut off for days, or weeks, or longer.

- **Water**. One gallon per person per day for at least three days.
- **Food**. At least a three-day supply of non-perishables.
- Battery-power or hand crank **radio** and a NOAA Water Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both.
- **Flashlight** and extra batteries.
- **First Aid Kit**.
- **Whistle** to signal for help.
- **Dust mask** to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- **Wrench** or pliers to turn off utilities.
- **Can opener** for food.
- **Local maps**.
- **Cell phone** with chargers, inverter, or solar charger.
- Prescription **medications and glasses**.
- **Infant formula and diapers**.
- **Pet food and extra water**.
- Important **family documents** such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.
- **Cash or traveler's checks** and change. ▼

STAY INFORMED

Before, during and after a disaster, it is critical that you listen for the most local, up-to-date information from emergency officials. Local media will convey instructions from local, state, and federal government partners, such as:

- **Orders to evacuate.**
- **Details about evacuation routes.**
- **Locations of evacuation shelters.**
- **How to safely stay where you are.**
- **Where to find assistance.**
- **Weather warnings and watches.**

Make sure your battery-powered radio is working in case the electricity goes out. Have extra batteries on hand.

It is also important to know what kinds of threats could occur in the Austin/Travis/Williamson County area. Explore the **Are You Ready?** Disaster links to learn more about these threats and how to respond to them. Knowing what to do during an emergency is an important part of being prepared.

Austin HSEM has a **Reverse 911 system** referred to as the Emergency Notification System. It will leave messages on a land line or cell phone.

- **Dial 911** for emergency help.
- **Dial 311** to call for non-emergency help.
- **Dial 211** to call the social service information line, the official state-wide information line for the general public to get updates in an emergency. Translation services are available.
- Listen to emergency radio stations.
- Join the HSEM mailing list. ▼

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

Get to know your neighbors. It is the most significant step you can take to improve your safety. In an emergency, your neighbors can respond faster than anyone else.

Working with neighbors can save lives and property. Meet with them to plan how the neighborhood can work together during a disaster until help arrives. If you're a member of a neighborhood organization, such as a home association or crime watch group, introduce disaster preparedness as a new activity.

Know your neighbor's special skills (medical, technical) and consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as disabled and elderly persons. Make plans for child care in case parents can't get home.

- Start or join a **Neighborhood Watch Program**. This helps you and your family feel safer at night and build a sense of community at the same time.
- Walk door-to-door and introduce yourself and your family to your neighbors.
- Get a **map of the neighborhood**.
- Talk with your neighborhood's local emergency personnel.
- Develop a list of neighbor's skills and special equipment that could be used in an emergency.
- Prepare a back up plan for neighborhood children, elderly, and persons with special needs.

These neighborhood tips will help reduce anxiety, injuries, and property damage during emergencies. Moreover, they will help reduce secondary hazards such as fires and greatly improve neighborhood recovery. ■

radio or check the internet often for information and other instruction as it becomes available.

Find out what kinds of disasters, both natural and man-made, are most likely to occur in your area and how you will be notified. One common method is to broadcast via emergency radio 590 KLBJ AM and TV broadcasts. You might hear a special siren, or get a telephone call, or emergency workers may go door-to-door.

Use the **New Online Family Emergency Planning Tool** created by the Ready Campaign in conjunction with the Ad Council to prepare a printable Comprehensive Family Emergency Plan.

Use the **Quick Share** application to help your family assemble a quick reference list of contact information for your family, and a meeting place for emergency situations.

You may also want to inquire about emergency plans at places where your family spends time. Work, day care, and school. If no plans exist, consider volunteering to help create one. Talk to your neighbors about how you can work together in the event of an emergency. You will be better prepared to safely reunite with your family and loved ones during an emergency if you think ahead and communicate with others in advance. ■

- Important **family documents** such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.
- **Emergency reference materials** such as a first aid book or information from www.ready.gov.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person. Consider additional bedding.
- Complete **change of clothing** including a long sleeved shirt, long pants, and sturdy shoes. Consider additional clothing.
- Household **chlorine bleach** and medicine dropper—when diluted, nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or, in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe, or bleaches with added cleaners.
- **Fire extinguisher.**
- **Matches** in a waterproof container.
- Feminine supplies and **personal hygiene items.**
- **Mess kits**, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, paper towels.
- **Paper and pencil.**
- Books, games, puzzles, or other **activities for children.**

Find out how to keep food safe during and after emergencies by visiting FoodSafety.gov. ■

- Join the HSEM mailing list.
- Follow them on Facebook. Search Disaster Ready Austin.
- Visit the Emergency Conditions page for road closures, etc.
- Always visit austinhsem.com during emergencies.

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as making an emergency supply kit and developing a family communications plan, are the same for both a natural or man-made emergency.

However, there are important differences among potential emergencies that will impact the decisions you make and the actions you take. Learn more about the potential emergencies that could happen where you live and the appropriate way to respond to them. ■

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