

Preparedness Tip #1 Take a moment to imagine that there is an emergency, like a fire in your home, and you need to leave quickly. What are the best escape routes from your home? Find at least two ways out of each room. Now, write it down — you've got the beginning of a plan.

Preparedness Tip #2 Pick a place to meet after a disaster. Designate two meeting places. Choose one right outside your home, in case of a sudden household emergency, such as a fire. The second place you choose needs to be outside your neighborhood, in the event that it is not safe to stay near or return to your home.

Preparedness Tip #3 Choose an emergency contact person outside your area because it may be easier to call long distance than locally after a local/regional disaster. Take a minute now to call or e-mail an out-of-town friend or family member to ask him or her to be your family's designated contact in the event of an emergency. Be sure to share the contact's phone number with everyone in the family. During an emergency, you can call your contact who can share with other family members where you are; how you are doing; and how to get in contact with you.

Preparedness Tip #4 Complete an emergency contact card and make copies for each member of your family to carry with them. Be sure to include an out-of-town contact on your contact card. It may be easier to reach someone out of town if local phone lines are out of service or overloaded. You should also have at least one traditionally wired land line phone, as cordless or cellular phones may not work in an emergency. Visit www.redcross.org for more information.

Preparedness Tip #5 Go through your calendar now, and put a reminder on it — every six months — to review your plan, update numbers, and check supplies to be sure nothing has expired, spoiled, or changed. Also remember to practice your tornado, fire escape or other disaster plans.

Preparedness Tip #6 Check your child's school Web site or call the school office to request a copy of the school's emergency plan. Keep a copy at home and work or other places where you spend a lot of your time and make sure the school's plan is incorporated into your family's emergency plan. Also, learn about the disaster plans at your workplace or other places where you and your family spend time.

Preparedness Tip #7 Teach your children how and when to call 9-1-1 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for help. Post these and other emergency telephone numbers by telephones.

Preparedness Tip #8 Practice. Conduct fire drills and practice evacuating your home twice a year. Drive your planned evacuation route and plot alternate routes on a map in case main roads are blocked or gridlocked. Practice earthquake and tornado drills at home, school and work. Commit a weekend to update telephone numbers, emergency supplies and review your plan with everyone.

Preparedness Tip #9 A community working together during an emergency makes sense. Sharing plans and communicating in advance is a good strategy

Preparedness Tip #10 What if disaster strikes while you're at work? Do you know the emergency preparedness plan for your workplace? While many companies have been more alert and pro-active in preparing for disasters of all types since the September 11, 2001 attacks, a national survey indicates that many employees still don't know what their workplace plan is for major or minor disasters. If you don't know yours, make a point to ask. Know multiple ways to exit your building, participate in workplace evacuation drills, and consider keeping some emergency supplies at the office. Visit www.ready.gov and click on Ready Business for more information about business preparedness.

Preparedness Tip #11 You should keep enough supplies in your home to meet the needs of you and your family for at least three days. Build an emergency supply kit to take with you in an evacuation. The basics to stock in your portable kit include: water, food, battery-powered radio and flashlight with extra batteries, first aid supplies, change of clothing, blanket or sleeping bag, wrench or pliers, whistle, dust mask, plastic sheeting and duct tape, trash bags, map, a manual can opener for canned food and special items for infants, elderly, the sick or people with disabilities. Keep these items in an easy to carry container such as a covered trash container, a large backpack, or a duffel bag.

Preparedness Tip #12 Preparing for emergencies need not be expensive if you're thinking ahead and buying small quantities at a time. Make a list of some foods that: Keep the list in your purse or wallet and pick up a few items each time you're shopping and/or see a sale until you

have built up a well-stocked supply that can sustain each member of your family for at least three days following an emergency.

Preparedness Tip #13 Take a minute to check your family's first aid kit, and note any depleted items — then, add them to your shopping list. Don't have a first aid kit? Add that to the list or build a kit yourself. Just add the following items to your shopping list and assemble a first aid kit. Consider creating a kit for each vehicle as well: First Aid Kits - Assemble a first aid kit for your home and one for each car. For more information about first aid kits, visit www.redcross.org

Preparedness Tip #14 Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person. Store a minimum of one gallon of water per person per day (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for food preparation and sanitation). Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments and strenuous activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers, and people who are sick will also need more.

Preparedness Tip #15 One of the easiest ways you can prepare for emergencies is to keep some supplies readily available.