

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

# ARE YOU READY?

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT

DISEASE CONTROL | NATURAL DISASTERS | HAZARDOUS MATERIALS  
INJURY PREVENTION | FOOD & WATER SAFETY | COPING WITH DISASTERS



**ADPH**  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS  
Alabama Department of Public Health  
[www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)



**M**any types of disasters can create public health problems--weather, chemical, radiological and biological.

Injury or illness can occur as a direct result of the event, or as a result of people trying to cope with the event.

The most important fact to remember about any disaster is this: by being prepared, you can help prevent or reduce harm to your family, yourself and others.

This booklet was written to give you basic disaster preparedness education. I urge you to take the time to read the information and make your own emergency plans with family, friends, caregivers and co-workers. You should update these plans at least once a year, or

when there is an important change in contacts or other information.

Public Health has provided education for over 125 years in Alabama to help people prevent disease and injury. We have worked with a wide variety of organizations, businesses and individuals on preparedness and prevention activities. This work has saved countless people from disability and loss of life. We ask you to remember that it is vital that you be a part of Alabama's efforts to be ready for whatever disasters may come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "D. E. Williamson". The signature is fluid and cursive, extending to the right with a long horizontal stroke.

Donald E. Williamson, M.D.  
State Health Officer

# BE READY FOR AN EMERGENCY

## Five Important Things to Do

1. Stay informed. Knowing about the hazards that may strike your community and the risks you face could be lifesaving. Learn about emergency alert systems and weather alerts.
2. Learn about basic injury and disease prevention. You can find information in this booklet, on the Internet, from your health care provider and in a variety of other places.
3. Look for the most current information on emergency preparedness. *See the back of this booklet for Web sites and phone numbers.*
4. Create a family preparedness plan and emergency supply kit. Make sure everyone knows or carries emergency contact names and numbers to help find each other if separated.
5. Become familiar with the emergency plans of your community, school, caregivers and workplace.

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# Create a Family Emergency Preparedness Plan

**C**reating an emergency preparedness plan can help your family respond quickly and more efficiently during an emergency.

All family members should help prepare the plan and assist in assembling a basic emergency response kit so that all required individual items will be included. See page 8 for a list of suggested items for the kit.

In creating your plan and kit, take time to consider those with special needs and medical needs in your family. These can include:

- ▶ elderly family members
- ▶ infants and children
- ▶ family members with physical and mental disabilities
- ▶ pets

Reviewing and maintaining your plan is just as important as creating one.

- ▶ Review your plan each year, or during peak disaster seasons, such as hurricane season.
- ▶ Review your needs and update your emergency kit as family needs change.
- ▶ Review and revise all contact information.
- ▶ Review and revise important documents and information.
- ▶ Change stored food and water supplies. Label each item by date stored.

***Create and update your emergency plan with those who will be part of it. Make sure everyone has a copy that's easy to find. Review the plan at least once a year.***

## EVACUATION

If you are planning to evacuate during an emergency, make sure all family members know where the family meeting place is located. Remember:

- ▶ Decide on transportation and route.
- ▶ Allow plenty of time to evacuate.
- ▶ Have your basic emergency kit ready to travel.
- ▶ Lock up your home and unplug small appliances. Call your utility companies to learn how to turn off utilities properly, and ask what is required to have them turned on again. It is best to have learned about this before a disaster.

***It's important to keep an AM-FM radio with extra batteries in a waterproof container to help you stay informed of changes in disaster status.***

## SHELTERING-IN-PLACE

If you are planning to shelter in place during an emergency, use the following tips:

- ▶ Make sure all family members are aware of the sheltering-in-place location

and have an alternate location if you can not get home.

- ▶ Know the location of the emergency supply kit.

## DESIGNATED EMERGENCY SHELTER

If you are planning to go to a designated emergency shelter, remember:

- ▶ Decide beforehand where you will seek shelter and have a designated meeting place.
- ▶ Take your emergency supply kit with you so that your family will have the supplies that they will need at the shelter.
- ▶ Be considerate and helpful to others in the shelter. Practice the basic principles of disease control listed on pages 10-11 as well as following any specific shelter instructions.
- ▶ Register upon arrival at the shelter and establish a designated meeting place within the shelter site for your family.
- ▶ Remain at the shelter until local authorities say it is safe to leave.

# Special Populations and Medical Needs Shelters

**P**eople in special populations and those with medical needs should make plans with health care providers and personal and community helpers for assistance in an emergency event.

## SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Special populations include those with physical and mental disabilities; people without vehicles; non-English speaking persons; people with special dietary needs; infants and children; and the elderly.

Special needs may include:

- ▶ transportation and handicap access
- ▶ communications assistance--this should include receiving warnings, orders to shelter and evacuate, and updates
- ▶ equipment to aid in movement or communications
- ▶ information on food allergies or diets as well as a five-day supply of special foods

## MEDICAL NEEDS SHELTERS

People with medical needs are persons with physical and/or mental conditions requiring limited medical/nursing oversight and who provide their own caregiver, medical supplies, equipment or special dietary supplies. During a disaster, these people should have enough prescription medicine and medical supplies for a minimum of 72 hours.

A limited number of medical needs shelters are available during an event, and space within these shelters is extremely limited.

***Those who may qualify for a medical needs shelter include persons who require minimal to moderate assistance with activities of daily living and are:***

- ▶ patients dependent on wheelchairs
- ▶ patients dependent on electricity to operate medical equipment
- ▶ those requiring assistance with medication injections or simple dressing changes
- ▶ ostomy patients
- ▶ foley/supra-pubic catheter patients
- ▶ peritoneal dialysis patients, if either self-administered or with family assistance without complication
- ▶ managing intravenous therapy at home without complications
- ▶ on oxygen, nebulizer, or sleep apnea therapy that has been stabilized/ maintained at home for 30 or more days
- ▶ hospice patients
- ▶ people living with mild dementia
- ▶ mentally ill people
- ▶ mentally retarded people

# Important Documents and Information

**D**uring an emergency you may be required to produce several documents. The following is a suggested list of documents and information to gather and store in your basic emergency supply kit. Use waterproof containers to store your information.

- Copies of driver’s licenses, immigration papers, work identification badges, social security cards, birth certificates, marriage licenses and other items
- Current photos of family members and pets for identification; make sure medical id bracelets, etc., are up-to-date; talk with your vet about having an identification microchip placed in your animal
- Copies of credit cards with company names and numbers
- Copy of your family preparedness plan and family contact information
- Medical prescriptions, including eyeglasses
- Immunization records
- Wills
- Insurance policies
- Stocks and bonds
- Bank account numbers
- Inventory of valuable household goods – if you can, take photos or videotape

your belongings and e-mail the pictures to a friend or family member for safekeeping.

- Deeds, titles and mortgage papers
- State and local area maps
- Backup of computer files

***Here’s an easy way to have a list of your medicines ready for an emergency: Put a copy of the drug information that comes with your medicines in a plastic bag. Replace the copies every year or when your medicine changes.***

# Assemble an Emergency Supply Kit

**T**o assemble a basic emergency supply kit, place your supplies in waterproof bags and store them in one or two easy-to-carry containers, such as plastic tubs, unused trash cans or duffel bags. Your kit should contain enough supplies for at least five days and should be stored in a designated place, where all family members can locate it.

- Food and drink that does not have to be refrigerated
- Three-day minimum supply of water – one gallon per person, per day
- Portable, battery–powered radio or weather radio, extra batteries
- Several flashlights, extra batteries
- Matches and waterproof container
- Whistle or other noisemaker
- Basic personal hygiene items (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, feminine products and wipes)
- Heavy-duty trash bags
- First aid kit
- Non-electric can opener and basic kitchen accessories (salt, sugar, aluminum foil, plastic storage bags, disposable utensils)
- Bathroom tissue
- Extra clothing, shoes and socks
- Waterproof coats or ponchos, boots
- Towels, blankets, small or inflatable pillows
- Chlorine bleach (pure, unscented)
- Medications
- Small repair kit (screwdriver, hammer, nails, duct tape)
- Pens, pencils, paper, tape, whistle, needles, thread, safety pins
- Important documents (see previous page)
- Other useful items, from dog dishes to books and small games
- A reminder list of things to turn off, cover up, find and include; people to call; and plans for pets

***Your kit should contain enough supplies for at least five days and should be stored in a designated place, where all family members can locate it.***

# Disaster Preparation Checklist

- ❑ **Contacts** – Review your contact list and make sure these individuals know your plans. Choose one or two contacts not in the disaster area where people can call in their locations if separated.
- ❑ **Car** – As soon as you get an official warning that you may have to evacuate for a disaster, fill up your car with gas and check your oil and tires. Make sure you have jumper cables, a jack and a spare tire.
- ❑ **Emergency supply kit** – Check your kit to make sure everything in it is working and up-to-date – weather radio, flashlights, batteries, maps, identification, insurance cards and other items.
- ❑ **Medications and medical equipment** – Pack your prescription medications and other items such as aspirin and antacids in a plastic bag. Make sure you have at least a week’s worth of medicine left. If not, try to get refills. Doublecheck your medications list for you and your family to make sure that any new medicines are on it. Look to see that you have all necessary medical equipment and supplies.
- ❑ **Sanitation-related items** include hand sanitizer, baby wipes, kleenex, toilet tissue, bleach, paper towels, plastic bags, rubber gloves and boots.
- ❑ **Pets** – Be sure to get your pet’s food, medications, feeding and water bowls, and collars with rabies tags and leashes. Call your vet or humane shelter or visit the Web sites in the back of this book for help with pets or other animals in a disaster.
- ❑ **Food and water** – Put food that does not have to be cooked or refrigerated in plastic bags. Include bottled water.
- ❑ **Clothing, bedding, eyeglasses and other personal items** – If flooding may be a problem, put them in plastic bags to keep items dry. Do not forget money, cell phones and phone chargers.
- ❑ **Utilities** – Unplug small appliances. Leave your freezer and refrigerator plugged in unless there may be flooding. Check with your utility company about turning off your utilities properly if you have not already learned how.
- ❑ **Place things inside and outside the home** in as secure a position as possible.

## Things to Remember:

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# Disease Prevention and Control

**S**ome of the most common ways people come in contact with germs are through:

- ▶ Coughs, sneezes, blood, pus, urine, and other body fluids from people and animals
- ▶ Unclean hands
- ▶ Food that has not been properly cleaned or handled; that has come in contact with unclean surfaces or raw meat or juices; or that has not been stored at the right temperature or in protective containers
- ▶ Unpurified water
- ▶ Clothing, dishes, bedding, doorhandles and other objects contaminated with body fluids, dirt, flood water and other potential carriers of disease
- ▶ Animal and insect bites
- ▶ Dirty nails, sharp edges and other things that can pierce or scrape the skin

## DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL ACTIVITIES

### Handwashing and Wound Care

- ▶ Wash your hands before eating, drinking or preparing food.
- ▶ Wash your hands after changing diapers, going to the bathroom or coming in contact with any of the things listed on this page that may carry disease.
- ▶ Keep cuts, scrapes or wounds clean.

If the injured area becomes red, swollen, or hot to touch, or if you develop a fever, see your health care provider.

***During a disease outbreak or an emergency event such as flooding, it's vital to have knowledge of basic principles of disease prevention and control.***

### Food Preparation and Storage

- ▶ Rinse fruits and vegetables well; use soap or disinfectant to clean areas where you have placed or cut raw meat.
- ▶ If food has been cooked or refrigerated, do not eat it if it has been left at room temperature for more than two hours.
- ▶ Do not eat food from cans that are dented, rusted or swollen, even if it smells okay.
- ▶ Do not taste or eat food that smells or looks unusual.
- ▶ For more information on food and water safety, see page 23 of this booklet.

## Coughs and Sneezes

- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze, and throw the tissue in a wastebasket or where it will not contaminate others. If you do not have a tissue, cough into your sleeve. Wash your hands afterwards.

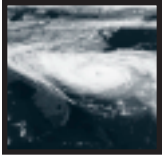
## Immunizations

- ▶ Check with your health care provider to see what immunizations you and your family should take and how often any of them need to be updated. Some immunizations such as those for children are given based on age. Others such as tetanus, flu, pneumonia and hepatitis A and B vaccines may be recommended by a health care provider.
- ▶ Keep a record of immunizations in a resealable plastic bag so a health care provider will know if you need to get or update a particular vaccine.

## Watch for Health Alerts

- ▶ Follow health advisories issued by public health officials, your health care provider or other authorities. This information may alert you to be immunized or to avoid an area where you may come in contact with disease.

You will find additional information on disease prevention and control on the ADPH, CDC and FEMA Web pages listed in the back of this booklet.



# Natural Disasters

## HURRICANES

### Facts to Know

- ▶ Hurricanes are a type of tropical storm that can create tornadoes and strong storm surges with heavy rain.
- ▶ Hurricanes are divided into five categories based on their wind speed, central pressure and damage potential. A hurricane categorized at three or higher is considered a major hurricane, but categories one and two are still extremely dangerous.
- ▶ A hurricane watch is issued when there is a threat of hurricane conditions within 24-36 hours.
- ▶ A hurricane warning is issued when hurricane conditions are expected in 24 hours or less. This usually means that the winds are at least 74 miles per hour or greater.

### Dangers/Threats

- ▶ Hurricanes can produce high, damaging winds and heavy rainfall that can cause flash flooding and landslides.
- ▶ Injury can occur from flying debris, structural damage, power loss and flood and sanitation problems.

### Protective Tips

- ▶ Before a hurricane occurs, learn about safe evacuation routes.
- ▶ Find out about local shelters and make arrangements for pets, as most shelters do not allow them.
- ▶ Protect your windows by either purchasing permanent shutters or having plywood sheets handy that are cut to fit each window. Pre-drill holes to allow for quicker installation during an actual hurricane event.
- ▶ Trim back branches from trees near your home that might cause serious damage.
- ▶ Bring in outdoor objects such as lawn furniture, toys and garden tools. Anchor down those objects that can not be brought inside.
- ▶ Store drinking water and turn refrigerator and freezer on coldest settings, opening only when absolutely necessary to preserve food in case of power loss.

# TORNADOES

## Facts to Know

- ▶ Tornadoes generally occur near the end of a thunderstorm. Before the tornado hits, winds may die down and the air may become very still.
- ▶ Winds generated from a tornado can reach 300 miles per hour and create damage paths ranging from one mile wide to 50 miles long.
- ▶ Tornadoes can last from several seconds to more than an hour, but most tornadoes last less than 10 minutes.
- ▶ A tornado watch is issued when conditions exist for a tornado to possibly occur in the area.
- ▶ A tornado warning is issued when the tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radio.

## Dangers/Threats

- ▶ Tornadoes can destroy many structures and can easily lift up vehicles and toss them.
- ▶ Tornadoes usually bring heavy rain which may cause flooding.
- ▶ In some instances, tornadoes may cause hail that can cause damage to vehicles and other items located outside the home.

## Protective Tips

- ▶ If at home, find a windowless, interior room at the lowest level to wait the tornado out. If in a mobile home, get out and find shelter elsewhere.
- ▶ If outdoors, find the nearest building. If shelter is not available, lie down in a ditch or low-lying area near a strong building.
- ▶ If in a car, get out of the car and find a sturdy building or low-lying area.

*Natural disasters continued on next page*

***A tornado warning is issued when the tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar.***



# Natural Disasters *continued*

## FLOODS

### Facts to Know

- ▶ Floods can develop slowly over a period of days or they can develop quickly within a matter of minutes. Flooding can occur outside a defined river or stream, after heavy rain or when a dam breaks.
- ▶ The National Weather Service and your local media should alert you of impending flooding by issuing flood watches and warnings.
- ▶ When purchasing a home be sure to inquire whether or not you are located in a floodplain area. Remember, flood damage is not covered by a homeowner's insurance policy. To find out more information on flood insurance, call the National Flood Insurance Program at 1-800-427-4661.

### Dangers

- ▶ Flash floods often have a dangerous amount of roaring water that can carry rocks, mud and other debris and can sweep away most objects in their path.
- ▶ The appearance of floodwaters can sometimes be deceiving. As little as one foot of moving water can move most cars off of the road, and just six inches of fast-moving floodwater can sweep a person off his feet.
- ▶ Electrocutation is a serious danger associated with flooding. Downed power lines and electrical wires can often be hidden underneath floodwaters.
- ▶ Stray animals and rodents can cause serious harm during flooding. Snakes are often found in floodwaters.
- ▶ Floodwaters may also carry other hidden dangers such as nails, broken glass, sewage and chemicals from roads, farms and factories.

### Protective Tips

- ▶ Be aware of flood hazards where you live, especially if you live in low-lying areas, near streams of water or downstream from a dam.
- ▶ Elevate the furnace, water heater and electric panel if you live in an area susceptible to flooding.
- ▶ Keep all important documents in waterproof packaging.
- ▶ If possible, construct barriers to prevent floodwater from entering the home.
- ▶ Seal walls and basements with waterproofing compounds.
- ▶ In the event of a flood emergency, move immediately to higher ground. Also, move important items in the home to higher ground.
- ▶ Be prepared to evacuate. If it is necessary to walk from the home and floodwaters are already present, use a stick to check the depth of the water and the firmness of the ground before moving.
- ▶ Do not drive in floodwaters.

# THUNDERSTORMS AND LIGHTNING

## Facts to Know

- ▶ Thunderstorms generally develop during warm, humid conditions.
- ▶ Lightning usually strikes outside of heavy rain and may occur as far as ten miles away from rainfall. Lightning flashes can be seen long before the thunder is heard.
- ▶ The distance you are from a thunderstorm can be measured in miles by counting the number of seconds between a flash of lightning and the next clap of thunder.
- ▶ A severe thunderstorm watch tells you when and where thunderstorms are likely to occur.
- ▶ A severe thunderstorm warning radar indicates immediate danger. It is issued when severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar.

## Dangers/Threats

- ▶ Strong thunderstorms can include tornadoes, strong winds, hail and flash flooding. Thunderstorms can produce heavy rain from 30 minutes to an hour. Storm winds can reach as high as 58 miles an hour causing serious danger from flying objects.

- ▶ Each year in the United States, an average of 300 people are injured and 80 people are killed by being struck by lightning. Lightning strikes can also reach ground and start wildfires.

## Protective Tips

- ▶ Go indoors if you see lightning and stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.
- ▶ If the area surrounding them is safe, help lightning victims immediately. They carry no electrical charge and serious damage can occur if they are not attended to quickly.
- ▶ Secure outside items that could blow away or cause damage.
- ▶ Secure doors and windows to ensure they can handle strong storm winds.
- ▶ Protect cars in covered areas to prevent hail damage.



# Hazardous Materials

## Exposure

- ▶ Exposure to hazardous materials can result from the accidental or deliberate release of a toxic gas, liquid, or solid.
- ▶ Some chemical agents may be odorless and tasteless, or they may have a clear warning odor, such as gas or most house and garden products.
- ▶ You may come into chemical agents through the food supply, air, or by touch.
- ▶ Try to define the impacted area and take immediate action to get upstream, uphill and upwind from that area.
- ▶ If you believe that most or all of your body has been exposed to a chemical, strip immediately and wash thoroughly with soap and water. Remove eyeglasses and contact lenses and ask your health care provider how to clean them properly.

## Symptoms/Signs

- ▶ Difficulty breathing; eye irritation; loss of coordination; nausea; cramps or diarrhea; and/or burning in the nose, throat and lungs and on the skin
- ▶ Presence of many dead animals
- ▶ Listen for warnings to those in the affected area to evacuate, to shelter, or to seek medical attention.

## Protective Tips

- ▶ Seek emergency medical attention if necessary. Keep emergency medical services and poison control numbers on speed dial and by the phone. The back of this book has poison control numbers.
- ▶ Follow house and garden chemical instructions and store them properly.
- ▶ If you live within ten miles of a nuclear power plant, you should receive emergency information materials. If you need copies of the materials, contact the Alabama Department of Public Health, Office of Radiation Control, 334-206-5391.
- ▶ If the air is contaminated, and you are in a car, keep car windows and vents closed and use recirculated air. If you are in a building, close doors and windows and turn off and block all ventilation, such as furnaces, air conditioners, vents, window fans, and spaces under doors to prevent contaminated air from coming inside. Listen for specific instructions from authorities on sealing rooms and the need afterwards to ventilate the room to clear it of any contamination.
- ▶ In an unventilated room, ten square feet of floor space per person should provide adequate ventilation for up to five hours. Depending on the time of year, use blankets or extra clothes for warmth or bottled water for cooling.
- ▶ Watch for information on when it is safe to leave shelter or to return to the area.

## Dirty Bombs

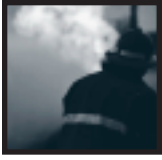
- ▶ A “dirty bomb” or “radiological dispersion device (RDD)”, is the use of common explosives to spread radioactive materials over a targeted area.
  - ▶ The force of the blast will be immediately obvious, but the presence of radiation will not be clearly defined. Trained personnel will have to determine the presence of radiation.
  - ▶ A dirty bomb’s radioactivity would be dispersed in low concentrations in the air, limited to the immediate vicinity. As a precaution, however, people living or working downwind from the explosion may be asked to evacuate.
- ▶ If you believe that you have been exposed to radiation, take off your clothing and seal it in a plastic bag for disposal or testing. Wash yourself thoroughly as soon as possible.
  - ▶ To limit the amount of radiation you are exposed to, remember the following:
    - Shielding – a thick shield between yourself and radioactive materials will allow more of the radiation to be absorbed in the shield and you will be exposed to less.
    - Distance – the farther you are away from the blast and the fallout, the lower your exposure.
    - Time – minimizing time spent being exposed will also reduce your risk.

## Symptoms

- ▶ No immediate symptoms commonly occur as a result of low exposure to radiation, but long-term effects of any amount of exposure could include cancer.
- ▶ High doses of radiation exposure can include radiation sickness and poisoning.

## Protective Tips

- ▶ If outside, immediately cover nose and mouth and move quickly inside to the nearest building.
- ▶ If inside, close windows and doors; turn off air conditioners, heaters and other ventilation systems. See page 16 for protective tips on sheltering.



# Injury Prevention

**N**atural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes and floods as well as explosions and other mass trauma events can result in serious injuries and death. The following information can help you and your family protect yourselves and prevent injuries caused by natural disasters.

## FIRST AID KIT

The majority of injuries that occur in a natural disaster are cuts caused by flying glass and debris and also puncture wounds from exposed nails, metal and glass. Many injuries are not life threatening and do not require immediate medical attention.

Having a first aid kit in your home can help make a difference in an emergency. Items in the kit can help you stop bleeding, prevent infection and aid in decontamination.

## UTILITY HAZARDS

Utilities, including electricity and gas, can be dangerous before, during and after a natural disaster. During a tornado, hurricane or flood, leaking gas lines, damaged or leaking gas propane containers and leaking vehicle gas tanks may explode or ignite. Debris can also become easily ignited, especially if electrical wires are severed. Be aware that pools of water produced during the disaster, and even appliances, can be electrically charged.

### Electricity

- ▶ If your home has sustained flood or water damage, and you can safely get to the main breaker or fuse box, turn off the power.
- ▶ Assume all wires on the ground are electrically charged. This includes cable television feeds.
- ▶ Be aware of and avoid downed power lines. Report downed or damaged power lines to the utility company or emergency services.
- ▶ Remove standing water, wet carpets and furnishings. Air dry your home with good ventilation before restoring power.
- ▶ Make sure that all electrical equipment and appliances are completely dry before you use them.
- ▶ Have a licensed electrician check your home for damage.
- ▶ Look for and replace frayed or cracked extension and appliance cords, loose prongs and plugs.
- ▶ Exposed outlets and wiring could present a fire and life safety hazard.
- ▶ Appliances that produce smoke or sparks should be repaired or replaced.

## Gas Safety

- ▶ Smell and listen for leaky gas connections. If you believe there is a gas leak, immediately leave the house and leave the doors open.
- ▶ Do not use matches or other ignition sources if you believe that there is a gas leak. Any size flame can spark an explosion.
- ▶ Before turning the gas back on, have the gas system checked by a professional.
- ▶ Install a carbon monoxide detector that will alert you to high concentrations of gas in the air.

## CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon monoxide gas is often called the silent killer. It is a colorless, odorless gas that you will not see or smell. Its fumes can quickly overwhelm you indoors or in confined spaces.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is of concern in the home when fuel (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane) are used for heating and cooking. Other sources of carbon monoxide are generators and automobiles.

- ▶ Get a carbon monoxide detector if you rely on fuel for heating and cooking.
- ▶ Place portable generators outside of your home or building and away from any air intake vents.
- ▶ Place gasoline-powered pressure washers outside the building in well-ventilated areas.
- ▶ Never enclose yourself in an automobile in a confined space while the engine is running.

## FIRE HAZARDS

Natural disasters often result in power outages, and people often cause fires using generators, candles, camp stoves and other such items.

It is important to take the time to learn how to prevent the injury and death caused by these ways of getting heat and light. The next page tells more about generator safety and fire safety.

*Fire hazards continued on next page*



# Injury Prevention *continued*

## Generator Safety

- ▶ Follow the manufacturer's instructions and guidelines when using generators.
- ▶ Use a generator or other fuel-powered machines outside the home. Do not operate near open windows or doorways. Carbon monoxide fumes are odorless and can quickly overwhelm you indoors.
- ▶ Use the appropriate size and type power cords to carry the electric load. Overloaded cords can overheat and cause fires.
- ▶ Never run cords under rugs or carpets where heat might build up or damage to the cord may go unnoticed.
- ▶ Always refuel generators outdoors.
- ▶ Never connect generators to another power source such as power lines. This can cause electrocution to unsuspecting utility workers.
- ▶ Before using a generator, make sure you have installed a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm near sleeping areas to alert you in the event of increased levels of CO in your home.
- ▶ Never connect a generator to the home's electrical system. Instead, plug what you want to power directly into the generator.

## Fire Safety

- ▶ Be careful when using candles. Keep the flame away from combustible items such as cloth, hair, gasoline, cleaning fluids, oils and fireworks. Keep on a stable surface away from children and pets.
- ▶ Some smoke alarms may be dependent on your home's electrical service and could be inoperative during a power outage. Check to see if your smoke alarm uses a back-up battery and install a new battery at least once a year.
- ▶ Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home, within ten feet of the family sleeping area.
- ▶ All smoke alarms should be tested monthly and batteries replaced yearly.
- ▶ If there is a fire hydrant near your home, keep it clear of debris for easy access by the fire department.
- ▶ Do not use devices such as portable stoves to dry clothes or furnishings.
- ▶ Never thaw frozen pipes with a blow torch or other open flame. Use hot water or an Underwriter's Laboratory (UL®) such as a hand-held dryer.

## ANIMALS, SNAKES & MOSQUITOES

Following a natural disaster, wild or stray animals and snakes may be disoriented and dangerous. Also, flooding may lead to more mosquitoes, which can carry disease.

- ▶ Be very careful near animals, including dogs, even if they seem tame.
- ▶ Snakes may be hiding in unusual places after flooding. Be cautious. If you are bitten, try to identify the snake so that if it is poisonous, you can be given the correct anti-venom. Do not cut the wound or attempt to suck the venom out.
- ▶ Put all food in plastic and metal containers and remove any dead animals to avoid attracting rats.
- ▶ Wear long sleeves and long pants. Wear insect repellents when outside. Insect repellents that contain DEET are very effective. Drain all standing water left in open containers outside your home.

## EXTREME HEAT OR COLD

During a natural disaster, power outages may occur unexpectedly. This may result in extreme hot or cold temperatures indoors. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are serious heat-related diseases.

Hypothermia is also a serious concern that can occur in cold temperatures. Elderly populations, children and those who are ill are more prone to develop heat and cold stress-related health effects.

### Heat

- ▶ Drink a glass of fluid every 15-20 minutes and at least one gallon each day. Avoid alcohol and caffeine. They both dehydrate the body.
- ▶ Wear light-weight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- ▶ Take frequent cool showers or baths.
- ▶ Work during the cooler hours of the day when possible.
- ▶ If you feel dizzy, weak, or overheated, go to a cool place immediately. Sit or lie down, drink water and wash your face with cool water. If you do not feel better soon, get medical help quickly.
- ▶ Visit older adults at risk at least twice a day and watch for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

### Cold

- ▶ Have adequate food, clothing, shelter and sources of heat.
- ▶ Wear layers of clothing, which help to keep in body heat.
- ▶ Move around. Physical activity raises body temperature.

*Extreme cold continued on next page*

# Injury Prevention *continued*

## *Extreme cold continued*

- ▶ Avoid swimming or wading in water if possible.
- ▶ Ensure older adults have adequate food, clothing, shelter and sources of heat.

## CHAIN SAW INJURIES

The risk of injury from using chain saws increases after a natural disaster, when they are widely used to remove fallen or partially fallen trees and tree branches.

- ▶ Properly sharpen and lubricate chain saw blades.
- ▶ Choose the proper size chain saw to match the job.
- ▶ Wear appropriate protective equipment.
- ▶ Always cut at waist level or below.
- ▶ Bystanders or co-workers should remain at least two tree lengths (150 feet) away.
- ▶ Take extra care in cutting trees or branches that have become bent, twisted, hung up on, or caught under another object during high wind.
- ▶ Operate, adjust and maintain the chain saw according to manufacturer's instructions.

## MASS TRAUMA EVENTS

Mass trauma events such as explosions and fires can cause a variety of serious injuries including burns and brain injury.

- ▶ Thermal burns are caused by contact with flames, hot liquids, hot surfaces or other sources of high heat. Chemical and electrical burns are also possible. For burns, immediate first aid care can be lifesaving.
- ▶ Brain injuries are caused by a blow or jolt to the head. In a mass trauma event, brain injuries can be caused by flying debris or by persons falling and hitting their heads. A blast from an explosion can also cause a brain injury, even when there is no direct contact with an object. The signs of brain injury may be slight and the person may look fine. If you think you or someone else has a brain injury, see a doctor as quickly as possible.



# Food and Water Safety

**D**uring emergency events, water and food supplies can be contaminated. The following are tips for reducing the risk of contamination.

## Water Safety

- ▶ Do not use bottled water unless you are sure that it came from a safe, commercial source.
- ▶ Do not use contaminated water to wash hands, dishes or food. Also, do not brush teeth or make baby formula with contaminated water.
- ▶ Use alcohol-based sanitizers to wash hands if clean water and soap are not available.
- ▶ Boiling water is the preferred method to kill harmful bacteria and parasites. Most organisms will be killed by bringing water to a boil for one minute.
- ▶ Water can be treated with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets, or unscented household chlorine bleach. Please note that these treatments are only effective for killing bacteria.
- ▶ If using chlorine bleach, add 1/8 teaspoon of bleach per gallon of water if the water is clear. If the water is cloudy, add 1/4 teaspoon of bleach per gallon. Mix the solution completely and let stand for about 30 minutes before use. If the water does not smell slightly of bleach, then discard it and find another source of water.

## Food Safety

- ▶ Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with contaminated water.
- ▶ If it is possible that the water may be contaminated, do not use powdered baby formulas that must be prepared with water.
- ▶ Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Refrigerators will keep foods cool for approximately four hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours if it is unopened.
- ▶ “When in doubt, throw it out.” If food has been cooked or refrigerated, do not eat it if it has been left at room temperature for more than two hours. Do not eat any food that has an unusual smell, color, or texture. Never taste food to determine if it is safe!
- ▶ Thawed food may be eaten if it is “refrigerator cold.” It may also be re-frozen if ice crystals are present.
- ▶ Cook food at 160° F and reheat at 165° F.

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Alabama Department of Public Health

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# Coping with Disasters

**T**raumatic stress reactions often occur as a result of traumatic events. These reactions are natural and may occur immediately or weeks or months after an event. People of any age may experience traumatic stress reactions which can lead to emotional, physical, cognitive and interpersonal effects.

## Emotional Effects

- ▶ Shock
- ▶ Anger
- ▶ Despair
- ▶ Emotional numbing
- ▶ Terror
- ▶ Guilt
- ▶ Grief or sadness
- ▶ Irritability
- ▶ Helplessness
- ▶ Loss of pleasure derived from regular activities
- ▶ Dissociation (having “dreamlike,” “tunnel vision,” “spacey” or “automatic pilot” feelings)

## Physical Effects

The physical effects caused by a disaster may be similar to the physical effects resulting from acute anxiety. They include:

- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Sleep disturbance
- ▶ Increased tension
- ▶ Body aches
- ▶ Impaired immune response
- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Stomach problems
- ▶ Decreased appetite
- ▶ Decreased sex drive
- ▶ Feelings of anxiousness

***Talk with others and seek information on traumatic stress reactions to help work through your feelings.***

## Cognitive Effects

- ▶ Loss of concentration
- ▶ Decreased decision-making ability
- ▶ Memory loss
- ▶ Disbelief
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Decreased self-esteem
- ▶ Increased dependence on others
- ▶ Self-blame
- ▶ Intrusive thoughts and memories
- ▶ Worry

## Interpersonal Effects

- ▶ Social withdrawal
- ▶ Increased conflict within relationships
- ▶ Employment problems
- ▶ School difficulties

## Ways to Cope

The following are some ideas about how to deal with the stress and anxiety caused by disasters.

- ▶ Traumatic stress reactions can happen to anyone. They are not signs of weakness. You are not “crazy.” Most signs of stress are normal reactions to an abnormal event and diminish with time.

- ▶ Get plenty of rest.
- ▶ Exercise regularly.
- ▶ Eat balanced meals.
- ▶ Talk with others and share your feelings with those you can trust.
- ▶ Sometimes a different approach is needed to help people cope with their feelings. Young children often have misinformation that you can correct. You can use puppets to help them talk, and ask them to draw pictures to help reveal their feelings. Teenagers and some adults may pretend that things do not bother them, and some people are not “talkers.” These people may more easily talk to someone they especially admire. It may help to leave out reading or video materials that they can look at privately for help on the specific event or on the type of coping needed to deal with it.
- ▶ Avoid using alcohol or self-prescribing medication to relieve stress and anxiety. See a health care provider or a professional counselor to find ways to help you cope.
- ▶ Maintain your usual routine, but give yourself some breaks.
- ▶ Do things you enjoy.



Alabama Department of Public Health

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# Alabama Department of Public Health Emergency Preparedness Teams

## Center for Emergency Preparedness

- ▶ Manages the Health Department's assessment; planning and response to acts of bioterrorism; other outbreaks of infectious disease; and public health threats and emergencies such as meteorological, geological, chemical, radiological and industrial disasters.

## Alabama Health Alert Network (HAN)

- ▶ Improves communication links between federal, state and local public health agencies in the event of possible communicable disease outbreak, natural disaster or terrorist event.

## Risk Communications

- ▶ Provides effective communications to Alabama citizens about public health risks to assist them in protecting themselves during natural and terrorist events.

## Emergency Preparedness Teams (Area)

- ▶ Provides emergency preparedness support locally for Alabama's 11 public health areas. Efforts include providing emergency communications plans and responding to local events and detecting and monitoring the occurrence of disease.

## Strategic National Stockpile Team (SNS)

- ▶ Determines the supplies and medicines needed in the event of an emergency and requests those medicines from the federal government. Once the medicine has arrived at the secure facility, the team works to dispense the medicine throughout the state. The team consists of ADPH personnel and volunteers including pharmacists, nurses and social workers.

## Emergency Medical Services

- ▶ Provides regulatory oversight for the education, certification, credentialing and licensure of all EMS providers and personnel to ensure that a reliable and consistent level of medical care is provided on all emergency responses involving the citizens of Alabama.

## Bureau of Clinical Laboratories

- ▶ Performs a variety of services including testing for diseases of public health concern and collecting and analyzing samples for unknown substances and powders.

## Immunization Program

- ▶ Conducts surveillance and investigation of diseases that can be prevented by vaccination. Provides vaccine using state and federal funds and participates in the Vaccines for Children Program (VFC), a federal entitlement program that provides vaccine at no cost to children 0 to 18 years of age who are on Medicaid, uninsured, underinsured or are American Indian or Alaskan native.

## Environmental Services Program

- ▶ Ensures the safety of Alabamians by regulating food, milk, lodging, seafood, soil and onsite sewage, indoor air quality/lead and solid waste.

## Zoonoses Program

- ▶ Protects Alabamians by monitoring, controlling and preventing diseases transmitted from animals to humans.

# Additional Resources

## WEB SITES

- ▶ [www.aoa.dhhs.gov](http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov)  
US Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging information for disaster planning
- ▶ [www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)  
Alabama Department of Public Health
- ▶ [www.alabama.gov](http://www.alabama.gov)  
State of Alabama
- ▶ [www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)  
American Humane Association
- ▶ [www.avma.org/disaster](http://www.avma.org/disaster)  
American Veterinary Medical Association
- ▶ [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov)  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- ▶ [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)  
Federal Emergency Management Agency
- ▶ [www.nhc.noaa.gov](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov)  
National Hurricane Center
- ▶ [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)  
National Association of School Psychologists
- ▶ [www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov)  
National Weather Service
- ▶ [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- ▶ [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)  
American Red Cross
- ▶ [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)  
U.S. Fire Administration

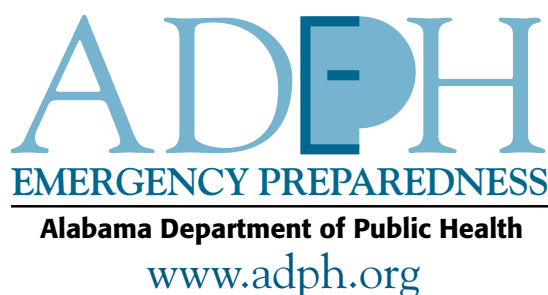
- ▶ [www.uab.edu/cdp](http://www.uab.edu/cdp)  
University of Alabama at Birmingham's Center for Emergency Care and Disaster Preparedness

## PHONE NUMBERS

- ▶ CDC Emergency Response  
1-800-232-4636
- ▶ FEMA  
1-800-621-FEMA
- ▶ Alabama Poison Center  
1-800-462-0800
- ▶ American Association of Poison Control  
1-800-222-1222
- ▶ Regional Poison Control Center  
1-800-292-6678

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Montgomery, AL 36104  
334/206-5950  
334/206-5309



## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

### FAMILY

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Blood Type \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work/School Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Pager \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Pager \_\_\_\_\_

### FRIENDS/NEIGHBORS

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work/School Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Pager \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work/School Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Pager \_\_\_\_\_

### OUT-OF-TOWN CONTACTS

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work/School Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Pager \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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### OTHER

County Health Dept. \_\_\_\_\_  
County Emergency Management \_\_\_\_\_  
Local Red Cross \_\_\_\_\_  
Local Shelters \_\_\_\_\_  
Police \_\_\_\_\_  
Fire \_\_\_\_\_  
Poison Control Center \_\_\_\_\_

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