

Preparing for Disasters Can Keep You Safe

September is National Preparedness Month

As fall begins, the Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management wants to remind you that September is “National Preparedness Month.” The goal of National Preparedness Month is to educate the public about how to prepare for any and all emergencies, including natural disasters, public health emergencies, and terrorist attacks.

The Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management and emergency management agencies across the country are encouraging everyone to take a few basic steps to better prepare themselves for emergencies and disasters. During a disaster, help may not be available for the first 72-hours after an emergency event. It is important that you and your family know what to do before, during, and after a disaster.

Make sure to follow four basic preparedness steps:

- Stay informed
- Build a Kit
- Make a Plan
- Get Involved

Stay Informed:

Being prepared means staying informed; learn about the possible hazards that can affect your area and the types of warning systems that may be in place in your community. Check all types of media — websites, social media, newspapers, radio, TV, mobile and land phones — for global, national and local information. During an emergency, your local emergency management office will give you information on such things as open shelters and evacuation orders.

Build a Kit:

If disaster strikes your community, you might not have access to food, water or electricity for some time. By taking time now to prepare emergency water supplies, food supplies and a disaster supplies kit, you can provide for your entire family. Even though it is unlikely that an emergency would cut off your food supplies for two weeks, consider maintaining a supply that will last that long.

You may not need to go out and buy foods to prepare an emergency food supply. You can use canned goods, dry mixes and other staples on your cupboard shelves.

Having an ample supply of clean water is a top priority in an emergency. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts (a half gallon) of water each day. You will also need water for food preparation and hygiene. Store at least an additional half-gallon per person per day for this. Store at least a 30-day supply and consider storing a two-week supply of water for each member of your family.

If you are unable to store this much, store as much as you can. You can reduce the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity and staying cool. And don't forget to take your pets and service animals into account.

Keep emergency supplies in an easy-to-carry container and keep a kit in each of the places where you spend most of your time, including your Home, Office, School, and Vehicle.

Make a Plan:

Make plans with your family and friends in case you're not together during an emergency. Discuss how you'll contact each other, where you'll meet and what you'll do in different situations.

Evacuations are more common than many people realize. Fires and floods cause evacuations most frequently across the U.S. and transportation accidents involving hazardous materials can happen almost anywhere. If you are told to evacuate, have a plan on where you will go. Make sure you have several destinations in different directions.

Plan how you will assemble your family and supplies and anticipate where you will go for different situations. Choose several destinations in different directions so you have options in an emergency and know the evacuation routes to get to those destinations. If you do not have a car, know public transportation options. If you evacuate your home, **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND!** Keep in mind that what's best for you is typically what's best for your animals.

Get Involved:

Look into taking first-aid courses and any emergency response training you see offered to the public, and volunteer to support your local community organizations such as the Salvation Army, United Way and the Red Cross. You can also contact the Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management to become involved in your local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Below are some additional tips for keeping your family safe during an emergency:

- **Identify an Out-of-Town Contact** – In an emergency it might be easier to make a phone call out of town so designate a contact out-of-town to take roll and relay information for your family
- **Know School and Work Plans** – Learn about the emergency plans at your workplace and at your child's school so when an emergency happens, you are confident that you and your family members are safe.
- **Identify Meeting Places** – Choose two places to meet with family members in case you are not together when a disaster strikes: one in the neighborhood and one outside of the neighborhood so you can reunite with your family in a timely manner.

For more information on planning for disasters go to www.ready.gov or call the Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management at 216-443-5700.