

**PREPAREDNESS TOOLKIT FOR BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED
RESIDENTS**



**State of Florida
Department of Health
Division of Disease Control and Health Protection
Bureau of Environmental Health- Preparedness**

and

**State of Florida
Department of Education
Division of Blind Services**



BEFORE A DISASTER STRIKES, BE PREPARED!

What would you do after a major disaster, such as a hurricane or a tornado, and you had no water, no food, no electricity, no transportation, and no telephone? After a major disaster, emergency responders may not be able to reach everyone right away. In some cases it may take three or more days for help to arrive. Having a disaster plan will help to ensure you and your families are safe and more comfortable for at least three to seven days before help may arrive. To better prepare for a disaster, consider the following:

Determine your special needs, such as transportation, or medications you may need to take. If using a guide dog, do not forget to determine your pet care needs. Check your local county dates for shelter registration period

Have cash on hand- Banks or ATMs may not be open or available to withdraw cash after a disaster

Include outside family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers in your emergency plans

Make transportation arrangements with outside family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers and your local emergency management office

Ask your local emergency manager's office about evacuation routes, special needs shelters, or any facilities, local schools, being used as evacuation shelters. Check your local county dates for registration periods.

As most shelters do not allow animals, be sure to make arrangements for your pet's care in case you and your family need to evacuate. Call your local animal shelters and verify with them evacuation options for your pets

Check your insurance coverage- flood damage is not usually covered by homeowner's insurance

If possible, make an inventory of your possessions to help with insurance claims in case of loss or damage to your home

Post all emergency telephone numbers by your telephones and make sure your family members, especially children, know how, and when to call 9-1-1

IF STAYING HOME:

Gather your disaster supplies. Have enough food and water for each member of your family for 3 to 7 days.

Make sure there are enough battery supplies for your battery-powered radio for important news, weather reports, and instructions from local authorities. Stay alert to storm advisories or local news.

Leave your refrigerator and freezer plugged in unless there is a risk for flooding. Then, make sure you unplug all electrical equipment and small appliances such as toaster, microwave, toaster oven, etc.

Tell your family what room has been designated the safe room in your home. A safe room is one without windows or glass doors and is surrounded by other walls, such as a bathroom or closet.

Make your home more disaster resistant; board windows and glass doors, anchor or move loose outdoor objects inside, such as lawn chairs, bicycles, yard tools, etc.

If you live in a mobile home, and have been ordered to evacuate, follow your county's or city's evacuation orders. Contact your local emergency management office to verify evacuations sites as well as any special needs shelters that may have opened.

DO NOT USE CANDLES OR OPEN FLAMES FOR LIGHT SOURCES.

NEVER use a generator indoors. This includes garages, crawl spaces and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even when you think there is enough ventilation.

DO NOT burn charcoal or gas grills inside your home, garages, basements, crawl spaces, enclosed, or partially enclosed, areas of your home.

If you are using a NOAA weather radio, remember to replace its battery every 6 months, just as you do with your smoke detectors.

IF EVACUATING:

Gather your family and your disaster supplies and evacuate if told to do so.

Put your important documents inside a waterproof container and take them with you. Important documents include insurance papers, medical records, bank account numbers, Social Security cards, prescriptions, passports, etc.

If your pets will be evacuating with you, please consider the following:

Have proper identification including immunization records, proper identification and rabies tag

A leash, collar and muzzle

Pet's veterinary contact information

Any medications your pet may need

Enough pet food and water for 3 to 7 days including feeding bowls

A carrier or a cage large enough to let your pet stand and turn around in it

If you and your family are evacuating to a shelter, check in advance if the shelter is an established pet shelter, or if any animal control shelters are available. Pet shelters fill up fast, so check ahead on their availability.

Before evacuating, and, if you have time, consider these additional steps:

Close and lock doors and windows

Unplug electrical equipment and small appliances, such as radios, televisions, toasters and microwaves. Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding.

Let relatives (including those out of town), neighbors and friends know where you are going.

Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather or being stuck in traffic.

DISASTER SUPPLY KIT

A disaster supply kit should have the basic emergency supply items you and your family would probably need during and after a disaster. Consider the following items when making your disaster supply kit:

Water – at least one gallon of water per day per person for 3 to 7 days for drinking and sanitation.

Food – 3 to 7 days of non-perishable, packaged or canned foods. Include foods and beverages for infants, elders, and those on special diets.

Non-electric can opener, paper plates, plastic cups, plastic utensils, garbage bags with plastic ties, kitchen accessories and cooking utensils

Portable, battery-powered radio or hand-crank radio, and extra batteries, so you can receive important news, weather reports and instructions from local authorities.

Old fashion cord telephone (an extra cord can also be stored in the kit)

Flashlights, extra batteries, and glow sticks.

Whistle or air horn and a white distress flag are also recommended.

First aid kit and manual

Hand Sanitizers

Special needs items such as prescription medications, eye glasses, contact lens solution, magnifying glasses, hearing aid and extra batteries, etc.

Personal sanitation and hygiene items (hand sanitizer, deodorant, toothpaste and toothbrush, flushable wipes and toilet paper)

Infant and toddler needs – diapers, wipes, formula, bottles, pacifiers, etc.

Toys, games, coloring books and crayons, battery powered electronic devices with extra batteries

Talking food thermometer

Include these items in your disaster supply kit in case of an evacuation:

Phone chargers

Sleeping bags, pillows, sheets, blankets, etc.

Important documents in a waterproof container or plastic Ziploc bag

Photocopies of identification and credit cards

Seasonal items such as sunscreen lotion (SPF15 or greater), hat or cap, rain gear, and sturdy shoes with rubber soles

Cash and coins

Pet supplies, including identification, immunization records, muzzle and leash, medications, etc.

Special needs items, such as pet or guide dog supplies, a wheel chair, extra set of eyeglasses, or extra hearing aid equipment

Ready to Eat: NO Cook Foods Considerations Checklist

Meals Ready to Eat (MREs): heat sensitive

Energy bars (high calorie)

Sugar or sugar substitute

Salt and Pepper

Whole grain cereals

Almonds and other nuts (if no food allergies)

Canned ready to eat foods

Canned pasta

Peanut butter (if no food allergies)

Trail Mix (if no food allergies)

Jerky

Dried fruit

Canned fruit

Applesauce/fruit cups

Fruit leather

Rice cakes

Crackers/Triscuits/ Salt-free Crackers

Hard candies

Tuna packs

Cookies

Cheese spread in jars

Pudding cups

Breakfast bars

Sunflower seeds

Potable drinking water (1 gallon per person per day- 3 to 7 day supply)

Shelf-stable juice (boxes or cans)

Gatorade mix

Cocoa mix

Instant coffee

Packets of dry milk

Shelf stable milk/almond milk/soy milk

Utensils:

Plastic utensils

Metal Cup

Metal Pans

Can Opener

Talking Food Thermometer

PRECAUTIONS FOR FOOD SAFETY

The risk of food poisoning is heightened when refrigerators and ovens are inoperable. Throw away any food that has been at room temperature for two or more hours, and any food with an unusual odor, or texture.

Take the following precautions to ensure your food is safe:

- Always keep a talking food thermometer in your refrigerator. The temperature inside should read 41 degrees or lower.
- A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled. Pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to insure a constant cold temperature. If available, 25 pounds of dry ice will keep a ten-cubic-foot freezer below freezing for 3-4 days.
- Thawed food can usually be eaten if it is still "refrigerator cold."
- Eggs and other foods need to be stored in 41 degrees Fahrenheit (F) or slightly below. Do not eat foods that may have spoiled.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled and cooled or disinfected. Hands should be washed before preparing or eating food and after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, handling uncooked food, playing with a pet, handling garbage, tending to someone who is sick or injured, blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- Do not cross-contaminate. This happens when harmful bacteria is transferred to food from other foods, cutting boards or utensils.
- Use a talking food thermometer just for meat products to insure that food reaches a safe internal temperature:
 - Hamburgers should be cooked to 155 degrees Fahrenheit
 - All Poultry: 165 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Roasts, steaks and other large cuts of beef: 145 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Fish should be cooked to 145 F, until the meat flakes easily
 - Eggs: 145 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Pork: 145 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Stuffing with meats or eggs: 165 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Casseroles with meats or eggs: 165 degrees Fahrenheit
- Use sanitized food and water bowls for your pets. Be sure that pets do not drink from flood-contaminated surfaces.

REMEMBER: When in doubt, throw it out!

CONSIDERATIONS FOR LOSS OF POWER

Before there is a loss of power in the event of a disaster, you should consider the following:

Do you rely on battery powered equipment (hearing aids, alarms, phone alerts). If yes, do you have spare batteries for them?

Can you get replacement batteries easily or do they have to be special ordered?

Do you, or does anyone in your family, use any electrical equipment that is critical to your, or their, well-being? Is there a manual or battery operated substitute that you can use?

What will happen if you lose power?

Suggestions to Better Prepare:

1. Assemble essential supplies such as:
 - Flashlight (s)
 - Batteries (for flashlights, radios, alarms and detectors)
 - Portable Radio(s) with extra batteries
 - Standard old fashion cord telephone
 - Clean Plastic containers to fill with water to freeze (as water expands when it freezes, it's important to leave room inside the container for the water to expand: do not fill to top!)
 - Stock up on Ready to Eat food that DOES NOT require refrigeration
 - Power converter: for laptop, cell phone that may be operated from the cigarette lighter of a vehicle
 - Talking food thermometer with extra batteries

CONSIDERATIONS FOR LOSS OF POWER- Specific Information for Persons with Disabilities:

- Do you have electrical back-up for medical equipment you need?
- If you, or a family member, require the use of a battery-operated wheelchair, or scooter, or other power-dependent type of equipment, contact your local utility company to inform them that your household has power-dependent residents

- An extra battery for the motorized equipment. A car battery can also be used, but may not last as long
 - Manual wheelchair(s) for back-up
 - Can these fit through the hallways, or in case of, down the stairs?
 - If you are visually impaired, or blind, store a talking or Braille clock, or a large-print clock with extra batteries
 - If you are hearing impaired, or deaf, or have family members who are, consider having a portable battery-operated television set
2. Suggestions to Better Prepare: Things to Do
- Turn on your battery operated, or crank, radio so that you are aware of the latest news from your emergency managers: water safety, any boil water notices, etc.
 - Leave a radio turned on so you know when the power returns
 - Leave refrigerator and freezer doors closed so that food and/or medicine stay as cold as possible.
 - If you, or a family member, take medication that requires refrigeration, ensure that those medications are kept in a refrigerator that will not be opened or used frequently. Most medications can be kept in a closed refrigerator for several hours without a problem.
 - How long can you keep your medicine without regular power?
 - If the power is out longer than two hours, check food temperatures in the refrigerator and throw away food that has a temperature higher than 40 °F
3. You Lost Power? What NOT to DO:
- DO NOT USE CANDLES DURING A POWER OUTAGE
 - NEVER use a generator, gas or charcoal grill, or similar items, inside the home even when you feel there is enough ventilation – these items should only be used outdoors.
 - Use the phone only for emergency calls. Do NOT call 9-1-1 for information. USE ONLY to report a life threatening emergency

If you or anyone in your household requires a respirator or other electric-powered medical equipment, make prior arrangements with your physician or check with the oxygen supplier(s) about emergency plans for you. Be sure to have electrical back-up for any medical equipment that you are dependent on.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT:

After a major disaster or emergency, visually impaired individuals may lose the auditory cues they usually rely on after a major disaster. In the case of an evacuation, individuals assisting visually impaired persons' should mark clear the persons' items as assistive devices and not just "baggage". Emergency supplies, or kits, should be marked with large print, fluorescent tape or Braille.

If a household has a family member that has some vision impairments, place security lights in each room to light paths of travel for that person. These lights plug into electrical wall outlets and light up automatically if there is a loss of power. They will, depending on type, continue to operate automatically for 1 to 6 hours and can be turned off manually and used as a short-lasting flashlight.

In addition, to the above, here are some extra suggestions:

- Special Items such as extra folding mobility canes-keep in strategic, consistent and secured locations so individuals can easily access them in case of an emergency
- Extra pair of dark glasses (if medically required)
- Tape recorder & extra batteries
- Battery operated or crank operated radio
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Plastic emergency whistle
- Portable assistive devices: magnifiers, communication devices, etc.
- Work gloves and sturdy shoes
- Medications: prescription and Over the Counter (OTC)

Service/Companion Animals:

Service or companion animals may become confused or frightened during and after a disaster: keep them confined or securely leashed or harnessed. A leash/harness is an important item for managing a nervous or upset animal. Be prepared to use alternative ways to negotiate its environment.

Create an animal supply kit and Take-Along-Bag (if necessary):

For each animal:

- Two-week supply of water (plastic gallon jugs) and food
- **Non-spill food and water dishes**
- Manual can opener and spoons
- **Animal/Service Animal identification information, veterinary records and proof of ownership**
- **Cage/carrier (labeled with: pet's name, owner's name, address and phone number and an emergency name and phone number)**
- **Favorite toys, treats, blankets**
- Leash, collar, harness, muzzle, stakes and tie downs
- **Litter, litter pan, litter scoop**
- Newspaper (for bedding or litter)
- **Paper towels and plastic baggies**
- First aid kit and manual (call your vet)

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING PREVENTION

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odorless, and tasteless gas that is highly poisonous. Depending on the level of exposure, CO may cause fatigue, weakness, chest pains for those with heart disease, shortness of breath upon exertion, nausea, vomiting, headaches, confusion, lack of coordination, impaired vision, loss of consciousness, and in severe cases, death. Poisonings from CO are often caused by faulty furnaces, by improperly operating portable generators, or by using other types of fuel-burning devices indoors.

To avoid carbon monoxide (CO) exposure, take the following precautions with gas-powered appliances and charcoal or gas grills:

- Do not burn charcoal or gas grills inside a house, garage, vehicle, tent or fireplace.
- NEVER use a generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent CO build-up in the home.
- ALWAYS locate the unit outdoors on a dry surface, away from doors, windows, vents, and air conditioning equipment that could allow CO to come indoors. Follow the instructions that come with your generator.
- Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up in your home, according to the manufacturer's installation instructions. The CO alarms should be certified to the requirements of the latest safety standards for CO alarms (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, or CSA 6.19.01).
- Test your CO alarms frequently and replace dead batteries.
- Remember that you cannot see or smell CO and portable generators can produce high levels of CO very quickly.
- If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air RIGHT AWAY. DO NOT DELAY.
- If you have a poisoning emergency, call your nearest Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 immediately.

RISKS TO WATER SUPPLY AFTER A DISASTER

If your house has a private water well, take the following precautions:

- Make sure that water is boiled (at a rolling boil) for at least one minute before using for drinking, brushing teeth, washing food, cooking, or washing dishes. REMEMBER: Water boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit (F), or 100 degrees Celsius (C)
- If boiling water is not possible, disinfect water by adding 8 drops (about 1/8 teaspoon – this would form a puddle about the size of a dime) of plain, unscented household bleach (4 to 6 percent active ingredient) per gallon of water, and then let it stand for 30 minutes. The disinfection procedure can be repeated once.
- Use a container that has a cap or cover for disinfecting and storing water to be used for drinking. This will prevent contamination.
- Use bottled water, especially for mixing baby formula.
- If your well has been flooded, it needs to be tested and disinfected after the storm passes and the floodwaters leave. If you have questions about testing contact your local county health department.

Disinfecting your well:

It is important to disinfect both the drinking water well and plumbing with 4 to 6 percent chlorine, non-scented household bleach to ensure that all infectious agents are killed. If your well was flooded, boiling the water is the safest action, since bleach disinfection does not kill certain parasites. If you have water treatment devices, remove all membranes, cartridges and filters and replace them after the chlorination process is completed.

The amount of chlorine and the length of time you allow it to remain in the system are equally important. Common unscented laundry bleach can be used effectively as a chlorine disinfectant.

The only way to know that the water in your well is safe to drink is to have it tested. Although chlorine bleach is effective against microorganisms, it will not remove chemical contamination that may have gotten into your well. Contact your local county health department for sampling instructions to get your water tested. There may be a cost for the testing.

RISKS TO WATER SUPPLY AFTER A DISASTER

If you receive your water from a public water supply, listen to public service announcements about the safety of the public water supply. In an area hit by a disaster, storm damage or flooding can taint water lines.

Here are some general rules concerning water for drinking and cooking:

- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food or make ice
- If you use bottled water, know where it is coming from. Otherwise, water should be boiled or treated before use. Drink only bottled, boiled or treated water until your water supply is tested and deemed safe to use
- Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites. Bringing water to a rolling boil for 1 minute will kill infectious germs. Remember: Water boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit (F), or 100 degrees Celsius (C)

What if you have already consumed potentially contaminated water?

Even if someone has consumed potentially contaminated water from either a public water system or a private well before they were aware of the boil water advisory, the likelihood of becoming ill is low. However, anyone experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, with or without fever, should seek medical attention.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about this preparedness guide, please contact:

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