

Why do I need to prepare?

Each day brings new stories of people whose lives have been turned upside down. The disaster may be a natural occurrence, such as a tornado, or man-made, such as civil unrest. Either way, the destruction experienced by victims can be devastating. **Although we may not be able to avoid a disaster, we can be prepared for one.**

So, how can I be prepared?

- Find out what kind of disasters are common where you live. For example, people near the coast are vulnerable to hurricanes and tsunamis, while wildfires tend to be a danger in rural communities. Make sure your family's insurance is adequate.
- Make sure each family member knows what to do in each type of disaster. Have a plan for where and how to meet if separated. Choose an out-of-state relative or friend to check in with.
- Create a general disaster kit with the following:
 - Battery-operated radio and flashlight
 - Plenty of batteries
 - Food and water for at least a few days
 - Non-electric can opener
 - First aid kit and essential medicines
 - Extra clothing and blankets
 - Fire extinguisher and matches
 - Small toolkit, rope, and duct tape
- If you live in an area where winter storms occur, add the following to your disaster kit:
 - Rock salt to melt ice, and sand for traction when driving
 - Snow shovel to clear walkways
 - A way to stay warm if power is lost, such as a generator
- Know the difference between a "Watch" and a "Warning." A "Watch" means a storm *may* occur. A "Warning" means a storm *is or will be* occurring nearby.
- Make sure that your home is up to code, especially electrical wiring and smoke detectors. If you live in an area prone to wildfires, make sure to follow local building codes and use fire-resistant materials.