



**Be ready to do your best  
when it matters most.**

# **TEN STEPS TO DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

City of Sacramento  
Office of Emergency Services

Sacramento Area Chapter  
American Red Cross

# Be Prepared

What would you do if a major fire, flood, earthquake, or toxic spill occurred near where you live or work? How would you protect yourself and your family until emergency workers arrived? If you had 15 minutes to evacuate, what would you take? Where would you go? What if you were isolated at home? Could you survive at least 3 days without heat, power, running water, or telephone services, and with only the supplies you have on hand? What if a disaster struck while you were at work? What if a child or elderly member of your family was home alone? What if you were separated from your family? How would you find them?

Everyone needs to think about these things before a disaster occurs. Coping with a disaster is much more difficult and dangerous if you're not prepared. Some people don't take disaster preparedness seriously because they don't think it will ever happen to them. If it does, they assume there's nothing they can do about it. The truth is, disasters can happen any time, anywhere. The better prepared you are, the better off you'll be.

Disaster preparedness isn't just a case of preparing for the worst, it's being prepared to do your best when it matters most.

We can't always prevent disasters, but there are 10 simple steps everyone can take to help protect themselves, their families, and their property in a disaster.

## **1. Keep Emergency Supplies on Hand**

Keep emergency supplies at home, at work, and in your car. Ideally you should have enough supplies to last from 3 days to 2 weeks. Even if a disaster passes quickly you may not be able to get to stores and gas stations. Or, supplies may be extremely limited because suppliers are unable to deliver goods and services.

## **2. Learn First Aid**

First aid can save lives and reduce suffering in many everyday medical emergencies. In a disaster, first aid skills are especially important. You may not be able to rely on the telephone to summon medical help. Damaged roadways may prevent you from reaching help and prevent medical help from reaching you. Be prepared - learn first aid. For information about first aid classes contact the Red Cross or a community college near you.

## **3. Learn How to Turn Off Your Utilities**

During a disaster if you have a broken gas line, water line or serious electrical problem, you may need to quickly turn off the main service to your home in order to prevent injuries and property

damage. Find your main electric fuse box or circuit breaker, water service main, and natural gas main, and learn how to turn these utility services off. Make sure all family members capable of turning utilities off know how!

There are instructions for turning off your gas and electricity in the *First Aid and Survival Guide* in the front of the Telephone Directory White Pages. Don't shut your utilities off unless you smell gas or unless you are told to do so by officials. If you do turn your service off, don't turn it back on until the lines have been inspected, or until you are told by your utility company that it is safe to turn the service back on. Natural gas service should only be turned on by your utility company. Contact your utility company for more information.

If you have a water meter, the water shutoff valve is located at the meter. If you don't have a meter, look outside for a pipe coming up out of the ground and going into the house. Typically, you can shut off your water by turning the knob on the valve.

#### **4. Make Sure Your Home Is Safe**

During an emergency, what's in your home can help you or hurt you. At least once a year do a top to bottom, attic to basement inspection of your home, and correct any problems you find.

#### **5. Plan Ahead**

Thinking things through before a disaster will save time and reduce panic during an emergency. For example:

- ✓ Have a family evacuation plan, and practice it.
- ✓ Develop a family reunion plan. Get your family together and agree on a meeting place outside your home, in case of a fire. Also agree on a friend or family member outside your area that everyone will call if you're separated during a disaster.
- ✓ Make list of valuable items to take if your home is threatened and you have to evacuate quickly. Let everyone in the family know where the list is kept.
- ✓ Identify places you and other family members can stay if you cannot stay at home, and do not want to stay in an emergency shelter.
- ✓ Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1 for emergency help.
- ✓ If there are latchkey children, elderly, or handicapped people in your household, talk to them about what to do if they are home alone when a disaster strikes. Make sure trusted neighbors know there are people in your household who may need help during an emergency.
- ✓ If you have pets or livestock, think about how you would care for them during an emergency. Because of health regulations, animals are not allowed in emergency shelters. If you can take your animals outside the disaster area you may be able to board them with friends, veterinarians, animal shelters, or boarding facilities. If you drive to a shelter, you may be able to leave your

pet in your car and regularly attend to it. As a last resort, pets can be left with plenty of food and water in a safe place in your house, such as a bathroom or garage.

#### ✓ **At work:**

Make sure you know the location of fire extinguishers, emergency exits, and first aid kits.

#### **6. Check Your Insurance**

Find out now what your insurance does and doesn't cover. Would your insurance policy pay to replace your home and personal property damaged in a fire, flood or earthquake? Would it cover living expenses while your home is repaired or rebuilt? Ask what information your insurance company would need before you could file a claim for your losses. Most insurance companies recommend keeping an up to date inventory of your personal property as a record of what you own, and to help you in making claims.

#### **7. Keep Copies of Important Documents**

After a disaster you may need records for identifications, insurance claims, disaster relief loans or other assistance. Make sure you keep extra copies of important documents in at least 2 different locations.

#### **8. Be Alert to What's Going On Around You**

People sometimes put themselves in great danger because they're unaware of what's going on around them. Being aware of sirens and increasingly dangerous situations such as fires or flooding, will give you more time to take steps to protect yourself, your family and your home.

Sirens are often the first warning of a dangerous situation. When you hear sirens, pay special attention. During an emergency, the city may sound emergency warning sirens (air raid type sirens) located throughout the City. Whenever you hear these sirens turn on the news and listen for emergency instructions and information.

**The emergency broadcast station in our area is KFBK Radio at 1530 on the AM radio dial.**

The sirens are tested the last Friday of every month. Officials may also send emergency vehicles with sirens and loudspeakers through your neighborhood to warn you of a dangerous situation.

### 9. Listen to News and Weather Reports

The City and County work with radio and television stations and newspapers to get emergency warnings and instructions to you as quickly as possible. That's why it's important to regularly follow news, weather, and traffic reports.

### 10. Learn Disaster Survival Skills

Learn how to avoid injury during and after a disaster.

#### Water Tips

To purify drinking water, use any of the following methods:

1. Boil water for 5-10 minutes; or,
2. Add 10 drops of household bleach per gallon of water, mix well, and let stand for 30 minutes. A slight smell or taste of chlorine indicates the water is safe to drink; or,
3. Add tincture of iodine in the same manner as the bleach (described above); or,
4. Use commercial purification tablets and carefully follow the instructions.

If your water supply gets low, remember there is water stored in your hot water tanks, ice cube trays, toilet tanks, or swimming pool. However the water may require purification for drinking.

## Evacuation Checklist

### Before you decide to evacuate:

- ✓ Make sure you know where you're going.
- ✓ Make sure your destination is in a safe area.
- ✓ Make sure roads are passable.
- ✓ Make sure you have enough gasoline to get there.

### If you decide to evacuate:

- ✓ If you have to leave and have nowhere to go, listen to news reports for the location of emergency shelters set up by the Red Cross and the City or County.
- ✓ Take basic emergency supplies with you, such as food, water, blankets, a first aid kit, special medications, cash, important papers, a battery operated radio and flashlight, and extra clothes.
- ✓ Make arrangements for pets.
- ✓ Leave a message indicating where you are going.
- ✓ Lock your house.
- ✓ As you drive, listen to the radio for emergency instruction and information. Beware of loose, dangling, or downed power lines, and dangerous road conditions.

**Add your own notes here:**

# Emergency Supplies

Use these suggestions as a guide in making your own lists of emergency supplies to keep at home, at work, and in your car.

**Radio:** battery operated

**Flashlight:** battery operated, and spare bulbs

**Batteries**

**Sleeping bags or blankets**

**Tent**

**First Aid and Medical Supplies:**

- First aid supplies such as bandages, aspirin, disinfectant, tweezers.
- First aid instructions.
- Medical aides such as eye glasses and dentures.
- Special medications needed by family members.

**Food and Water:**

- Food which doesn't need to be cooked or refrigerated, and doesn't need water added.
- Drinking water: one gallon per person per day and water for animals.
- Hand operated can and bottle opener.

**Special supplies for babies, pets and others:**

- Baby supplies such as formula and diapers.
- Pet supplies such as food, medication, leashes, pet carriers, and a bowl.
- Special supplies for others.

**Personal hygiene supplies:**

Supplies such as soap, shampoo, a sponge, towels, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, toilet paper, razor, pre-moistened towelettes, comb, sanitary napkins.

**Clothes and sturdy shoes** for every family member.

**Safety equipment** such as fire extinguishers.

**Tools:**

Tools such as wrenches to turn off utilities, an axe, shovel, saw, work gloves, broom, ladder, waterproof tarp, screwdriver, pliers, hammer, ½" rope, bailing wire, knife, plastic tape, plywood, plastic sheeting, garden hose for siphoning or firefighting, pen and paper.

**Plastic Bags:**

Various size plastic bags including large sturdy garbage bags for trash, to store or move household supplies, or to use as a waterproof tarp or ground cloth.

**Outdoor cooking equipment and supplies:**

Supplies such as a barbecue and fuel (never use this equipment indoors), matches, pots and pans, knife, disposable dishes, cups, utensils, paper towels.

**Clock or watch:** battery operated

**Cash**

**Disinfectants:**

- Liquid bleach
- Powdered chlorinated lime to add to sewage to deodorize, disinfect and repel insects.

**Gasoline:**

Keep your gas tank full, and your car in good working order. You may need your car to evacuate, and gas may not be available if gas stations are damaged or don't have power to operate pumps.

**Special Car Supplies:**

Flares, maps, tow chain, windshield scraper, snow chains in winter.

**Anything else you think would help you and your family cope during a disaster.**

# Home Safety Checklist

## Be Fire Safe

- In a fire, seconds count. Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms and near stairways, and make sure they work properly. Check your batteries at least once a month.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy, and know how to use it. Extinguishers should be checked periodically to make sure they are fully charged and ready to use.
- Make sure everyone in your family knows how to **Stop-Drop and Roll** if their clothing catches on fire.
- Make sure there are at least 2 exits from every room. Teach everyone how to get out of the house if there is a fire. Children sometimes try to hide from fire under a bed or in a closet. **Teach children that in a fire they must get out quickly.**
- Have a family fire escape plan and practice it. You expect schools to have fire drills, but fires are much more likely to occur at home. Home fire drills can save lives.
- Have an agreed on meeting place outside your home. Injuries and deaths sometime occur when people enter a burning building trying to rescue a family member who is already out.

## Don't give fires a place to start. Eliminate potential fire hazards.

- Teach children not to play with matches, lighters or household chemicals.
- Make sure cigarettes, candles, matches, and similar items are completely extinguished. Soak ashes and coals in water before disposing of them.

- Don't overload extension cords or outlets.
- Replace frayed electrical cords.
- Keep heaters and candles away from draperies and furniture.
- Don't allow rubbish to accumulate in garages, basements, closets, or attics.
- Keep fireplaces, furnaces and cook appliances clean and in good working order.
- Buy UL (Underwriters Laboratory) approved smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and appliances.

## Prevent Localized Flooding

Keep storm drains in front of your property cleared.

## Be Quake Safe

During an earthquake, tornado or explosion everything shakes. Chimneys and masonry walls collapse, buildings slide off their foundations, gas and water lines break, glass shatters, heavy objects fall, and chemicals spill.

- Make sure your house is securely attached to the foundation, and the foundation is free of cracks.
- Make sure there are flexible connections on gas appliances and good support on gas lines to prevent line breaks and gas leaks.
- Locate beds away from windows, pictures, and furniture that could fall. Move children's play areas into open spaces away from hazards.

- Make sure water heaters, large appliances, bookcases, china cabinets, other tall heavy pieces of furniture, mirrors, and pictures are securely attached to the wall. Secure hanging objects (plants, lights, etc.) by closing the opening in the hook, and making sure the hook is securely anchored.
- Move heavy objects to lower shelves in cupboards, and make sure cabinet doors have strong latches to keep contents from flying out.
- Protect yourself from falling bricks by reinforcing the ceiling around chimneys.
- Send for the EQE Earthquake Home Preparedness Guide, 595 Market Street-18th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105 (enclose \$.50 for postage and handling), or contact a structural engineer for advice on how to make your home quake safe.

### Be Careful With Toxic Chemicals

Chemicals can cause problems in any emergency. It's best not to store toxic chemicals. However, if you do keep chemicals on hand:

- Keep toxics outside of your house.
- Lids on the containers should be tightly closed. Secure chemicals so they don't tip and spill.
- Keep gasoline and similar products in vapor-proof containers. Any type of spark can ignite these chemicals, their vapors, or rags which have the chemicals on them.
- Store ammonia and bleach in separate locations. Mixed together they create toxic fumes.
- Keep all chemicals away from gas appliances.
- Store chemicals on the bottom shelf of a locked cabinet which is securely attached to the wall.

## Check Your Utilities

**Natural Gas:** If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak don't light matches, turn lights on or off, operate appliances, use the telephone, or do anything that might cause a spark. **Any spark can ignite gas and cause a fire or explosion.** Use a flashlight to check gas lines. Sniff for gas leaks. Check the connections on gas appliances such as hot water heaters. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows and get everyone out of the building as fast as possible. Don't go back in until the gas company advises you it is safe to do so. Do not shut the gas off unless you smell gas, suspect a leak, or are told to do so by officials. Turning gas service back on should only be done by a gas company representative after an inspection of your service.

**Electricity:** Watch out for electrical shorts of live wires. If there is a power outage, unplug motor driven appliances such as refrigerators, and turn off all lights except one. Check your circuit breaker. If the problem isn't in your household electric system, call the electric company. Check your electrical system for damage. If your wiring is shorting out, if you see frayed wires or sparks, if you smell hot insulation, or if you suspect damage to your electrical system, turn off the power at the main circuit breaker or fuse box. Never go near electrical equipment when water is present. If your home has been flooded, turn off power to the affected area. Don't turn the power back on until the circuits are dry and have been checked for damage. Stay away from downed power lines and anything touching downed power lines. Remember, people, metal and damp objects are all conductors of electricity. If you see a downed power line report it to your utility company immediately.

**Water and Sewer:** Check your water lines for leaks. If there are line breaks or leaks, turn off the water to your house. Check to make sure sewer lines are intact before using toilets.

# Survival Skills: Before & During a Disaster

These basic survival skills will help you avoid injury:

- Whenever a disaster warning is issued take it seriously and get prepared.
- Follow instructions.
- Listen to news reports.
- Gather emergency supplies.
- Be prepared to turn off your utilities if you have a problem, or if officials advise you to turn your utilities off.
- Avoid unnecessary driving. Keep streets clear for emergency vehicles.
- Don't use elevators. If there is a power outage, you may be trapped.
- Don't use the telephone unless it's an emergency. Leave phone lines free for emergency calls.

**If you need life saving, police, fire, or medical assistance, call 9-1-1.**

Don't call 9-1-1 unless there is a life threatening emergency, fire, hazardous materials incident, or crime in progress. Do report flooding, gas leaks, water and sewer line breaks, and downed power lines to your utility company as quickly as possible.

- Try to stay calm and think clearly. If you can't remember what to do, reference the telephone book. There is a *First Aid and Survival Guide* in the front of the telephone directory white pages.
- Remember, your life is more important than your property.
- Evaluate the situation. Then whether or not to leave the area. If you feel you are in danger evacuate the area.

## After a Disaster

- Put on heavy shoes to avoid injury.
- Use a flashlight to check around you. Don't do anything to make a spark unless you're certain there isn't a gas leak.
- Check for fires.
- Check around you for injuries and give first aid as needed. If the victim isn't breathing, give CPR. If the person is bleeding, apply pressure to the wound. Don't try to move seriously injured people unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Keep injured people warm.
- If possible, check on your neighbors.
- Check your natural gas, electricity, water and sewer systems for leaks or broken lines.
- Check for safety hazards which cause further injury. Look for structural damage such as chimney cracks. Check for fire hazards. Carefully clean up spilled medications and chemicals.
- Do not enter any structures in the affected area until they have been checked and declared to be safe. Stay away from buildings which may have sustained damage and could collapse.
- Contact one family member or friend outside the area and let them know you're safe, and where you are. Ask them to contact others for you.
- Don't go sightseeing. Stay away from disaster areas. You could put yourself in great danger, and interfere with emergency response operations.
- Don't eat food that may have been contaminated by flood waters, shattered glass, chemicals used to fight a fire, or anything else. When in doubt, throw it out.



- In an emergency, water may be contaminated because of line breaks or other problems. As a precaution, you may want to purify drinking water until officials have determined the water is safe to drink. (See Water Tips, Page 6)

- Have all heat and air conditioning, water, electric and natural gas lines, gas equipment appliances, and vehicles affected by the disaster checked by a service professional before using.

### **In a Fire:**

If you act quickly, you can prevent a disaster by using a fire extinguisher or pan lid to smother a small fire.

Never use water on an electrical fire.

**Never try to fight a fire burning out of control.** Get everyone out of the building quickly. Fire moves very fast, and both fire and smoke can be deadly.

As you exit check all closed doors before opening. If the door feels hot, find another exit. If it's cool, open it slowly and check for smoke.

If there is a lot of smoke, stay low to the ground as you exit, and cover your mouth with a cloth.

Once you get outside, make sure everyone is accounted for, and call 9-1-1 to report the fire.

### **In an Earthquake:**

The greatest danger comes from collapsing buildings, falling objects, and fires caused by broken gas lines.

**If you are indoors,** stay there. Don't run for exits.

Get under a piece of sturdy furniture and brace yourself until the shaking stops.

Don't use stairs while the building is shaking. Don't use elevators, the power may go out.

Stay away from windows, fireplaces, and heavy objects such as bookcases that may fall.

**If you are outdoors,** move to an open area.

Stay away from buildings, power poles, trees, chimneys, brick or block walls, overpasses, and anything else that could fall.

**If you're driving,** stop in a safe open area and stay in your vehicle until the shaking stops. If you're in a mountain area, be alert for slides and falling rock.

**Prepare for after shocks.** After shocks may come minutes or days later.

After the shaking stops, check around you for signs of structural damage. If you think the building is unsafe, leave. A building damaged but still standing after an earthquake may collapse during an after shock.

Open cupboard doors carefully.

Don't use your fireplace until it has been inspected.

### **In a Toxic Spill, Chemical or Nuclear Accident:**

You may be advised to stay indoors to avoid exposure to hazardous materials. Take pets inside with you.

Be prepared to close windows and doors, and shut off any heating or air conditioning systems that draw in outside air (such a fireplace dampers, bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans and clothes dryers).

Do not use your fireplace or wood stove until officials announce it is safe to do so.

## **In a Flood:**

If possible, and if time permits, move essential items to upper floors. Move outdoor equipment and furniture inside, or tie it down in the yard. Disconnect electrical appliances that can't be moved.

Stay away from areas subject to flooding. If you're in a flood prone area, don't wait too long to evacuate.

**Avoid moving water.** Even shallow moving water can sweep away a person or car. Never try to walk in water above your knees. Never drive in moving water or in standing water more than 1 foot deep, unless officials direct you to. If your vehicle stalls in a flooded area, abandon the vehicle and move to high ground. Flood waters can quickly sweep away a vehicle.

Water can conduct electricity. Don't touch any electrical equipment or appliances that are wet or standing in water.

If you are caught inside and flood waters are rising, move to upper floors, the roof, or high ground. Take emergency supplies with you. Watch for rescue crews, and be prepared to signal them.

Avoid contact with flood water. Flood water may be contaminated and cause health problems. If cuts or wounds come in contact with flood water, clean the wound as thoroughly as possible.

Never enter a flooded building until officials tell you it is safe to do so.

Living near two of the largest rivers in California offers many benefits, and some risks. In Sacramento, anytime water in rivers and creeks is higher than the surrounding land, there is a potential for flooding. While most emergencies happen without warning, floods occur after many days of heavy rain. Between November and April pay special attention to weather reports, storm warnings, and rising water levels in creeks and rivers.

The flood control system that protects Sacramento includes miles of levees, bypass systems, upstream dams, and storm drainage pumps and channels. Federal, State and local government agencies monitor the flood protection system, the weather, water releases from dams and water elevations in rivers and creeks.

The City and County work with the media to issue four levels of Emergency Stage Definitions based on weather forecasts, water elevations and levee conditions: River Advisory Stage, River Warning Stage, River Flood Alert Stage and River Danger Stage.

**The Emergency Stages may move quickly or skip to River Flood Alert or River Danger** if levee sloughing or boils carrying dirty river water are determined to be a serious public safety threat.

You may want to find out the approximate elevation of your property. Then, during periods of high water you can compare your elevation to the elevation of water in nearby creeks and rivers to estimate the flood threat to your property. You can find the general elevation of your property by looking on the USGS (United States Geological Survey) maps available in the reference section of each City library.

### **Ten Steps**

1. Keep emergency supplies on hand
2. Learn first aid
3. Learn how to turn off your utilities
4. Make sure your home is safe
5. Plan ahead
6. Check your insurance
7. Keep copies of important documents
8. Be alert to what's going on around you
9. Listen to news and weather reports
10. Learn disaster survival skills

The City and County are working closely with other agencies to prevent disasters. Despite these efforts, disaster may still occur. We all need to be ready. Successfully coping with a disaster will require preparation and team work. You are an important part of that team.

Government agencies, utility companies, Red Cross and others have disaster response plans. You also need to have a disaster plan for yourself and your family.

In an emergency the City, County, Red Cross, utility companies, and other government agencies will work together to rescue victims, provide emergency medical services, coordinate ordered evacuations, get information to citizens, provide traffic control, maintain law and order, restore utility services, protect public health, provide care and shelter, and try to prevent further injury or damage. Common sense and experience will tell you that during community disaster, emergency service workers may be overwhelmed. Their efforts will focus on caring for the most seriously injured, and protecting those in greatest danger. You need to be prepared to take care of yourself and your family until emergency workers can reach you.

In a disaster everyone needs to do their part in order to keep damage and injuries to a minimum. Your actions can make a difference.

### **Disaster Preparedness Workshops**

Disaster Preparedness workshops are available to neighborhood groups and community organizations. To schedule a workshop, or for more information, contact:

Sacramento Area Chapter  
American Red Cross  
8928 Volunteer Lane  
Sacramento, CA 95826  
(916) 368-3131

## **Emergency Stage Definitions**

### **River Advisory Stage**

An advisory may be issued when water in rivers or creeks is higher than normal and expected to rise. High water occurs about once every 2 years. At this stage you may be advised to check emergency supplies and listen to news and weather reports.

### **River Warning Stage**

Flood warnings have been issued about 13 times in the last 35 years. At this stage, levee patrols begin. The State Flood Center will be activated. The City Utility Operations Center will be activated. The City EOC may be partially activated. You may be advised to plan ahead and make arrangements so you are ready to move quickly if an evacuation becomes necessary.

### **River Flood Alert Stage**

At this stage the river or creek would be carrying the maximum amount of water it was designed to carry, although the water would still be below the top of the levee. The water in local rivers has not risen to this level anytime in the past 30 years, although in February of 1986 it was very close. City EOC may be fully activated. At this stage, people who would have difficulty moving quickly to a safe area may be advised to evacuate.

### **River Danger Stage**

At this stage the river or creek would be carrying more water than it was designed to carry, although the water would still be below the top of the levee. The water in local rivers has not risen to this level anytime in the past 30 years. At this stage you may be advised to evacuate, whether or not flooding has occurred.

Call the City Operator at **264-5011**  
for personal city-wide assistance,  
day or night.  
(7 days a week, 365 days a year)  
For life-threatening issues call 9-1-1