

# Emergency Preparedness



Many people are concerned about the possibility of a public health emergency such as a natural disaster, act of terrorism, or disease outbreak. Take steps now to help prepare for an emergency and cope if an emergency happens.

## Get a Kit



An emergency supply kit is a collection of basic items that might be needed during an emergency. It is good to involve whoever is going to use the kit, including children, in assembling it.

**Assemble the following items** to create kits in a sturdy, waterproof container with a lid to use at home, office, school and/or in a vehicle:

- Water: one gallon per person, per day
- Food: nonperishable, easy-to-prepare
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Battery powered or hand crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
- First aid kit and a 7 day supply of medications
- Medication list and other pertinent medical information
- Personal hygiene items
- Copies of personal documents: Proof of address, deed/lease to home, passports, birth certificates, and insurance policies
- Cell phone with home/car chargers
- List of family and emergency contact information
- Extra cash: Change and smaller bills
- Blanket and a set of towels
- Map(s) of the area
- Extra set of car keys and house keys
- Manual can opener, bottle opener and scissors
- Roll of duct tape and a package of light weight plastic sheeting.
- Multi-Purpose tool (e.g., Swiss army knife)

## Special Needs

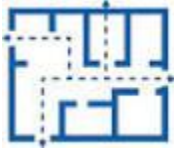
Additional supplies may be needed to meet the needs of all family members, such as children, pets, and those with special medical requirements. Suggested items are:

- Medical supplies (e.g., hearing aids with extra batteries, glasses, contact lenses, syringes, portable wheel chair, or a cane)
- Baby supplies (e.g., bottles, formula, baby food, and diapers and games and activities for children)
- Pet supplies such as:
  - A sturdy leash, harness and a portable kennel with name, pet's name, and contact information affixed.
  - Food and water for at least 3 days for each pet; bowls, and a manual can opener.

- A litter box, paper towels, plastic trash bags, and grooming items may be needed, depending on the pet.
- Medications and proof of vaccinations in a small container with owner and pet's names, breed, photo of pet, and description. Also include information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, and name and number of veterinarian.
- First aid kit with a pet first aid book.
- Pet toys and the pet's bed or a blanket from home helps to reduce stress.

Pack the items in easy-to-carry, clearly labeled containers, and store them where they are easily accessible. Make sure to check expiration dates on food, water, and batteries throughout the year.

## Make a Plan



Families can cope with disasters by preparing in advance and working together as a team. If something were to happen, how would family members contact one another, how would you get to a safe place and what would be done in different emergency situations? Planning what to do before a disaster strikes provides the best protection for a family.

### Create a Family Communication Plan

Because family members may not be together when a disaster hits, it's important to create a communication plan to help loved ones connect and get help.

- Complete a contact card for each family member and have them keep these cards handy in a wallet, purse, backpack, or emergency kit.
- Identify an out-of-town contact, such as a friend or relative, who family members can call to let them know they are safe. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, because phone lines can be jammed. An out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.
- Teach family members how to text. It may seem like second nature to some of us, but not everyone texts. *During an emergency it's often easier to get a text message delivered rather than a phone call.*
- Subscribe to an emergency alert system. Check with health department or office to see what is offered for this area. Post emergency telephone numbers by home phones or save them in your cell phone (fire, police, ambulance, etc.).
- Teach children how and when to call 911 for help.
- Plan to check on elderly neighbors to see if they are aware of situation and/or need help.

### Create a Family Disaster Plan

Planning for a disaster means knowing what to do in each possible situation. Whether there is a need to evacuate the home or shelter in place, it's important to have a plan ahead of time.

Before creating a disaster plan, know what types of emergencies are likely in this area and the best way to respond. The most likely scenarios for St Clair County include:

- Severe or extreme weather events such as: heat, cold, ice or snow and high winds, occasional threat of conditions conducive to a tornado, and heavy rains with/without flooding.
- Chemical releases (air, transport, or water)
- Communicable or infectious disease outbreak

Because different disasters may require the need to go to different places, make sure to identify a meeting place in neighborhood, a meeting place just outside neighborhood, and a meeting place out of town. Review these plans with all members of the family and don't forget to consider what would be done with pets who may not be allowed in emergency shelters.

- Contact local emergency management or fire department and ask about the community's warning signals. What do they sound like and what should be done when they are heard?
- Show each family member how and when to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at the main switches and label them!
- Teach each family member how to use the fire extinguisher, and show them where it's kept.

## Be Informed



In addition to understanding *how* a person will be informed of potential threats, a person should also understand the difference between various weather alerts:

- **“Watch”** gives advance notice that conditions are favorable for dangerous weather. If a severe storm watch or other type of watch is issued for the area, be alert for changing weather conditions.
- **“Warning”** requires immediate action and is only used when severe weather is about to strike.
- **“Advisories”** are issued when events are expected to remain below the warning criteria, but still cause significant inconvenience. Most common in association with snow events.

## Additional Ways to Prepare:

- Check to make sure there is adequate insurance coverage to cover possible flooding or structural damage to home and property. (Sump pump failure may need to be added to the policy)
- Install smoke detectors on each level of home, especially near bedrooms. Test and recharge fire extinguisher(s) and smoke detectors according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Install at least one battery-powered or battery back-up carbon monoxide alarm in home, preferably near bedrooms. Test the battery at least twice a year, when the time is changed on clocks.
- Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.



**For more sources of information on this topic visit:**

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT [www.scchealth.co](http://www.scchealth.co)

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES [www.michigan.gov/mdhhs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs)

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

THE RED CROSS [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)