

## **PLANNING FOR WEATHER RELATED AND OTHER EMERGENCIES LEADERS GUIDE**

Are you prepared if a disaster or emergency should strike. They can happen at any time and come with out any warning. While they can not be prevented, you can be prepared to take immediate action to protect yourself and your family.

Disasters come in many forms including tornadoes and severe winds, winter storms, floods, earthquakes, fires or a hazardous chemical spill. The results can be an inconvenience or life threatening. Sometimes they lead to lose of gas, water, electrical and telephone services or force emergency evacuation of the area. While each emergency will be different, preparation in advance will help insure that you will be able to respond for the maximum comfort and safety of you and your family.

### **Steps in Preparing for an Emergency**

- Identify the types of potential disasters for your community and your location.
- Learn about the type of warning systems in the community.
- Find out how to prepare for each type of emergency.
- Develop a kit of emergency supplies for your family.
  - Use the brochure “Family Disaster Supplies Kit” as a guide.
  - Your kit should include: a minimum 3 day supply of food and water, first aid supplies, clothing & bedding, some tools & supplies, and special items such as medications (Don’t forget about pets).
  - Each kit should be tailored to your particular needs.
  - Store the kit in convenient location and consider a smaller version for the car.
  - Consider storing the items for an evacuation in an easy-to carry container.
  - Change water and rotate food supplies every six months.
  - Replace batteries and reevaluate the kit annually.
- Discuss the types of emergencies with your family and plan how you would respond.
  - What would be needed for emergency evacuation from the home?
  - What would be needed if all utilities are cut-off and/or you are confined to the home such as in a winter storm.

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- Plan how your family will stay in contact following an emergency or major disaster.
  - In case of a fire, identify a safe meeting place outside the home.
  - If your family is separated by a disaster:
    1. Identify a place outside your neighborhood to meet.
    2. Choose an out-of-state friend or relative as a “check-in contact” for everyone to telephone..
  
- Complete your family plan.
  - Post emergency telephone numbers.
    - Is 911 or enhanced 911 available in your community?.
    - (Enhanced enables emergency services to locate you through the telephone call.)
  - Show family member how to shut off gas, water and electrical power.
  - Install smoke detectors in your home and test regularly.
  - Learn CPR and emergency first aid procedures.
  - Consider the special needs of family members who are infants, elderly or have disabilities.

### **Possible Discussion Topics**

- Potential disasters and emergencies in your area?
  
- Which disasters could result in loss of utilities and isolation or confinement to your home? (Winter storm, tornado or high winds, earthquake)
  
- Which disasters could result in emergency evacuation of your home? (Flood, tornado, earthquake, hazardous chemical spill)
  
- Do you have an emergency kit? If not, do you have any of the supplies in your home? Could they be easily assembled in an emergency? Have you given thought to special needs such as dietary or medication needs in an emergency? Where is the Kit stored?
  
- Discuss checklist in the pamphlet “Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit”.
  
- Identify emergency drinking water sources in the home such as hot water heater tank, ice cubes and toilet tanks (not the bowl). If the water supplies may be contaminated, treat by boiling for 5 to 10 minutes or adding 2 drops of liquid chlorine bleach per quart of water if clear or 4 drops if cloudy and let it stand for 30 minutes. (Use 4-6% common liquid chlorine household bleach.)
  
- Put together a sample Emergency Kit with water, sample food items, clothing, first aid kit, and special needs such as medications, glasses, money, travelers checks, credit card, battery powered radio, flashlight and extra batteries, and sanitation supplies.

- Demonstrate how to shut-off a gas supply valve.

## COMMON WEATHER AND OTHER EMERGENCIES

### TORNADOES

Tornadoes take many sizes and shapes but the swirling winds of 200 miles per hour or more can leave a path of death and destruction. The key to survival is being alert to potential severe weather conditions. Watch out for signs or clues of possible tornadoes such as dark often greenish sky, wall clouds, large hail and loud roar similar to a freight train. At first signs or warnings, seek shelter. Most tornado deaths are from being struck by flying debris from the high winds. The most dangerous locations are vehicles and mobile homes.

Tornadoes are spawned when thunderstorms develop in warm moist air in advance of eastward moving cold fronts. Other common effects of these storms are high winds and large hail. The peak season for tornadoes is March through May. The most likely times are between 3 and 9 p.m. Most tornadoes move from the southwest to the northeast at average speed of 30 miles per hour. However, tornadoes can occur at any time, travel in any direction and at varying speeds.

#### Terms:

**Tornado Watch** - means conditions are favorable for the formation of tornadoes.

**Tornado Warning** - means a tornado has been sighted and you should seek shelter immediately.

#### Tips:

- Have a NOAA Weather radio with warning alarm tone and backup battery. Stay tuned to local radio and TV during a severe weather conditions or a Tornado Watch .
- When a **Warning** is issued, immediately move to shelter such as a basement or an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor. Examples are a closet or bathroom. Get under a piece of sturdy furniture. Crouch down and cover your head or wrap yourself in overcoats or blankets to protect yourself from the flying debris.
- Stay away from windows and large areas of glass or areas with wide-span roofs such as auditoriums and warehouses.
- If in a car, do not try to outrun the tornado. Instead, get out of the car and seek

shelter or lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression. Use your hands to cover your head.

- Mobile homes offer little protection from a tornado, even if tied down. Abandon the mobile home and seek shelter in substantial shelter or a designated tornado shelter.

## **LIGHTNING**

According to the National Climatic Data Center, Kentucky will have an estimated 45 to 50 days of thunderstorms and lightning each year. While the chances of being struck by lightning are only 1 in 600,000, each year lightning causes more deaths than tornadoes and hurricanes combined. Most lightning deaths and injuries occur when people are caught outdoors in a storm.

Lightning occurs when electrical charges build up in the thunderstorm clouds and discharges between clouds or between the clouds and the ground. The air near a lightning strike can be heated to 50,000 degrees, hotter than the surface of the sun! This heating and cooling of air near the lightning strike results in a shock wave that we hear as thunder. You can greatly reduce your chances of being struck by lightning by following a few safety rules.

### **Tips:**

- Watch for signs of approaching storms including flashes of lightning or the sound of thunder. Remember, lightning can strike up to 10 miles ahead of the actual rain storm.
- Seek shelter at the first signs of an approaching thunderstorm.
- If possible seek shelter in a home or a large enclosed building, preferably one with a lightning protection system. Stay away from windows, open doors, faucets, sinks, bathtubs or other large metal objects. Unplug electrical appliances that could be damaged and only use the telephone in an emergency.
- A hard topped automobile with the windows up or farm equipment with an enclosed metal cab can offer fair protection.
- Avoid small sheds, convertible cars and other open top vehicles, open farm equipment, isolated trees or high points. Get out of boats and away from water.
- If caught outdoors and no shelter is available, stay away from trees, fences or other metal objects, and poles. If you are in the woods, take shelter under a thick growth of relative smaller trees.
- If you feel your hair standing on end or a tingling of your skin from static electricity, squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet and place your head between your

knees. An alternative is to drop to your knees and bend forward putting your hands on your knees. Keep as low a profile as possible. **Do not lie flat!** In a flat position your body is exposed to the step voltage that travels through the soil if lightning should strike nearby.

## **FLASH FLOODS**

Flash floods are the number one killer from thunderstorms causing more deaths than either tornadoes or lightning. Most of these flash flood deaths occur at night and when people become trapped in an automobile or attempt to walk or play in the flood waters.. **Remember, the rushing waters from floods and flash floods are extremely dangerous.** Rushing flood waters only a foot deep can sweep a person off their feet and several feet of flood water can move an automobile.

### **Tips:**

- If you live in flood prone areas, listen to local radio and TV stations for emergency information.
- If a Flash Flood Warning is issued or water is threatening, leave low lying areas immediately and get to higher ground.
- If your home is likely to be flooded and if time permits, turn off the utilities before leaving.
- Keep your car's gas tank filled if weather is threatening.
- Do not try to walk through water more the ankle deep.
- Do not allow children to play in flood waters or around streams, drainage ditches, viaducts, storm drains or other flooded areas.
- Never attempt to drive or walk through a flood area. It is the most dangerous thing you can do. Flood water can conceal damage to roads and bridges and the force of the fast moving water can sweep a car off the road.
- If your car stalls in rapidly rising water, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground.

## WINTER STORMS/BLIZZARDS

Winter snow and ice storms along with blizzards have the capability to completely immobilize the entire state. They are deceptive killers because most of the deaths are caused indirectly by traffic accidents on slick and icy roads, heart attacks while shoveling snow or people dying of hypothermia from prolonged exposure to the cold.

A Winter Storm WATCH means that hazardous winter weather conditions (such as snow greater than 4 inches in 24 hours, winds gusting over 35 mph, or visibility less than 1/4 mile) are possible in the next 12 to 36 hours. A Winter Storm WARNING means that hazardous winter weather conditions are expected within the next 12 hours or are already occurring. A Blizzard Warning means a lot of falling and/or blowing snow and winds of at least 35 miles per hour are expected for several hours.

### Tips:

- Be prepared with an emergency kit which includes a flashlight and battery powered NOAA weather radio and portable radio, extra batteries, first aid supplies, and medicines and baby supplies.
- Have extra canned food, a non-electric can opener, bottled water, blankets and medications on hand.
- Maintain adequate fuel supplies and plan for an alternative emergency heating source such as fireplace, wood stove, or space heater. Be extremely careful if you plan to use a portable space heater and provide recommended clearances from combustible materials and adequate ventilation as needed.
- Have cars and trucks winterized and keep gas tanks filled.
- Avoid road travel if possible. If travel is necessary, try not to travel alone and keep a friend or relative informed of your route and timetable for travel.
- Carry a Winter Storm Survival Kit in your vehicle which includes blankets, extra sets of warm dry clothing, a shovel, sand, jumper cables, a first aid kit, flashlight with extra batteries, and a brightly colored cloth to tie to the antenna.
- If stranded in a car or truck stay with the vehicle. Run the motor about ten minutes each hour. Open a window slightly for fresh air and keep the exhaust pipe clear to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Make yourself visible by turning on the dome light at night. Tie a colored cloth to the antenna or door. Exercise to keep the blood circulating and to keep warm.

- If caught outside cover all exposed parts of the body. If shelter is not available find protection from the wind in a snow cave or wind break. Build a fire for heat . Do not eat snow as it robs your body of heat. Melt it first.
- If at home, stay indoor during the storm. If there is no heat, close off unneeded rooms and stuff towels or rags in cracks and under doors. Cover windows at night. Continue to eat and drink. Food provides the body with energy and heat while fluids are need to prevent dehydration. Dress with layers of loose fitting, light-weight, warm clothing. Check on older friends and relatives who can more easily develop hypothermia and dehydration from the cold.
- After the storm dress warmly when working outside and use caution when walking on snowy or icy sidewalks. If you shovel don't overexert yourself. Shoveling snow is physically strenuous work.