

Denton County Health Department urges every citizen to be prepared

In recent years several major emergency events such as September 11, 2001, the Indian Ocean Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, as well as the threat of a pandemic influenza, have increased the importance of personal preparedness. Emergencies, whether man made or natural, often occur without warning. While officials are responding to the larger event they may not be able to respond to individual needs. You may be required to shelter in your current place or even leave familiar surroundings. The key to managing yourself in an emergency is to have a plan and prepare for the “what ifs.” Your family will cope best by preparing for disaster before it strikes. One way to prepare is by assembling a Disaster Supplies Kit. Once disaster hits, you won’t have time to shop or search for supplies. But if you gather supplies in advance, your family can endure an evacuation or home confinement.

One way to prepare for emergencies is to create an emergency kit that will enable you to survive for at least ten days on your own. You should prepare two kits, one for sheltering in place and another that you can take with you in case you need to leave your home. *The American Red Cross suggests the following items be included in emergency kits:*

BASIC KIT:

- Bottled water: one gallon per person, per day
- Non-perishable food
- Battery-powered radio
- NOAA Weather Radio
- Flashlight
- Extra batteries for radio/flashlight
- First Aid kit
- Dust or surgical mask to help filter the air
- Moist towelettes/hand sanitizer
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener
- Medication (prescription and/or over-the-counter)
- Medical Records
- Infant Care items
- Garbage bags
- Important family documents (birth certificates, social security cards, insurance policies, etc.)
- Cash or traveler’s checks, and/or change
- Car and/or home cell phone charger
- Extra clothing
- Blanket

IN YOUR CAR:

- Flashlight
- Extra batteries
- Map
- First Aid kit
- Tire repair kit
- Booster cables
- Bottled water
- Non-perishable food items
- Blanket
- Windshield scraper

FOR YOUR PET(S):

- Food and food bowl
- Water and water bowl
- Medications
- Cat litter pan and extra cat litter
- Leach/Carrier/Pet bed
- Toys

Low Cost Alternatives:

Preparing for emergencies can seem like an expensive endeavor. To minimize cost, consider putting all normally used and needed medications, first aid supplies and medical supplies in portable containers that can easily be accessed in an emergency or evacuation situation. Also, do not purchase ready made emergency kits that can be a bit expensive. Try preparing your own by gathering up the materials, much of which you may already have at home, and storing them in a portable, waterproof container. Another money saver could be to clean empty milk jugs to use for water storage. Rotate stored water every 6 months, but eliminate water wastage by using the old water to drink, either by your family or animals, or to water household plants. Nose and mouth protection can be improvised by using dense-weave cotton material to cover your nose and mouth. This could include items of clothing, such as a shirt. Make sure whatever you use fits snugly over your nose and mouth so it can filter contaminants in an emergency. Remember that it is extremely important for you and your family to have an emergency kit.

Create a Family Emergency Plan:

Your family may not be together when an emergency happens. During an emergency you should anticipate miscommunication and confusion. Creating a communication plan can reduce this. It is important to involve your entire family in the planning process.

The communication plan should include:

An out of town contact name and phone number, email address, name, date of birth, social security number, important medical information of each family member and a meeting location. It is also important to become familiar with the emergency plans of the workplace, daycares, and schools.

Your Possessions:

Family Records and other documents including birth and marriage certificates, social security cards, passports, wills, deeds, and financial, insurance, and immunizations records should be kept in a safe deposit box or another flood/fire safe place. It is important to inventory your possessions. Take photographs or video of your home include automobiles and other vehicles. You may also want to get professional appraisals of your other valuables (jewelry, collectibles, artwork, etc.). Keep copies of receipts that show the value of your items.

Become Involved:

You can become involved in your community through the Denton County Medical Reserve Corps (DCMRC). The Medical Reserve Corps is made up of medical and non-medical volunteers that volunteer their time and skills to prepare for and respond to emergencies. Recently, DCMRC responded to the needs of Hurricane Katrina evacuees in our county. To join the DCMRC go to <http://www.metroplexvolunteers.com/> or contact Jessica Herpeche at 940-349-2923.

For additional preparedness information visit www.ready.gov.