Prepare Your House

There are many ways you can better prepare your house to withstand the effects of a natural disaster.

BEFORE A HURRICANE

- Long before storm season approaches install permanent protection for windows and doors with glazing.
- If your house does not have permanent shutters, plan to protect your windows and doors with glazing with the low-cost alternative of plywood panels. Install permanent fasteners long before storm warnings, so panels can be put in place quickly. Long before storm season approaches, cut 7/16 minimum thickness exterior grade, plywood to fit each window and doors with glazing. Store the panels where you can easily access them during an emergency. Clearly mark each panel so you can quickly determine which window or door it covers.Visit www.flash.org for detailed instructions on how to use plywood for emergency board up.
- The roof of your house is very vulnerable to hurricane winds. Reinforce the connection between the roof and walls with hurricane straps and bracing to resist a hurricane's uplift.
- Reinforce double-entry front doors as well as garage doors.
- Clear away dead or weak tree branches that may break off and damage your house in high winds.
- Remove all outdoor furniture, lawn items, planters and other materials that could be picked up by high winds. These items can produce wind-borne debris that can break windows and sometimes tear openings into your house; letting in damaging rain and wind.

BEFORE A FLOOD

- Stock up on building materials such as plywood, plastic sheeting, hammer, nails, saw, pry bar, shovels, and sandbags. In the case of an emergency, you will be better off already having these items on hand.
- Prevent electrical damage by raising the level of electrical components (fuse and circuit breaker boxes, meters, switches, and outlets). This can save you from the expense of replacing a flood-damaged system, and it will help prevent fires caused by short circuits. Remember that a licensed contractor should do this work.

BEFORE AN EARTHQUAKE

- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Repair any defective electrical or gas connections.
- Secure your water heater by strapping it to wall studs or bolting it to the floor (this can prevent a possible gas leak and provide a convenient source of clean water after an earthquake).
- Also, other large appliances that are connected to water and /or gaslines should be secured.
- Repair cracks in foundations and ceilings.
- Bolt your house to its foundation.

BEFORE A WILDFIRE

- Install smoke detectors on every level of your house, in every bedroom, and in hallways leading to bedrooms.
- Use fire-resistant materials when building or renovating. Most importantly, use tile or flame-retardant shingles on your roof.
- Keep vegetation, yard debris, and any other combustible materials at least 30 feet away from your house.
- Plant trees away from your house at a distance greater than their mature height. If you do have trees close to your home, trim them to a height of 8 to 10 feet and keep them free of dead or dying wood.
- Use stone walls, swimming pools, or patios to create a shield safety zone between vegetation and your house.
- Avoid planting shrubs near your house. Instead, try alternatives like a fountain or rock garden.
- Clear rain gutters of dead limbs, needles, and other debris.

Support Building Safety!

For more information about building safety codes and local requirements, contact your local building department below:

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INTERNATIONAL CODE COUNCIL®

1-888-ICC-SAFE (422-7233) | www.buildingsafetymonth.org

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Safety First— Disaster Preparedness

Tips for Your Home and Family

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Prepare Your Family

Although no one can prevent natural disasters from occurring, there are many things you can do to make the impact less devastating for your family.

Every home should have 3 key elements in place before a disaster strikes:

- Evacuation Plan
- Communication Plan
- Emergency Supply Kit

EVACUATION PLAN

In the event of an emergency such as a flood, wildfire, tornado, or hurricane, you may be instructed to evacuate your house. Depending on the type of natural disaster, you may have to travel 20 to 50 miles to get your family to safety. Establish a "safety destination" (like a friend's or relative's house some distance away) and plan several different routes to get there so you can drive around roadblocks or hazards. Practice your plan and become familiar with each route so you will be better prepared.

You may need to turn off your gas, water, and electricity before you evacuate. Each member of the household should learn when and how to do this.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

During an emergency it is usually easier to make long distance calls, so choose an out-of-state relative to be your family's "communication center." Be sure that each member of your family knows the name and phone number for this person in case you are separated. By having everyone call one central person, it will be easier for you to check on each other and reunite after a disaster.

Teach every family member when and how to dial 9-1-1 for emergency assistance.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

Find out if any of your neighbors will need extra help during an emergency. The elderly, disabled, and people with small children may need you to lend a helping hand.

Emergency Kits

EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT

Whether you are preparing for an earthquake, tornado, hurricane, flood, or wildfire, you will need the following basic items in your kit:

- battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- flashlight and extra batteries
- canned food
- first aid kit and manual
- prescription medications you take every day such as insulin, heart medicine, and asthma inhalers
- non-prescription medications (aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever) and dust masks
- large garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- local maps
- infant formula and diapers
- portable container for important family documents
- cash or traveler's checks and change
- fire extinguisher
- matches in a waterproof container
- paper and pencil
- books, games, puzzles, or other activities for children
- battery-operated lantern and extra batteries
- blankets
- hand-operated can opener
- durable shoes and change of clothes for each member of your family
- basic tools (wrench, hammer)
- utility gloves

Place all items in a sturdy, closed container outside your home where it can be easily located. Restock food and water twice a year. For detailed information on an emergency preparedness kit, please visit the Homeland Security website at www.ready.gov/america.

PET SUPPLY KIT

An emergency kit for your furry friends should include:

- food
- water
- bowl
- medication and medical records
- first aid kit (talk to your veterinarian about what is most appropriate for your pet's emergency medical needs)
- collar with ID tag, harness, or leash
- crate or other pet carrier
- sanitation (pet litter and litter box, newspapers, plastic trash bags)
- a picture of you and your pet together
- favorite toys, treats, or bedding
- blanket
- name and phone number of your veterinarian

Place all items in a sturdy, closed container outside your home where it can be easily located. Restock food and water twice a year. For detailed information on an emergency preparedness kit, please visit the Homeland Security website at www.ready.gov/america.

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