



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 44 – October 28 - November 2

Home Emergency Preparedness

Natural and man-made disasters can strike at any time. Have your own emergency response plans when you're at work, at home, on vacation, or on the road. In 2018, there were around 60,000 weather-related events that resulted in almost 600 deaths and 4,300 injuries. Flash floods, tropical storms, and heat waves resulted in the most deaths that year, according to *Injury Facts*.

Federal agencies like the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) are valuable resources for emergency preparedness. When you face a natural or man-made emergency, try to stay informed through the radio, TV, or Internet. In some cases, communication becomes nearly impossible when cable, electric, and cell phone services are disabled.

This week, we will discuss fire, chemical, and weather preparedness in the home and the kinds of emergency supplies you should keep on hand.

Monday – Fire Emergencies

If a fire starts in your home, get out immediately and call for help. Never go back inside for anyone or anything. Look for people and pets outside.

- **Minimizing Risks:**

Cooking and heating are the leading causes of home fires.

- Be alert! If you are sleepy or intoxicated, do not use the oven or stovetop.
- Do not leave food alone while it is cooking.
- Keep all flammables away from the stove, fireplace, and space heaters.
- Never leave the stove, fireplace, or portable heater unattended if they are on.
- When looking for a space heater, consider one that automatically shuts off if it falls over.

- **Working Smoke Alarms Are a Must:**

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and in each bedroom.
- Keep smoke alarms at least 10 feet from the stove to reduce false alarms.
- Use special alarms with strobe lights and bed shakers for people who are hard of hearing or deaf.
- Replace batteries in smoke and CO detectors every year when Daylight Savings Time is over and we turn our clocks back one hour (this year Sunday morning, November 3, 2019).



- **Escape Plans:**

- Plan two ways to escape from each room and make sure all doors and windows open easily.
- Practice getting out with your eyes closed, crawling low to the floor, and keeping your mouth covered. Remember “stop, drop, and roll” in case your clothes catch fire.
- Teach children never to hide during a fire. Remind them of the escape routes and ensure they are familiar with them. You can have fun practicing fire escape drills and “stop, drop, and roll”.

Tuesday – Chemical Release Emergencies

Chemical agents are poisonous vapors, aerosols, liquids, and solids that are toxic to people, animals, or plants. In some cases, chemical agents can result in serious illness or death. A chemical release could come without warning, especially if you live within a mile of railroad tracks where a train may derail, or factories and plants that use or process chemicals. The effects of chemicals on people include difficulty breathing, eye irritation, loss



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of coordination, nausea, or burning in the nose, throat and lungs. The presence of many dead insects or birds may indicate a chemical agent release before you can smell or see anything.

Protecting against a chemical emergency includes:

- Making a family emergency plan to Shelter In Place and turn off air conditioning.
- Building an Emergency Supply Kit that consists of scissors, duct tape, and plastic to cover doors, windows, and vents.

Wednesday – Weather Preparedness - Tornadoes

Not one state in the continental U.S. has escaped the wrath of tornadoes. While tornadoes typically occur within the spring and summer months, they can strike at any time of the year. During this Fall season, strong cold fronts, late tropical storms and “Noreasters” can produce tornadoes. If a tornado is spotted or a tornado warning is issued:

- Seek shelter immediately. This includes basements, tunnels, interior corridors, and underground parking lots or subways.
- Avoid auditoriums, upper floors of buildings and houses, and trailers or parked vehicles. Stay away from all windows.
- If you are outside, lie flat in a ditch or other low-lying area and protect your head. Stay away from poles or overhead lines.
- If you are driving, drive at right angles to the tornado's path. If you can't escape it, get out of the vehicle and seek a low-lying area.
- If you are at home, head for the basement and take cover under a heavy table or workbench. If you don't have a basement, go into a windowless room in the center of the house. Cover yourself with a rug or mattress for protection against glass and debris.
- Know the difference between a tornado *watch* (conditions are favorable for a tornado to form) and a *warning* (a tornado has been spotted in your area and you should take shelter immediately).

Thursday – Weather Preparedness - Hurricanes

Unlike tornadoes and earthquakes, hurricanes and tropical storms are forecast ahead of landfall, giving residents time to take precautions. Hurricanes have wind speeds more than 75 mph and produce damage like tornadoes. But in addition to the wind, even small tropical storms can produce multiple feet of rain in less than a day, causing catastrophic flash flooding in areas that normally do not flood. If you are in the path of a hurricane:

- Board up windows and secure loose outdoor furniture.
- Know where to go in the event of an evacuation and how to get there. Establish an assembly point for family members to meet if separated, and choose one person everyone can contact with their whereabouts and status.
- If you are driving in heavy rain, try to safely exit the road, stay in the vehicle, and turn on emergency flashers. Never drive into flooded areas. Don't drown, turn around.
- Electrocutation is a real hazard in storm damaged areas. Avoid contact between electrical equipment, cords, metal, and water.
- Stay indoors until authorities tell you it's safe to go outside.
- Hurricanes can spawn tornadoes with stronger winds. Keep aware of tornado warnings.



Friday – Emergency Supplies

Home Supplies

Every home should have an emergency supply kit located in an accessible storage area. It's best if you store the items in plastic containers that are easy to grab and carry. Check these kits every 6 months. Make sure everything is up to date and expired items are replaced. Home emergency supply kits should include:

- One gallon of water per person per day for at least three days (that's 12 gallons for a family of 4).
- Enough nonperishable food for at least three days and a can opener. Keep protein-packed foods like tuna, peanut butter, and granola bars. Don't forget about food for your pets!
- Flashlights and hand or battery powered radios. Remember to include extra batteries.
- First aid kit with gauze, tape, bandages, antibiotic ointment, pain relievers, non-latex gloves, scissors, thermometer, tweezers, hand sanitizer, and instant cold compress.
- Tool kit with basic tools, in case you need to shut off utilities.

Car supplies

Every vehicle should have an emergency supply kit located in the trunk. Check these kits every 6 months. Make sure everything is up to date and expired items are replaced.



Vehicle emergency supply kits should include:

- A properly inflated spare tire, wheel wrench, and tripod jack.
- Jumper cables and a multipurpose utility tool.
- Flashlight with extra batteries and reflective triangles or brightly colored clothes for visibility. Consider adding a reflective vest as well and a poncho in case you need to get out in the rain for help.
- First aid kit (similar to the home kit described above).
- Drinking water and nonperishable, high-energy foods, such as unsalted nuts, dried fruits and hard candy.
- Car charger for your cell phone.

It's also a good idea to keep family and emergency phone numbers, including your auto insurance provider and a towing company, in your phone.

Discussion: Has anyone here found themselves in the middle of a natural disaster? What did you do? What would you do differently now that you have this information?