



Earth Gauge™ - National Preparedness Month

Environmental Information for Broadcast Meteorologists

September is **National Preparedness Month**, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. National Preparedness Month encourages Americans to prepare for potential threats by understanding risks in their communities and having a plan in place in case of emergency. While National Preparedness Month addresses both natural and man-made threats, this fact sheet will focus primarily on natural threats.

KNOW YOUR RISKS

Natural threats can occur in any state or territory at any time, and it's important to identify potential risks in your community.

- The most common natural disasters in the U.S. – **floods** – can occur in every state and territory.
- Forty-five (45) U.S. states and territories are at moderate or high risk for **earthquakes**, which cannot be predicted.
- **Hurricanes** affect eastern Pacific, southern Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico coastal communities.
- While **tornadoes** are most common in the Southeast, Midwest, and Southwest U.S., they can occur anywhere, at any time of year.
- **Thunderstorms** produce lightning, which results in about 300 deaths and 80 injuries each year; storms can also be associated with other dangers, including tornadoes, fires, high winds, and flash floods.
- **Wildfires, landslides, extreme heat and cold, winter storms, volcanoes, and tsunamis** can also affect U.S. communities.



Learn more about the types of natural threats, where they are likely to occur, and find threat-specific preparedness tips in the "Be Informed" section of the Ready America website: www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/index.html.

HAVE AN EMERGENCY KIT

Keeping a basic emergency kit at home can help ensure you have what you need to stay safe during an emergency. Some of the items that should be included in an emergency kit are:

- **Water** – One gallon per person, per day. Keep at least a three-day supply in clean plastic containers.
- **Food** – A three-day supply of non-perishable food, such as ready-to-eat canned foods, snack bars, nuts, dried fruit, etc. Keep food for infants on-hand, too. Include a **can opener**.
- **Battery-powered or hand-crank radio** to help you stay informed during the emergency. A **NOAA Weather Radio** will broadcast warnings, watches, forecasts, and other important weather information.
- **First-Aid kit**.
- **Dust masks**, which will help filter the air if necessary.
- **Wrench or pliers** to help you turn off utilities.
- **Maps of your community** to help with evacuation.

Find additional suggestions for emergency kit items in the "Get a Kit" section of the Ready America website: www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html.



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HAVE A PLAN

A study conducted by the Ad Council in 2006 indicated that 54 percent of Americans had put together an emergency kit, 40 percent had looked for information about preparedness, and only 39 percent had created a family emergency plan. It's important to remember that your family members may not be in the same place when an emergency occurs – having a plan in place can help ensure your family members stay safe.

- **Identify a trusted out-of-town contact** that family members can call if separated during an emergency. Sometimes, it is easier to make a long-distance telephone call than a local call during emergencies, and this person can help coordinate and communicate between separated family members.
- **Identify a meeting place in your neighborhood**, and make sure all family members know how to get there.
- **Identify a regional meeting place**, where you will go in case of evacuation.
- **Make a list of important information about family members**, including birthdays, Social Security numbers, and any information about medical conditions/medications needed. Keep a copy of this list with your emergency preparedness kit.
- **Make a list of information about family doctors, medical insurance, homeowners/renters insurance, etc.** Keep a copy of this list with your emergency preparedness kit.
- **Check with daycares, schools, and workplaces about emergency plans.** How will they communicate with family members during an emergency? Do they keep emergency supplies on hand?
- **Remember to plan for pets, too.** If you have to evacuate, pets may not be allowed at public shelters. Find tips for pet preparedness in the brochure "Preparing Your Pets for Emergencies Makes Sense: Get Ready Now" at www.ready.gov/america/downloads/pets.pdf.

DOWNLOAD A FAMILY EMERGENCY PLANNER in the "Make a Plan" section of the Ready America website: www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/index.html. This document will help you record important information, such as meeting places, contacts, and medical information. It also includes individual information cards that family members can carry with them in a wallet, purse, or schoolbag.



RESOURCES

Ready America – Find information about hazard risks, emergency kits, and creating an emergency plan. www.ready.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency – Find information about declared disasters/emergencies, types of emergencies, and preparedness tips. www.fema.gov/hazard/index.shtm

American Red Cross – Find disaster and public health information, and links to local chapters. www.redcross.org

Fact Sheet Sources:

Department of Homeland Security and the Ad Council. "Ready America." www.ready.gov.

DHS Press Release, November 14, 2006. "Homeland Security Launches New Ads to Demonstrate Importance of Family Emergency Planning." Available from: http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/releases/pr_1163518483290.shtm.