



Dear Parent or Educator,

News stories of disaster regularly make headlines around the globe. As you've watched others deal with these emergencies, you may have wondered what would happen if a disaster struck closer to home.

For parents or teachers of young children, the thought is even more troubling. How would you and your children cope? Perhaps you've already experienced a disaster — what would you do differently next time? The answer to both questions is clear. Be prepared.

Children can learn about fire, earthquakes, floods, tornados and other disasters, as well as how to protect themselves.

Work through each section with children to make sure they understand the concepts and learn important safety messages, discussing the key points and action steps to take. You may want to review this information before meeting with children. This information ends with a "quiz" that can help you find out if they learned the information. From time to time, quiz children again and practice key steps to help them remember what to do.

Children are wonderful at adapting to situations when they know what to expect. By creating a family disaster plan, you can help children be ready to deal with emergencies.

Emergencies

Even very young children can be taught how and when to call for help.

Action Steps for Adults

- ▶ Help children recognize the warning signs for the disasters that could happen in your community. You can get this information from your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter.
- ▶ Tell children that in a disaster there are many people who can help them. Talk about ways that an emergency manager, Red Cross volunteer, police officer, firefighter, teacher, neighbor, doctor or utility worker might help following a disaster.
- ▶ Teach children how and when to call for help. Check the telephone directory for local emergency telephone numbers. If you live in a 9-1-1 service area, teach children to call 9-1-1. At home, post emergency telephone numbers by all phones and explain when to call each number.
- ▶ Even very young children can be taught how and when to call for emergency assistance. If a child can't read, this emergency telephone number chart has pictures that may help him or her identify the correct number to call. As you explain each picture, have the child color the symbol on the chart.
- ▶ Take a first aid and CPR course. These are critical skills, and learning can be a fun activity for older children. Contact your local office of emergency management, American Red Cross chapter or hospital for information.
- ▶ At home, ask an out-of-state friend to be your family "check-in" contact. After a disaster, long-distance telephone lines often remain in service even when local lines are down. Tell children to call this "check-in" contact if they are separated from the family in an emergency. Help them memorize the telephone number, or write it down on a card they can keep with them.

Fire

Fire is the disaster that families are most likely to experience.

Talk with children about fire safety, and practice these activities with them.

Keep in mind that children under age five are at highest risk.

Safety Messages for Kids

- ▶ "Matches and lighters are tools, not toys. These tools help adults use fire properly. If you see someone playing with fire, tell an adult right away."
- ▶ "If a fire starts in your home or you hear the smoke detector alarm, yell 'Fire!' several times and go outside right away. If you live in a building with elevators, use the stairs. Never try to hide from fire. Leave all your things where they are. Once you are outside, go to your meeting place and then send one person for help."
- ▶ "If your clothes catch fire...stop, drop and roll. Stop what you are doing, drop to the ground, cover your face and roll over and over until the flames go out. Running will only make the fire worse."

Action Steps for Adults

- ▶ Show children how to crawl low, under the smoke to escape.
- ▶ Explain that they should feel a door before opening it.
- ▶ If the door is cool, open it slowly.
- ▶ If the door is hot, find another way out.
- ▶ If they cannot get outside safely, instruct them to hang a sheet outside a window so firefighters can find them.
- ▶ Practice "stop, drop and roll" with children. Explain that running away will only make the fire burn faster.

At home:

- ▶ Choose an outside meeting place, such as a tree, street corner or mailbox. Make sure it will be a safe distance from heat, smoke and flames. Tell children to go directly to this meeting place in case of a fire. This plan will help you know quickly if everyone got out safely.
- ▶ Make sure that children understand that once they are outside, they should stay outside. Children are often concerned about the safety of their pets, so discuss this issue before a fire starts.
- ▶ Find two ways to escape from every room and practice getting out of your home during the day and at night. Chart these escape routes on your own "home escape plan." If you have an escape ladder, show kids where it's kept and how to use it.
- ▶ Practice your home escape plan at least twice a year. Quiz children every six months so they'll remember what to do and where to meet.
- ▶ Install smoke detectors on every level of your home, especially near bedrooms. Clean and test them monthly, and change the batteries at least once a year. Make sure children know what your smoke detector sounds like.
- ▶ Check electrical wiring in your home. Fix frayed extension cords, exposed wires or loose plugs.
- ▶ Make sure your home heating source is clean and in working order. Many home fires are started by faulty furnaces or stoves, cracked or rusted furnace parts and chimneys with creosote build-up.

Natural Disasters

Disasters can strike quickly and without warning. While a disaster is frightening for adults, it can be traumatic for children if they don't know what to do.

Help children understand the concept of a disaster...

- ▶ Explain that nature sometimes provides “too much of a good thing” — fire, rain, wind, snow. Tell them that a disaster is when something happens that could hurt people, cause damage or cut off utilities such as water, telephones or electricity.
- ▶ Give examples of several disasters that could happen in your community. To get this information, contact your local office of emergency management or local American Red Cross chapter. Ask what disasters are most likely to happen and request information on how to prepare for them.
- ▶ Talk about typical effects that children can relate to, such as loss of electricity, water and telephone service.
- ▶ Explain that when people know what to do — and practice in advance — everyone is better able to handle emergencies.

That's why we need to create a family disaster plan.

Emergency Phone Numbers

My Family Name: _____

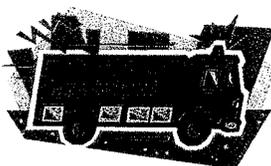
My Primary Phone Number: _____

My Address: _____

My Parents/Guardians Names: _____

My Parents/Guardians Contact Numbers: _____







For ANY Emergency Dial

9-1-1

Post this close to a phone or frequently viewed area.

Three things to always remember:

Address of Emergency

Phone Number

Type of Emergency