

Are you prepared for the next Broome County disaster?

While Broome County has had more than its share of disasters during 2006, there probably will be more in the future, either human-made or natural.

Disasters can happen anytime and anywhere, so it is important to be prepared before they strike. Natural disasters may come in the form of hurricanes, windstorms, snow storms, earthquakes, or tornadoes. Some of these occur at specific times of year, while others can strike at any time. Disasters may also be human-made, such as a chemical spill, which may require you or your family members to be confined in their homes, schools, or offices. Individuals can prevent such events from turning into major catastrophes by assuming a heightened state of alert. By taking precautions and planning for yourself and your family, you will be better prepared if a disaster strikes and able to cope until help arrives.

HOW TO PREPARE A FAMILY DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN

- Know what types of disasters are most likely to affect Broome County and how to prepare for each one.
- Know what form a warning will take (e.g. radio message, siren).
- Discuss all relevant information with your family.
- Plan how your family will stay in contact if you get separated.
- Pick a meeting place in case your home cannot be reached or you must leave it.
- Arrange with an out-of-state friend or family member to act as a telephone contact point, in case local phone links are disrupted.
- Post emergency numbers next to all telephones.
- Know how to disconnect or switch off all utilities.
- Install smoke detectors and test them regularly to ensure that they are working properly.
- Take a first aid course.
- Make plans for anyone in your family with special needs, such as infants, seniors, or those with disabilities.
- Make plans for your pets.
- Prepare a disaster kit and keep it up-to-date. (See below.)

STEPS TO TAKE IF THERE IS AN IMPENDING DISASTER

- Be prepared to evacuate very soon after the order is given. The longer you wait, the more likely you will be caught in heavy traffic. Do not return to the area until the announcement is given that it is safe to do so.
- Keep your car's gasoline tank full.
- Secure outdoor furniture, etc., that may be lifted by wind.
- Take photos of your home and belongings. You can use these later for insurance purposes.
- Board all windows and reinforce doors.
- Have sufficient cash on hand to live for one or two weeks. Credit cards, ATM cards, and checks may not be accepted immediately after a disaster.
- When evacuating your home, turn off all gas and electricity.
- If you leave your pets at home, put plenty of extra food and water out for them. Arrange your heavy furniture to give them a safer place to hide if the roof or another structure collapses.
- If you will remain at home, sterilize the bathtub with bleach, rinse it thoroughly and fill it with water.

FAMILY DISASTER KIT SUPPLIES

Water: Store water in plastic containers, 1 gallon of water per person for each day, for up to 3 days. Have extra water for pets.

Food: Store non-perishable food and ready-to-eat canned meats and vegetables, juices, soups, milk, sugar, vitamins, salt, and pepper. In-

clude high-energy foods (e.g., peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix, nuts, and dry cereals). Add comfort foods (candy, cookies, instant coffee, and tea). Be sure to include foods for anyone who may be on a special diet (e.g., diabetics, seniors, and infants). Remember to include food for pets.

First-aid kit: Start with bandages, adhesive tape, scissors, tweezers, needles, pins, antiseptic, moist towelettes, tongue depressors, petroleum jelly, a thermometer, latex gloves, cleaning agents, and sunscreen. Also include all prescription and non-prescription medicines, aspirin and non-aspirin pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medicine, an antacid, a laxative, and something to be used for poison control (e.g., syrup of ipecac or activated charcoal). Remember any special needs such as supplies for dentures, contact lenses, and eyeglasses. Include a first-aid book.

Tools and supplies: Include a battery-operated radio and extra batteries, flashlight, tape, needles and thread, pliers, thick plastic sheeting, nails, boards, duct tape, paper and pencils, matches (in a waterproof container), can opener, aluminum foil, plastic storage containers, disposable eating utensils, emergency cooking equipment (canned heat, etc.), fire extinguisher, garbage bags, signal flare, whistle, tire repair kit, disinfectant, and chlorine bleach. Also personal hygiene products, toilet paper, diapers, and feminine supplies. Basic clothing, sturdy shoes, rain gear, towels, bedding or sleeping bags, hats, work gloves, and sunglasses. Include a map of your intended destination for evacuation and entertainment supplies, such as games and books. Have a camera on hand (or buy a disposable one) to take photos of your property for insurance purposes.

Important family documents should be kept in a waterproof, portable container: This includes wills, insurance policies, an inventory of valuable household goods, important telephone numbers, deeds, stocks, contracts, passports, social security cards, immunization records, bank account details, and credit card information, as well as other family records such as birth, marriage, and death certificates.

Check your disaster supplies kit regularly. Make sure that food and water are not outdated. Check your batteries often. Store your kit in a convenient place and in an easy-to-carry bag.

ONGOING MEASURES TO HELP WITH PREPAREDNESS

- Keep your house in good repair. Check the soundness of roof supports. Repair or replace any cracked or weakened boards. Consider strengthening joints with metal clips. Check roof gables to ensure they are securely fastened to the roof supports. Replace any missing or loose shingles.
- Remove dead branches from trees, and keep shrubs trimmed.
- Keep materials on hand for boarding windows and reinforcing doors.
- Save your plastic milk jugs, clean them and store at least 3 per family member.
- Keep your car in reliable working condition. **DO NOT** store extra cans of gas in your home or auto.
- Review your insurance coverage and check to make sure you are covered for wind, flood, water, and other disaster-related hazards.
- Take photos of your home and your belongings.
- Make sure all family members keep their immunizations current (tetanus, typhoid, and paratyphoid). Also, keep your pets up-to-date with shots.

THE MORE YOU PLAN AND PREPARE, THE MORE EFFECTIVE YOUR RESPONSE WILL BE IF A DISASTER STRIKES.

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