



FOUNDATION BEYOND BELIEF

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Beyond Belief Network Guides: Disaster Preparedness for Households

Disasters can affect any family and community, so it's imperative to be prepared. Take time now to make plans that will help you both respond to any emergency, including natural disasters.

Gather the members of your household, whether that is your family, your roommates, or your pets and look at the resources below to help make a plan tailored to your local hazards. Write down the parts of the plan that are relevant to everyone in the household and keep a copy in a shared part of your home. Determine what is needed in your emergency kit and make a plan to purchase needed items and choose a place to store it where everyone knows and has access to it.

What to know?

Knowing what to do (and not to do) before, during, and after a specific emergency can help you make the right decisions. Each type of disaster requires a different response. Learn what's likely to affect your area and [become familiar](#) with how to handle yourself in each one including home fires, natural disasters, pandemics, technological and accidental hazards, and terrorist hazards. Sign up for [emergency alerts](#) so you know when you need to put your plan into action.

What to do?

- **Make an emergency plan.** Create an emergency plan with the people you live with that includes information about how to [receive emergency alerts](#), what your community's disaster plans are, how to take care of pets and peoples with specific needs, shutting off utilities, and

what to do [after the disaster has passed](#). Practice the plan at least twice a year and update it when necessary.

- **Build an emergency kit.** A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items that a household may need in an emergency. A basic kit should include water, non-perishable food, a first aid kit, flashlight and extra batteries, local maps, and a cell phone with chargers, inverter, or solar charger. Once you have your basic supplies gathered, consider adding items that your household will need for pets, children, and senior citizens. Prepare kits for home, work and vehicles. Check periodically to make sure items are in good working condition and are safe to use when needed.
- **Have an evacuation plan.** Physical safety is a concern during any emergency. In some situations, it's best to stay where you are and [take shelter](#) at that location. Use common sense and available information to assess the situation. Stay in your shelter until local authorities say it is safe to leave. If you [have to evacuate](#), leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather. Be on the alert for road hazards, and follow recommended evacuation routes. Have a designated meeting place within and outside of your neighborhood to meet the family.
- **Prepare your finances and documents.** In the face of an emergency, you likely will not have the time or focus to gather all the important documents you'll want to keep safe. Safeguard ahead of time the documents that are difficult to replace and will make response and recovery faster and smoother including identification, medical information, and insurance documents.
- **Include your pets in your emergency plan.** If you have to evacuate your home, take your pets with you. It's likely that your pet(s) will not be able to survive on their own and/or go missing. For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets. (Service animals may be permitted - check beforehand with shelters in your area.) When devising an evacuation plan, including a list of hotels and motels in your area that will accept pets. Don't forget to take or prepare any supplies that they'll need and keep a current photo of your pet on hand for identification purposes.

Event Ideas

- **Give to the Red Cross.** Make a list of all interested volunteers willing to donate blood, plasma, etc. Then, contact your local [Red Cross](#) to set up a group appointment. Keep in mind, this event can be combined with a collection (ex. canned goods, cash, etc.) for the Red Cross or another organization. To check whether volunteers are eligible to donate blood, check out the Red Cross's [Blood Donation Eligibility Requirements](#).
 - Keep in mind. Millions of U.S. residents still cannot donate blood due to a discriminatory policy excluding men who have had sex with other men (MSM) within the last three months. Female and nonbinary partners of MSM are also prohibited from donating blood for three months following their “exposure” to that man. This time frame is not based on any scientific research or criteria. Consider combining your blood donation event with a campaign to end this discriminatory policy. Learn more [here](#).
- **Volunteer.** Individuals or groups can undergo proper training and education to become [civilian volunteers](#). Often, the training and education process are free. Consider volunteering with [Meals on Wheels Association of America](#) which provides meals and disaster preparedness information to over a million senior citizens in the U.S. Training in CPR and basic first aid will allow you to volunteer with your [local American Red Cross chapter](#) with their mass care and sheltering operations. There are many opportunities to volunteer, so consider which would be best with your skillset.
- **Safety first.** Organize a safety-themed event (ex. pool, hiking) and learn how to handle emergencies that may arise with that particular event. Invite any individuals with relevant training to the event. Perfect for families.

If you decide to do a service event, don't forget to submit a [report](#) telling us how it went.

Questions or Concerns?

If you need help with planning your event or have additional questions, the best way to contact Foundation Beyond Belief is to use the [contact webform](#), which enables us to track the resolution of your question.