

Responder e-Learn Response Readiness

NC 2030 – Home and Family
Preparedness

Introduction

Proper planning is critical to respond effectively to a disaster. For first responders, knowledge that their families' welfare is in place enables them to better perform their jobs. For this reason, it is important to plan a strategy for home and family safety before a disaster event occurs so the family is prepared to deal with the emergency if the responder is deployed.

Module Objectives

After completing this module, learners should be able to:

- Identify the key components of a practical family disaster preparedness plan.
- Recognize threats posed by different types of disasters and the preparation measures that can be taken to lessen serious effects.
- Recognize the elements included in home disaster and evacuation supply kits.

Why This Matters to You

Advance warning of a disaster is not always possible. There may be little time to plan and make decisions at the time of the event. Preparing a disaster preparedness plan in advance minimize the event's effects on your family.

When developing a family disaster preparedness plan, it is important to consider that the disaster could result in evacuation or sheltering in place, and that basic services could be interrupted for long periods of time.

Module Content

There are four basic steps to developing a disaster plan:

1. Identify personal risks.
2. Develop plans for responding to the identified disasters.
3. Complete task lists developed in the plan.
4. Practice and maintain the plan on a regular basis.

Step 1: Identify Personal Risks

Good preparedness starts with knowing which types of events might occur in the area. The first step is identifying the types of disasters that could affect the region:

- Natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, ice storms, and floods
- Health-related disasters
- Human-caused disasters (accidental or intentional) such as chemical spills, release of hazardous materials, radiological or nuclear incidents, and biological events.

Step 2: Develop the Plan

Make a family disaster preparedness plan to help alleviate the stress and confusion that occurs during a disaster. The whole family should be involved in creating the plan to ensure that all family members know and understand it. The best plans are simple ones with very few details so it is easy to remember what to do when an emergency occurs.

Step 2: Develop the Plan - continued

Based on the types of disasters identified in step one, develop a plan which includes the following:

- Identify public warning systems used in the area and know what to do when a warning is issued.
- Determine two different places to meet: one outside of the home in case of a sudden emergency, and another outside of the neighborhood if authorities ask everyone to leave.
- Make a plan for getting back together if the family is separated.
- Identify a family contact and make sure all family members have this person's information.
- Outline a plan of action in case an evacuation order is given.

Step 2: Develop the Plan - continued

When developing the plan, remember to:

- Consider the needs of children, the elderly, and those with disabilities.
- Make a plan for care of family pets following the disaster.
- Make contingency plans in case a disaster happens when family members are at work, school, or other locations.

Step 3: Complete Task Lists

The next step is to complete items on lists created during the planning process. Creating checklists of important things to do before and after a disaster will help ensure that these tasks are accomplished and not overlooked.

Step 3: Complete Task Lists - continued

Key tasks to complete:

- Assemble emergency contact numbers, emergency supplies, and disaster supply kits.
- Check insurance policies to be sure the home and its belongings are adequately covered.
- Make copies of vital documents and store the originals in a safety deposit box.
- Make a complete inventory of all property and store a copy in another location.

Step 4: Practice and Maintain the Plan

Practice the plan to help the family instinctively make appropriate responses during an actual emergency:

- Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills at least two times per year.
- Replace stored food and water every six months.
- Test smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries annually.
- Check fire extinguishers to make sure they are functional.

Considerations for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities or mobility problems should prepare in the same way as the general public. However, consider some additional steps:

- Keep a list of additional emergency supplies including special equipment, prescription information, detailed information about medical regimens, and contact information of doctors and pharmacists.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets.
- Know the location and availability of more than one facility for life-sustaining equipment or treatment.
- Store extra food, water, and supplies for assistance animals.

Pet Care

Pet care needs to be part of the Family Disaster Preparedness Plan. It is best for the pets to stay with the family if evacuation becomes necessary. In cases where this is not possible, pets need to be boarded off-premises or have supplies at home while the family is expected to be away.

Pet Disaster Care Planning Checklist

The following items should be on the plan checklist:

- Identify places to stay where the pets can remain with the family or alternative places to board pets in case of evacuation.
- Make sure there are sturdy carriers available for all pets to keep them safe, calm, and easy to transport.
- Have identification, collar, leash, and proof of vaccinations for all pets.

Pet Disaster Care Planning Checklist - continued

The following items should be on the plan checklist:

- Assemble a portable disaster supply kit for pets and store it in a transportable container.
- If pets must be left behind, prepare an emergency pen in the home that includes a three-day supply of dry food and a large container of fresh water.

Evacuation

After a disaster, basic services such as gas, electricity, water, and telephone could be cut off. It could take days to help all the affected people.

In addition, authorities could recommend immediate evacuation, which leaves little time to prepare.

Evacuation Procedures

When an immediate evacuation order is given, leave quickly and follow instructions of local authorities. An immediate evacuation does not provide much time, which is one reason that a family disaster preparedness plan should be developed in advance.

Evacuation Procedures - continued

When authorities advise evacuation:

- Follow their instructions.
- Wear appropriate clothing including sturdy shoes to avoid injuries.
- Lock homes before leaving.
- Bring a disaster supply kit, first aid kit, and evacuation supply kit.
- Have a change of clothes, a sleeping bag, and a pillow for each family member.

If Evacuation is Not Immediate

If there is more time and authorities have not advised an immediate evacuation, additional steps can be taken to protect the home and belongings. These precautions include:

- Bringing pets into the house and make arrangements for their care.
- HHS Responder – NDMS RESPONSE READINESS
- Clearing the area outside the house of anything that could be blown around.
- Turning off utilities except natural gas unless told to do so. Natural gas can only be turned back on by the utility company. However, they may not be able to do it for days or weeks following a disaster.

Disaster Supply Kit

Keep a disaster supply kit at home as well as smaller kits in all vehicles. Make sure the kit covers the needs of the entire family. Replace and reorganize the contents of the kit every six months. Keep items in airtight plastic bags, and store the kit in transportable containers in a convenient place. Make sure all family members know where the kit is located.

Disaster Supply Kit - continued

At a minimum, a disaster supply kit should include:

- A portable battery-operated radio or television with extra charged batteries.
- A flashlight with extra charged batteries.
- A first aid kit and manual.
- Credit cards, cash, and personal identification.

First Aid Kit

Store first aid kits with the disaster supply kit. Keep one in the car if possible.

At a minimum, a first aid kit should include:

- A first aid manual.
- Bandages, gauze pads, antiseptics, soap, moistened towelettes, and latex gloves.
- Safety pins, tweezers, scissors, thermometer, tongue depressors.
- Prescription drugs, aspirin or other non-aspirin pain reliever, antacids and anti-diarrhea medication.

Evaluation Supply Kit

Keep an evacuation supply kit on hand in addition to the disaster supply kit. Keep it stocked with three days of supplies in a clearly labeled and transportable container.

Evaluation Supply Kit - continued

Evacuation supply kits should include:

- A three-day supply of water and non-perishable food for all family members.
- Basic kitchen accessories such as a can opener, mess kits, utility knife, and cooking fuel.
- A complete change of clothing for each family member.
- Blankets or sleeping bags for each family member.
- Sanitation and hygiene items for each family member.
- Games and entertainment accessories.

Home Disaster Supply Kit

The following items would be useful for a family confined to the home with or without utilities:

- Keep wrenches to turn off household gas and water near the shut-off valves.
- Store a week's supply of water and non-perishable food.
- Make sure that extra blankets and sleeping bags are available.

Home Disaster Supply Kit - continued

In addition, it is a good idea to have a National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio with tone alert features. NOAA Weather Radio is an "all-hazards" radio network, which makes it the most comprehensive single source for weather and emergency information available to the public.

Water Considerations

An adequate supply of clean water is a top priority in an emergency. Keep a minimum three-day supply of water per person.

- Store water in plastic containers and replace every six months.
- Plan on one gallon of water per person per day.
- Water from other sources can be made portable by boiling, treating with chlorine or distilling.

Food Considerations

Keep a minimum of three-day supply of food on hand. Most experts recommend having a two-week supply available.

- Select food that requires no cooking, refrigeration, preparation and little water.
- Avoid salty foods or commercially dehydrated foods in case the water supply is an issue.
- If the electricity goes off, use perishable foods from the refrigerator first followed by food from the freezer and then non-perishable foods.
- Store non-perishable food for animals.
- Keep cooking fuel or sterno on hand.

Important Documents

Keep copies of the following documents in a waterproof container with originals stored in a safe deposit box if possible:

- Wills, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, stocks and bonds.
- Passports, social security cards, and immunization records.
- Bank and credit card account numbers.
- Household possessions inventory.
- Personal documents such as photos and letters.

Post-Disaster Damage and Risk Assessment

Following a disaster event, damages and risks are often present and require appropriate action.

- Check the home for damage and record any problems for insurance claims.
- Use battery-powered lanterns or flashlights when examining buildings.
- Avoid using candles or matches.
- Check for gas leaks, electrical system damage, sewer and water line damage, and other hazards.

Post-Disaster Damage and Risk Assessment - continued

Following a disaster event, damages and risks are often present and require appropriate action.

- Clean up all spills immediately.
- Ensure an adequate supply of drinking water (e.g., an undamaged water heater may be the best source of clean drinking water).
- Avoid downed power lines and report them to the electric company immediately.

Conclusion

To ensure that the family is taken care of, prepare disaster plans ahead of time.

- Consider the types of disasters that are likely to occur.
- Develop a plan that covers the family's needs.
- Complete task lists identified in the plan.
- Practice and maintain the plan.
- Promote the family's full participation.

Think About It

Are you and your family prepared in case you are deployed with little advanced notice?

Bibliography

The following resources were used to develop the content of this module:

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- **Federal Emergency Management Agency, Emergency Management Institute.** (n.d.). IS-2 Emergency preparedness USA. Unit 2. Washington, D.C.
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency, Emergency Management Institute.** (n.d.). IS 10: Animals in disaster. Module A: Awareness and preparedness. Washington, D.C.

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The following resources were used to develop the content of this module:

- **National Disaster Education Coalition.** (1999). Talking about disaster: Guide for standard messages. Washington, D.C.
- **Ready.gov.** U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Retrieved November 8, 2005 from <http://www.ready.gov>.
- **U.S. Fire Administration.** (n.d.). Q-534 ERT: SS Emergency Response to Terrorism. Emmitsburg, MD.

Additional Resources

The following Web sites provided information associated with this module.

- <http://www.fema.gov> – Federal Emergency Management Agency.
- <http://training.fema.gov> – Enrollment in other FEMA independent study courses may be accomplished electronically through the FEMA home page.
- <http://www.ready.gov> – U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- <http://www.bt.cdc.gov> – U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.