



# **Weather Preparedness Instructional Guide**



**RECOVERY PROJECT**

**“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.”**

**- Alexander Graham Bell**

## Contents

Who are we? .....	3
Did You Know?.....	4
How to Prepare for Inclement Weather .....	6
Pre: Organize & Prepare.....	7
My Personal Disaster Plan.....	8
Emergency Plan Example.....	9
Emergency Plan .....	10
Emergency Disaster Kit .....	11
What can go into an emergency kit?.....	12
Importance of Protecting Essential Documents.....	14
Home Evacuation Plans .....	15
Example Evacuation Plan .....	16
Local Alerts/Warnings.....	17
Tips to Prepare Your Home .....	18
“General Preparation” .....	18
“Specific Preparation” .....	19
During: Survive .....	20
Safety First.....	21
Emotional Well-being and Support .....	22
Coping Skills .....	22
Post: Recover & Review.....	24
Coping After a Disaster .....	25
Common Adult Reactions: .....	25
Tips for Coping:.....	25
Common Children & Adolescents Reactions:.....	26
Tips for Coping:.....	27
Who to Contact for Important Documents Replacement.....	29
Frequently Asked Questions.....	31

## Who are we?

As we are all aware, in previous years, the natural disasters that have impacted the Middle Tennessee area have created a need in our communities. Coupled with other predicaments, such as the pandemic, lack of resources, and minimal support, can leave our communities feeling hopeless. The Federal Emergency Management Agency saw the need and sought to fulfill the need by funding a grant to create the Tennessee Recovery Project.

The Tennessee Recovery Project (TRP) was established as a supportive resource for those affected by natural disasters, specifically emphasizing emotional well-being. Our goal is to assist during this transition period of recovery through education, support, and resource connection. The Tennessee Recovery Project team will visit your county at least once a month. If you would like to connect with us during our visit or plan an event, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We understand that this topic may not be easy to discuss, and it could be triggering, especially if you have personally been affected by a natural disaster. This booklet has included a personalized disaster plan to help navigate those conversations. We have included a list of resources/strategies to help individuals connect with professionals, build confidence, and create a safe space to have these discussions.

**Mental Health Crisis Services 1-800-704-2651  
or the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline  
by dialing 988**

**First Time Appointments  
1-877-567-6051**

**Substance Use Treatment Recovery (SUTR)  
Medical Detox/Residential  
931-266-0646**

For more information, please visit us online at  
[www.vbhcs.org](http://www.vbhcs.org)

## Did You Know?

- Per the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Natural disasters affect 218 million people worldwide and claim 68,000 lives annually.
- Overall, 91% of Americans report they have experienced a natural disaster as most (92%) state they have been negatively impacted, varying from power outages (79%), home/property damage (26%), lost income (16%) damaged vehicles (19%) and evacuation (17%). Refer to image 3



An estimated **90%** of natural disasters in the U.S. involve flooding.  
*(DHS)*

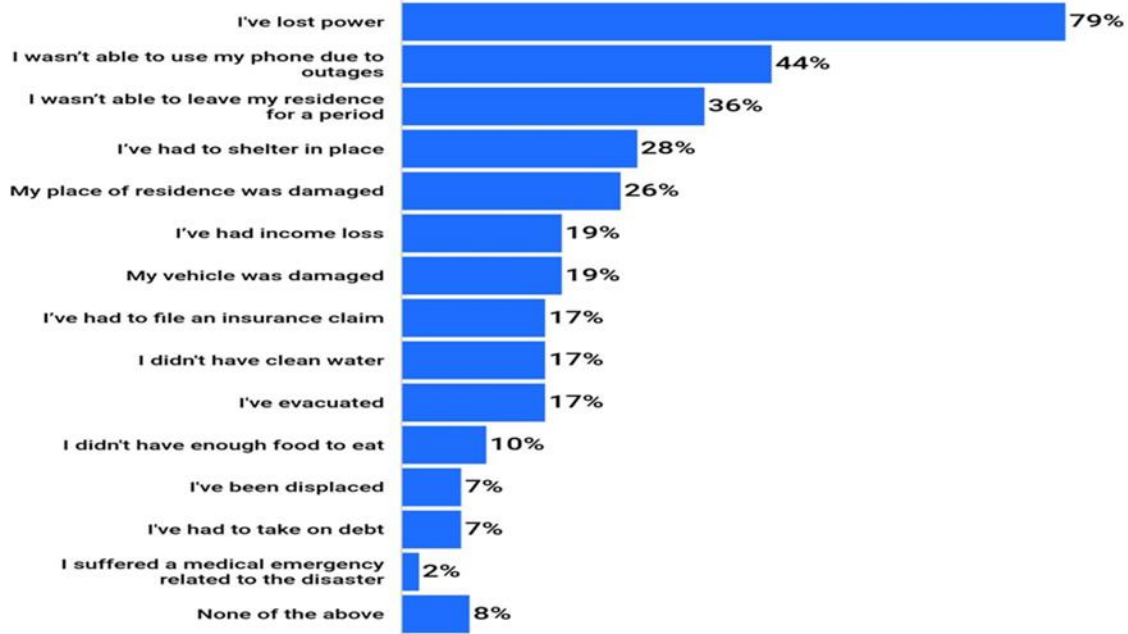


The average lead time for a tornado warning is **13 minutes**.  
*(NOAA)*



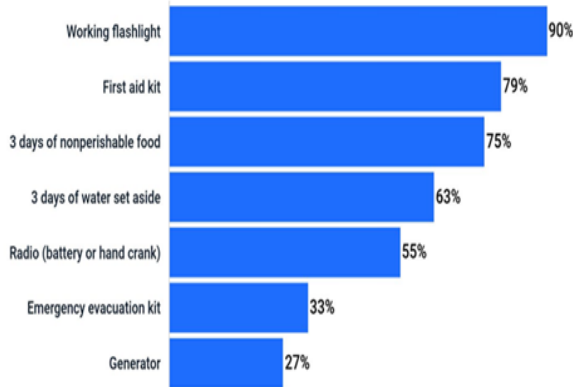
About **1 in 10** homes were impacted by natural disasters in 2021.  
*(CoreLogic)*

### Ways Americans have been impacted by natural disasters



Source: ValuePenguin survey of 1,432 consumers who live in an area impacted by natural disasters, conducted in July 2022. Respondents could select multiple answers, unless they selected "none of the above."

**Whether consumers have key natural disaster supplies at home**

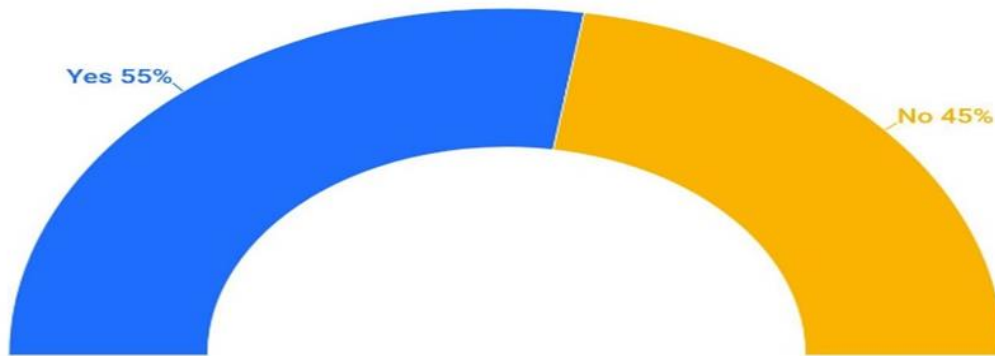


Source: ValuePenguin survey of 1,577 consumers conducted in July 2022.

Based on a data collection survey posted by Journalist Maggie Davis, Approximately two-thirds of Americans do not feel fully prepared for potential natural disasters and lack essential emergency preparedness items. These items include generators (73%), emergency evacuation kits (68%), and radios (45%).

- Approximately 45% of Americans are unaware of what their insurance covers pertaining to natural disasters (Davis, Maggie, 2022.).

**Do Americans know what their insurance will cover when it comes to claims that occur because of a natural disaster?**



Source: ValuePenguin survey of 1,577 consumers conducted in July 2022.

<https://www.bankrate.com/insurance/homeowners-insurance/natural-disaster-statistics/>

<https://www.cNBC.com/2022/02/17/natural-disasters-such-as-fires-hurricanes-hit-1-in-10-us-homes-in2021.html>

<https://www.thezebra.com/resources/research/natural-disaster-statistics/>

<https://www.weather.gov/hazstat/#>

<https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/home-and-community/safety-topics/weather-related-deaths-and-injuries/>

<https://today.yougov.com/topics/society/articles-reports/2018/07/17/americans-disaster-preparedness-2018>

<https://www.valuepenguin.com/natural-disaster-preparedness-survey>

Tornadoes in Tennessee: Here's what to know, understand and remember (tennessean.com)

Tennessee - Extreme Heat | States at Risk

<https://crisisequipped.com/what-natural-disasters-occur-in-tennessee/>

<https://www.tn.gov/tema.html>

## How to Prepare for Inclement Weather

Find out what you can do before severe weather strikes. Preparation is key to staying safe and minimizing impacts. No matter where you are, use these basic guidelines for preparation, safety, survival, and recovery. Refer to other sections of this guide for more details on staying safe in specific locations and circumstances.

<b>Pre: Organize &amp; Prepare</b>	<b>During: Survive</b>	<b>Post: Review &amp; Recover</b>
<p>Make a family communication plan.</p> <p>Prepare an emergency kit</p> <p>Get trained on specific needs your family may have</p> <p>Review your property insurance, and safeguard critical documents</p> <p>Sign up for local alerts and warnings</p> <p>Monitor local news</p> <p>Prepping home and yard</p>	<p>Implement your family plan</p> <p>Seeking Appropriate shelter (depending on inclement weather)</p> <p>Utilizing radio/local news to stay updated</p> <p>Remain calm (Techniques to assist)</p>	<p>Ensure the safety of your family and home</p> <p>Access and Evaluate your property and home</p> <p>Apply for the help you need.</p> <p>Protect yourself from disaster scams</p> <p>Support your mental health</p> <p>Plan now for any future storms</p>

Pre: Organize & Prepare

# My Personal Disaster Plan

When a natural disaster is upon us, it is important to have the following:

A Plan

An Emergency Disaster Bag

A \_\_\_\_\_

A natural disaster is an event caused by nature that creates great damage or loss. Examples of natural disasters include floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, and more. Below is a plan of action we can put together for when a natural disaster strikes, and we need to act fast!

## The Plan

When a natural disaster strikes, I will try my best to remain \_\_\_\_\_.

I can prepare for a natural disaster by:

Talking about a plan with my family

Talk about where to meet my family if we are separated

Putting together my disaster bag

---

---

---

I can increase the safety of my home before a disaster by:

---

---



# [SMITH'S FAMILY] (EXAMPLE)

## Emergency Plan Example

### Emergency Contact Steps (if one step doesn't work, move on to the next)

First - Contact Family Members  
 Second - Contact Emergency Contacts  
 Third - Meet at a Neighborhood meeting place.  
 Fourth - Meet at an Out-of-town meeting place.

### Family Member Contact Info

Home Phone: 123-456-7890

	Email	Cell Number	Medications & Medical info
Mom (Rachel)	<a href="mailto:rachel@domain.com">rachel@domain.com</a>	123-456-7890	
Dad (Steven)	<a href="mailto:steven@domain.com">steven@domain.com</a>	123-456-7890	150mcg Synthroid daily
Ashley Marie		123-456-7890	Allergic to nuts
Thomas		123-456-7890	

### Where we might be

	Place	Phone	Times	Address
Mom	Work	123-456-7890	9-2 M-Th	1121 Cherry Lane, Anytown, NY
Dad	Work	123-456-7890	7:30-5:30 M-F	65 Corporate Lane, Anytown, NY
Ashley Marie	Hoover High	123-456-7890	7:30-2:30 M-F	315 Large Road, Anytown, NY
Thomas	Johnson Elementary	123-456-7890	8-3 M-F	22 Small Lane, Anytown, NY
Thomas	Soccer at Finley Park		3-6 M, W	87 Center, Anytown, NY
Everyone	Church	123-456-7890	6-8 W, 9-11 Sun	212 Birch, Anytown, NY

### Meeting Places

	Place	Phone	Address
Neighborhood	Hoover High	123-456-7890	315 Large Road, Anytown, NY
Out-of-town	Grandma Brown's house	123-456-7890	2222 N 4400 W, City, NY

### Emergency Contacts

	Name	Phone	Email	Address
Neighborhood	Catherine Jones	123-456-7890	<a href="mailto:someone@gmail.com">someone@gmail.com</a>	212 Weston Road, Anytown, NY
Out-of-town	Grandma Brown	123-456-7890	<a href="mailto:someone@gmail.com">someone@gmail.com</a>	2222 N 4400 W, City, NY

### Resources

	Name	Phone	Other Information
Emergency radio			1610 AM
Family Doctor	Jim Stevenson	123-456-7890	
Medical Ins.	United		Policy 434-234234
Homeowners Ins.	John and Carey		Policy 123-321212

# [ ] Emergency Plan

### Emergency Contact Steps (if one step doesn't work, move on to the next)

- First - Contact Family Members
- Second - Contact Emergency Contacts
- Third - Meet at a Neighborhood meeting place.
- Fourth - Meet at an Out-of-town meeting place.

### Family Member Contact Info Home Phone: (    )    -    -

Name	Email	Cell Number	Medications & Medical info

### Where we might be

Place	Phone	Times	Address

### Meeting Places

Place	Phone	Address
Neighborhood		
Out-of-town		

### Emergency Contacts

Name	Phone	Email	Address
Neighborhood			
Out-of-town			

### Resources

Name	Phone	Other Information
Emergency radio		
Family Doctor		
Medical Ins.		
Homeowners Ins.		

# Emergency Disaster Kit

An emergency disaster kit is a bag put together and aside full of essential supplies you need in case a natural disaster causes you and your family to evacuate quickly. It is vital to have an emergency kit because if you have to act fast due to a natural disaster, you will not have the time to gather everything you want or need in such a short timeframe.

I will pack these items in my emergency kit:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

I will keep my emergency kit \_\_\_\_\_.

**When a natural disaster strikes, it cannot be undone, but if  
you need help, call 9-1-1**

## What can go into an emergency kit?

Go to Ready.gov and get a complete list of what you'll need if you have to survive for several days after a disaster. Below you will find a list of items to last for at least 72 hours.

A disaster supply kit is a collection of essential items your household may need in the event of an emergency. Ensure your emergency kit is stocked with the items on the checklist below. Most items are inexpensive and easy to find, and any item could save your life. Are you headed to the store? [Download a printable version](#) to take with you.

Once you look at the basic items, consider what unique needs your family might have, such as supplies for pets or seniors.

**Basic Disaster Supply Kit-** To assemble your kit, store items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supplies kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers such as plastic bins or duffle bags.

A basic emergency supply kit could include the following recommended items:

Water (one gallon per person per day for at least three days for drinking and sanitation)

Food (at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food)

Battery-powered or hand crank radio and an NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert

Flashlight

First aid kit

Extra batteries

Whistle (to signal for help)

Dust mask (to help filter contaminated air)

Plastic sheeting and duct tape (to shelter in place)

Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties (for personal sanitation)

Manual can opener (for food)

Local maps

Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery

**Additional Emergency Supplies:** (CDC) recommends that people include additional items in their kits to help prevent the spread of coronavirus or other viruses and the flu. Consider adding the following items to your emergency supply kit based on your individual needs:

Cloth face coverings (for everyone ages two and above), soap, hand sanitizer, and disinfecting wipes to disinfect surfaces

Prescription medications

Non-prescription medications such as pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medication, antacids, or laxatives

Prescription eyeglasses and contact lens solution

Infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, and diaper rash cream

Pet food and extra water for your pet

Cash or traveler's checks

Important family documents, such as copies of insurance policies, identification, and bank account records, are saved electronically or in a waterproof, portable container.

Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person

Complete change of clothing appropriate for your climate and sturdy shoes

Fire extinguisher

Matches in a waterproof container

Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items

Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels, and plastic utensils

Paper and pencil

Books, games, puzzles, or other activities for children

When creating an emergency kit, consider the needs of not only yourself but everyone.

If you or someone in your household has disabilities or other access and functional needs, visit <https://www.ready.gov/disability> for specific content and information regarding disaster preparation.



## Importance of Protecting Essential Documents

Natural disasters often occur without notice. Storms, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc., will call for a swift evacuation. If a catastrophic event damages a victim's home, it is necessary to protect the essential documents of the residents. Essential documents include but are not limited to Driver's license, insurance cards, deeds to the home, passports, social security cards, birth certificates, tax, and bank information. Losing these documents to a natural disaster can cause additional issues after the disaster. When individuals do not have their identity information, the process of gaining resources faces adversity. Individuals with identifying information would have a better chance to seek assistance faster because they would have proof of being impacted. Replacing those documents can be difficult and sometimes impossible.

Since natural disasters are so unpredictable, it is essential to protect those documents in the event one occurs. Safety deposit boxes are one of the most secure ways, and they are in banks and post offices and are often provided at a reduced rate if individual banks are at the same location as the safety deposit boxes. On the other hand, home safes are also considered effective in keeping your essential documents in one accessible location. Many home safes are fire-proof and do not break easily. Whether you choose a safety deposit box or home safes, plastic page slips protect these documents and prevent them from being damaged by water. Plastic page slips for all documents and keeping them in a secure safe will best serve everyone impacted by a natural disaster.

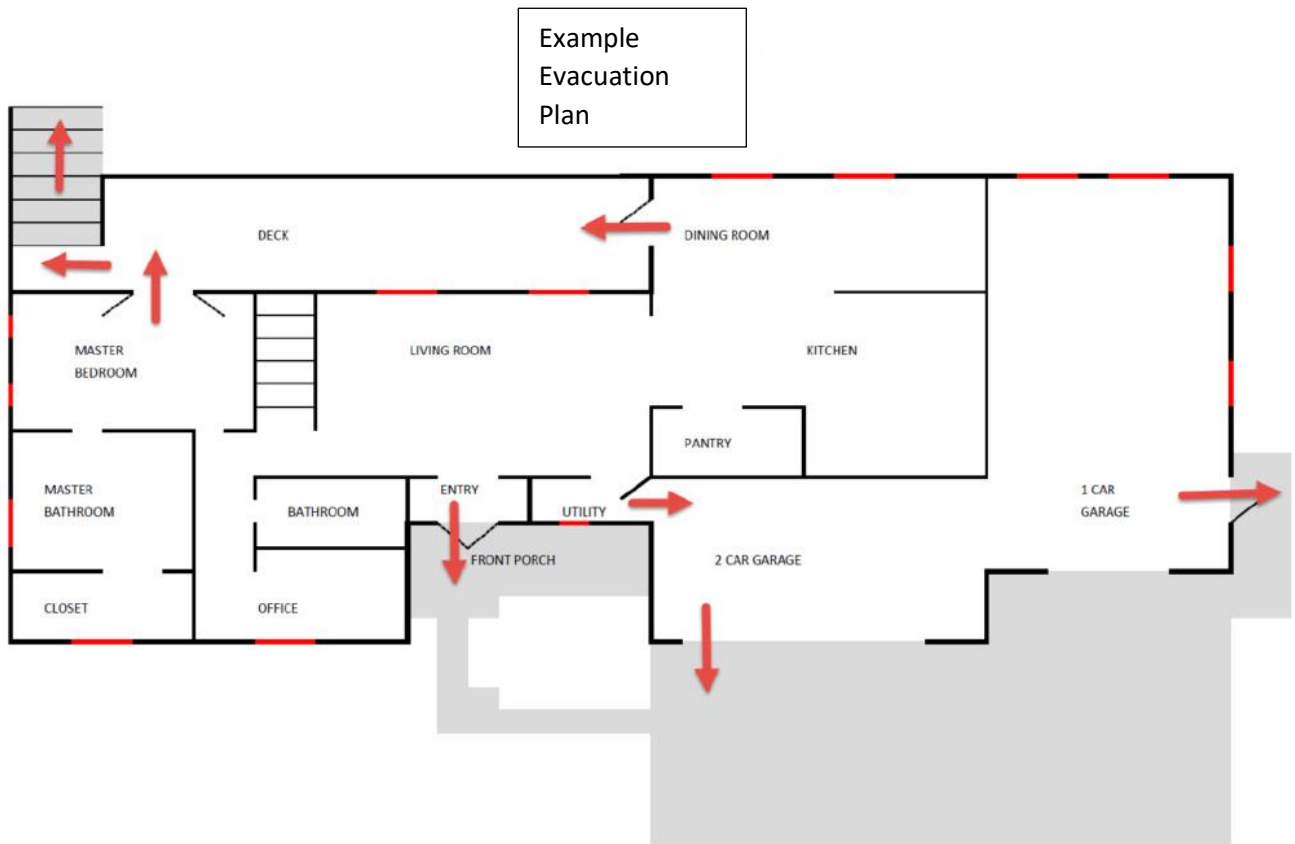
## Home Evacuation Plans

Do you have a home evacuation plan? If a natural disaster or safety concern required you to leave your home immediately, would you and your family know where to go and how to leave your home in the event of an emergency? Although we hope to avoid these situations, unfortunately, they do occur, and if they do, we can prepare for them as best as we can. When considering commercial buildings and businesses, evacuation plans have been around for a while. To think of applying this to your home might seem odd, but it is genuinely not.

Evacuation plans are often required by the city ordinance or building/life safety code in commercial occupancies. It is designed to quickly and efficiently get people out of a building (that they might not be too familiar with) during an emergency, thus saving lives. If it is good enough for a business, wouldn't it also be good enough for our homes? You may already have a general idea or even a plan; however, are your family members aware or familiar with this plan? If not, no worries; it is never too late to educate our loved ones on what to do in an emergency, especially children. This informational guide and evacuation plan is an excellent opportunity to discuss and teach everyone in the home. Children practice safety drills monthly in school in case of an emergency; implementing and practicing this at home can be lifesaving and help manage anxiety and stress. The more familiar everyone is with the evacuation plan, the more the chances of everyone getting out safely.

Please see the example evacuation plan on the next page for a visual aid of what your family's evacuation plan may look like. Below the visual aid is a link that will allow you and your family to create your own evacuation plan. The website allows you to create a floor plan tailored to your home.

## Example Evacuation Plan



To create your evacuation plan, please visit <https://evacuation-planner.com/>.

This website will give you step-by-step instructions on creating the perfect layout and plan for your family.



## Stay Prepared Anywhere!

Whether experienced or just starting, the **FEMA App** can help you learn basic preparedness strategies like creating a family emergency communication plan, what to pack in your emergency kit, and what to do immediately after a disaster.

With the FEMA App, you can receive real-time weather and emergency alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations nationwide. It can also help you find a nearby shelter if you need to evacuate to a safe space.

Find out if your location is eligible for FEMA assistance, find Disaster Recovery Center locations, and get answers to your most pressing questions. Instantly connect with FEMA's disaster resources, so you find the help that you need when you need it most.

**Sign up for emergency alerts and more with the QR Code below!**



**SCAN ME**

Or sign up at <https://www.fema.gov/about/news-multimedia/mobile-products#download>.

## Tips to Prepare Your Home

The best time to prepare for a disaster is before it happens. To protect a home from a natural disaster, being proactive is key. Protect Your Property with Insurance. Property insurance can provide coverage in case you have losses from an emergency or disaster. Review your insurance policies to see if you have adequate coverage. If you're not sure you have enough coverage, talk to your agent or company.

- Flood losses are not typically covered under renter and homeowner's insurance, so consider purchasing flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Plan (NFIP). Flood insurance is available whether or not your building is in an identified flood-prone area and can be purchased through insurance agents in most communities. There is a 30-day waiting period before it takes effect.
- Household Inventory Insurance Checklist- Back up your inventory by videotaping or photographing each room in your house and storing this visual record outside your home.
- Keep insurance policies, household inventory, and other important papers together safely and securely. Consider sending copies of these documents to a trusted friend or family member living outside your area.

### “General Preparation”

Building a home with wind-proof and fire-proof materials offers some of the best protection, but it is optional. Individuals can take some simple additional steps to keep a home safe before a natural disaster strikes. Please see below:

- Clean out gutters, making sure they are free of debris and water is free flowing.
- Prune any non-flowering trees and shrubs too close to the house. A good rule of thumb is to trim flyaway limbs at least 3 feet away from home.
- Check the weather stripping to prevent drafts. Do a once-over of the home's exterior to ensure no damage to the roof, siding, and foundation from the past season's heat and wind storms. Also, take this time to look for any exterior gaps wildlife could use to escape the cold.
- Check all safety equipment to ensure all security systems, smoke detectors, and carbon monoxide detectors have fresh batteries.
- Secure outdoor furniture; ensure everything is tied down and secured before a storm hits. Loose items, like sporting equipment, grills, or umbrellas, should be moved inside, if possible. Double-check that toys, yard tools, and other small items are not left outside before a storm.

## “Specific Preparation”

- **Earthquakes-** Secure heavy furniture to the walls. Earthquakes can be powerful enough to knock over heavy furniture, including appliances like a refrigerator. Items that fall can cause serious injuries, especially to young children. If the home is in an earthquake zone, secure heavy furniture to the walls with a bracket and be sure nothing near them can be damaged if they fall.
- **Wildfire-** In areas prone to wildfire, creating a defensible zone around your home and using non-flammable materials, like cement and stone, are just some strategies to protect your home. Plants in the yard can fuel the flames and spread the fire toward the house. Cal Fire recommends planting fire-retardant plants, like Rockrose, ice plants, aloe, hedging roses, sumac, and shrub apples. Maple, poplar, and cherry trees are less flammable than pine or fir trees.
- **Hurricanes and Storms-** can cause flooding. Review the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) flood maps to determine whether your property is in a flood-prone or high-risk area. Know where your electricity, gas, and water switches and valves are located and how to shut them off. Elevate your furnace, water heater, and electric panel to higher floors if they may be at risk during a flood. Buy and install sump pumps with backup power if you have a basement or lower property level prone to flooding. If you already have a sump pump, regularly check to ensure it is functioning properly. Elevate items stored in the basement to minimize damage from basement flooding. Consider installing check valves in sewer traps to prevent floodwater from backing up into the drains in your home. Use sandbags. Sandbags divert water, and placing them around doors, or flood-prone areas effectively keeps floodwater from seeping into a home during a hurricane. This step can be especially crucial during a storm surge. Individuals should stack sandbags at least one foot high for adequate protection.
- **Wind Hazards-** If you don't have storm shutters, make temporary plywood covers for windows and glass doors and store them in a readily accessible place.
- **Winter Weather & Extreme Cold-** Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected yearly. Make sure your home is properly insulated. Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows to keep cold air out. Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside to provide insulation.
- **Extreme Heat-** Install air conditioners snugly, insulating if necessary. Cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun. Outdoor awnings or louvers can reduce the heat that enters a home by up to 80 percent.
- **Possible Power Outage-** Prepare for power outages by charging cell phones and electronics and setting your refrigerator and freezer to their coldest settings. If you use electricity to get well water, fill your bathtub with water for flushing toilets. Unplug sensitive electronic equipment.

During: Survive

## Safety First

Implement your family plan. Seeking appropriate shelter for you and your family should be the top priority. Depending on the disaster, here are a few tips:

- **Thunderstorms:** Take shelter in a sturdy building while avoiding windows and doors. If outside, seek the lowest point on ground level. Avoid being under isolated trees, open fields, or bodies of water.
- **Excessive heat:** Take shelter in a cooler area, such as a building with air conditioning. If this is not available, seek shade or a body of water to cool off. Avoid the sun and heated spaces during this time and consume water. You may need to discard heavy clothing if needed.
- **Tornadoes:** Take shelter in the lowest interior of your home or any sturdy building. Stay away from the windows. Use your arms to protect your head, or cover yourself with a shield such as a mattress. If eligible, be aware of the heavy objects on the floor above and avoid being underneath them if they fall through.
- **Earthquake:** If indoors, drop to the ground and cover under a sturdy piece of furniture. Stay away from windows, doors, or anything that could cause injury from falling. If outdoors, stay outdoors and move away from any buildings or street lights.
- **Flood:** Move immediately to the highest ground available if you have not evacuated the area.
- **Extreme Cold Weather Conditions:** Minimize travel and stay indoors during the worst part of the extreme cold. Keep a winter survival kit in your vehicle if you must travel. Check tire pressure, antifreeze levels, heater/defroster, etc. Learn how to shut off water valves for potential pipe bursts. Check on the elderly and bring pets inside. Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing and a hat. Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves. Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from extreme cold. Try to stay dry and out of the wind.

No matter the natural disaster, remain updated via radio, television, or cell phone. Note that a battery-powered radio may be the most effective as the power/telephone lines may be out, dependent on the type and severity of the disaster. Follow through with your plan if this has been implemented.

## Emotional Well-being and Support

While it is easier said than done, it is important to remain calm. A calm mind is free from wandering and unimportant thoughts. Thus, allowing the mind to concentrate and even remember things better. Remaining calm during and after the physical actions to seek shelter is completed will assist with rational decision-making and actions needed to ensure that you and your loved ones are safe.



Stress triggers the body to respond to danger. Different situations can stress an individual (ex., lifestyle change, relationship problems, a divorce, parenting, a challenging job, or a natural disaster). Stressful situations can be overwhelming, and staying calm amid stressful situations seems almost impossible. Yet, staying calm in a stressful situation is possible. Being calm is an art that needs time to be developed. It will take practice to get used to staying calm in stressful situations. Staying calm makes you mindful, and this will help your ability to deal with situations.

Staying calm is the ability to make the mind quiet and prevent anxiety or worry. You develop your inner strength, and your internal becomes less and less dependent on external conditions.

This skill can be learned and should be learned. You can learn to stay calm by utilizing coping skills.

### Coping Skills

Coping skills or strategies are an action, a series of actions, or a thought process used in meeting a stressful or unpleasant situation in modifying one's reaction to such a situation. Coping strategies typically involve a conscious and direct approach to problems.

## TYPES OF COPING SKILLS

<p><b>Self-Soothing</b> (Comforting yourself through your five senses)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Something to touch (ex: stuffed animal, stress ball)</li><li>2. Something to hear (ex: music, meditation guides)</li><li>3. Something to see (ex: snowglobe, happy pictures)</li><li>4. Something to taste (ex: mints, tea, sour candy)</li><li>5. Something to smell (ex: lotion, candles, perfume)</li></ol>	<p><b>Distraction</b> (Taking your mind off the problem for a while)</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Puzzles, books, artwork, crafts, knitting, crocheting, sewing, crossword puzzles, sudoku, positive websites, music, movies, etc.</p>	<p><b>Opposite Action</b> (Doing something the opposite of your impulse that's consistent with a more positive emotion)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Affirmations and Inspiration</b> (ex: looking at or drawing motivational statements or images)</li><li>2. <b>Something funny or cheering</b> (ex: funny movies / TV / books)</li></ol>
<p><b>Emotional Awareness</b> (Tools for identifying and expressing your feelings)</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> A list or chart of emotions, a journal, writing supplies, drawing / art supplies</p>	<p><b>Mindfulness</b> (Tools for centering and grounding yourself in the present moment)</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Meditation or relaxation recordings, grounding objects (like a rock or paperweight), yoga mat, breathing exercises.</p>	<p><b>Crisis Plan</b> (Contact info of supports and resources, for when coping skills aren't enough.)</p> <p>Family / Friends Therapist Psychiatrist Hotline Crisis Team / ER 911</p>

**You can learn to stay calm through the following:**

- Shift your focus to the positive things. You can do this by practicing positive affirmations.
- Meditation is one major way to practice staying calm. Meditation helps you to be mindful and regain your peace amid stressful situations.
- Listen to music. Music has a calming effect on the mind and body.
- You can step out of the room to get some fresh air and organize your thoughts.
- Write it down – writing helps to get the negative thoughts out of your mind.
- Exercise relieves stress and helps to blow off steam.

**Specific exercises:**

- Deep breathing- attempt the 5-5-5 technique. Breathe in slowly through your nose for 5 seconds. Hold your breath at the top for 5 seconds, then exhale slowly through your nose for 5 seconds. Repeat the process three or more times (one minute total)
- Visualization- envision images or places you enjoy or find soothing. Be aware of what you might see, hear, smell or feel in the environment.
- Practice Mindfulness- understand that the physical responses you are experiencing are temporary, and you are completing all the actions you can control during this time.
- Repeat a mantra- repeating a phrase such as 'it will be okay or even a simple word like 'relax' may assist with grounding.

It is important to remain calm during and after the physical actions to seek shelter are completed. Being able to remain calm will assist with rational decision-making and actions needed to ensure that you and your loved ones are safe.

# Post: Recover & Review



## Coping After a Disaster

### Common Adult Reactions:

Following a disaster, most people will ultimately do well and return to their previous level of functioning. However, many people initially experience distressing thoughts, feelings, and physical symptoms and may engage in risky behaviors to help cope. Some may develop psychiatric disorders like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The impacts and reactions can happen immediately or may appear after some time. Here are some common adult reactions:

- Disbelief and shock
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Disorientation; difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Apathy and emotional numbing
- Nightmares and reoccurring thoughts about the event
- Irritability and anger
- Sadness and depression
- Disbelief and shock
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Disorientation; difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Apathy and emotional numbing
- Nightmares and reoccurring thoughts about the event
- Irritability and anger
- Sadness and depression

### Tips for Coping:

Having difficulty managing your feelings after major traumatic events is 'normal.' However, if you don't deal with the stress, it can harm your mental and physical health.

Here are some tips for coping with these difficult times:

- **Talk about it.** You can relieve stress and realize that others share your feelings by talking with others about the event.
- **Spend time with friends and family.** They can help you through this tough time. If your family lives outside the area, stay in touch by phone. If you have children, encourage them to share their concerns and feelings about the disaster.
- **Take care of yourself.** Get plenty of rest and exercise, and eat properly. If you smoke or drink coffee, try limiting your intake since nicotine and caffeine can add to your stress.
- **Limit exposure to images of the disaster.** Watching or reading news about the event repeatedly will only increase your stress.
- **Find time for activities you enjoy.** Read a book, go for a walk, catch a movie or do something else you find enjoyable. These healthy activities can help you get your mind off the disaster and keep the stress in check.

- **Take one thing at a time.** For people under stress, an ordinary workload can sometimes seem unbearable. Pick one urgent task and work on it. Once you accomplish that task, choose the next one. "Checking off" tasks will give you a sense of accomplishment and make things feel less overwhelming.
- **Do something positive.** Give blood, prepare "care packages" for people who have lost relatives or their homes or jobs, or volunteer in a rebuilding effort. Helping others can give you a sense of purpose in a situation that feels 'out of your control.'
- **Avoid drugs and excessive drinking.** Drugs and alcohol may temporarily seem to remove stress, but in the long run, they generally create additional problems that compound the stress you are already feeling.
- **Ask for help when you need it.** If you have strong feelings that won't go away or if you are troubled for longer than four to six weeks, you may want to seek professional help. People with existing mental health problems and those who have survived past trauma may also want to check in with a mental health care professional. Being unable to manage your responses to the disaster and resume your regular activities may be symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a real and treatable illness. Help is available. Make an appointment with a mental health professional to discuss how well you cope with recent events. You could also join a support group. Don't try to cope alone. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

#### Common Children & Adolescents Reactions:

Traumatic events are not easy for anyone to comprehend or accept. Understandably, many children feel frightened and confused. Fortunately, most children, even those exposed to trauma, are quite resilient. Parents, teachers, and caring adults can help by listening and responding honestly, consistently, and supportively.

By creating a supportive environment where children feel safe asking questions and believing their concerns are being heard, we can help them cope with stressful events and experiences and reduce the risk of lasting emotional difficulties. Although these may be difficult conversations, they are important. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to talk with children about these events.

Here is information on common reactions:

- Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Sadness, depression, hyperactivity
- Irritability or anger
- Having no feelings at all or feeling numb
- A lack of energy or feeling exhausted all the time
- Lack of appetite or the opposite, eating all the time
- Trouble concentrating or feeling confused
- Thinking no one else is having the same reactions as you
- Headaches, stomachaches, or other body pains
- Very young children may become clingy and fearful, have tantrums, or resume behaviors such as bedwetting or thumb-sucking

- School-aged kids may get into fights, feel socially isolated, or have trouble with schoolwork.
- Adolescents and teens may use alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or prescription medications to cope.

#### Tips for Coping:

- Let children know people are helping keep the community safe. It's a good opportunity to show children that there are people to help when something scary happens.
- Limit exposure to television and social media content about the disaster; repeated exposure to frightening or intense images increases distress.
- Maintain routines at home and school as much as possible
- Spend family time together; this can increase feelings of safety and provide helpful opportunities to talk and share.
- Ensure they have regular meals and get good sleep every night.
- Educate them to avoid using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs to manage distressing emotions.
- Find healthy ways to relax, such as music, reading, sports, and other hobbies.
- Stay connected with friends, family, classmates, and neighbors to give and receive support. We are helping one another aid in healing.
- Use words and concepts children can understand. Gear your explanations to the child's age and understanding.
- Make time and encourage kids to ask questions. Don't force children to talk about things until they're ready.
- Give children honest answers and information. Children will usually learn if you're making things up, which can diminish their trust in you.
- Be prepared to repeat information and explanations several times. Some information may be hard to accept or understand. Asking the same question repeatedly may also be a way for a child to ask for reassurance.
- Acknowledge and validate the child's thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Let them know that you think their questions and concerns are important and appropriate.
- Remember that children tend to personalize situations. For example, they may worry about their safety and the safety of immediate family members, friends, and neighbors.
- Be reassuring, but don't make unrealistic promises.
- Help children find ways to express themselves. Some children may want to talk about their thoughts, feelings, or fears, and others prefer to draw pictures, play with toys, or write stories or poems to help them cope.
- Be aware of how you respond to the tragedy and talk about it with other adults. Children learn from watching parents and teachers.
- Children who have experienced trauma or losses in the past may be more vulnerable to prolonged or intense reactions. These children may need extra support and attention.
- Monitor for physical symptoms, including headaches and stomachaches. Many children express anxiety through physical aches and pains. An increase in such symptoms without apparent medical cause may indicate a child feeling anxious or overwhelmed.

- Suppose the following are persistent or worsen over time. In that case, a child may need additional help: sleep disturbances, intrusive thoughts or worries, preoccupation with the event, recurring fears about death, diminished school performance, or aggression. If these or other concerning behaviors persist, seek help from your child's pediatrician, family physician, or school counselor.



## Helping Children After a Natural Disaster: Tips for Parents and Educators

Adults can help children manage their reactions after a natural disaster. Follow these key reminders and visit [www.nasponline.org/natural-disaster](http://www.nasponline.org/natural-disaster) to learn more.



### Remain Calm and Reassuring

Children, especially young ones, take cues from adults. Acknowledge loss or destruction, but emphasize efforts to clean up and rebuild. Assure them family and friends will take care of them and over time things will get better.



### Acknowledge and Normalize Most Feelings

Allow children to discuss feelings and concerns, but don't force them to talk about the disaster. Listen, empathize, and let them know most initial reactions are normal. Be attentive to, and obtain assistance for, feelings and concerns that may suggest that the child (or anyone else) is in harm's way.



### Emphasize Resiliency

#### Competencies

Help children identify coping skills used in the past when scared or upset.

#### Strategies

Encourage prosocial behaviors and good physical health.

#### Awareness

Highlight communities that have recovered from natural disasters.



### Strengthen Peer Support

Children with strong emotional supports are better able to cope with adversity. Especially among adolescents, peer relationships can decrease isolation and supplement support from caregivers who are experiencing their own distress.



### Take Care of Your Own Needs

You will be better able to help children if you are coping well. Take time to address your own reactions as fully as possible. Talk to other adults, take care of your physical and mental health, and avoid using drugs or alcohol to feel better.



### Seek Help for Prolonged Signs of Distress

With the help of naturally occurring social support systems, most children will be fine. However, some may have reactions requiring professional help. Consider getting professional support for children whose reactions continue or worsen after a week or more. Your child's school can be a great source of support.

For additional guidance, visit [www.nasponline.org/safety-and-crisis](http://www.nasponline.org/safety-and-crisis).  
© 2017 National Association of School Psychologists • [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)

## Who to Contact for Important Documents Replacement

The goal is to have documents protected and a copy in your emergency kits; however, if the documents still need to be replaced, listed below is the contact information for many agencies to assist survivors.

### **Birth and Death Certificates**

<https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/vital-records/certificate.html>

### **Lost Green Card**

Go to [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov), complete the Form I-90 application to replace a permanent resident card, and file it online or by mail. Call **800-375-5283** to check the status of your application.

**Lost EBT card replacements** – call 800-997-8888 immediately.

### **Bank Checks, ATM/Debit Cards, or Safe Deposit Boxes**

Contact your financial institution or get contact information from the FDIC by calling 877-275-3342 or going to [www.fdic.gov](http://www.fdic.gov).

### **Credit Cards**

Contact the issuing institution:

**American Express** 800-528-4800 or go online here: [lost or stolen card](#)

**Discover** 800-347-2683 or [www.discover.com/credit-cards/help-center/](http://www.discover.com/credit-cards/help-center/)

**Master Card:** Call 800-347-2683 or go to [www.mastercard.com/cgi-bin/emergserv.cgi](http://www.mastercard.com/cgi-bin/emergserv.cgi)

**Visa:** Call [800-847-2911](tel:800-847-2911) or go online [www.usa.visa.com](http://www.usa.visa.com)

**NOTE:** If you do not remember all your credit cards, obtain a credit report from any of the three major credit bureaus.

### **Credit Report**

**Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion** 877-322-8228 or [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)

### **Social Security Card**

**Social Security** 800-772-1213 or [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

### **Fraud Alerts or a Credit Freeze**

**Fraud Alerts:** Call the identity theft helpline at 877-382-4357 or contact the FTC at: [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

**Medicare Cards Social Security Administration** 800-772-1213  
or [www.socialsecurity.gov/medicarecard/](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/medicarecard/)

**Passport**

**U.S. Department of State**, Passport Services, Consular Lost/Stolen Passport 877-487-2778  
or <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html>

**U.S. Savings Bonds**

**U.S. Department of Treasury** 844-284-2676 or [www.treasurydirect.gov](http://www.treasurydirect.gov)

**Tax Returns**

**Internal Revenue Service** 800-829-1040 or download the Request for Copy of Tax Return  
at [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f4506.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f4506.pdf)

**Military Records**

**National Archives and Records Administration** 866-272-6272 or [www.archives.gov/contact/](http://www.archives.gov/contact/)

## Frequently Asked Questions

Even if you've done everything you can, it can be difficult to know how to prepare for a hurricane, tornado, blizzard, flood, earthquake, or wildfire that might affect your hometown. Before you jump head-first into recovery mode, be sure you're asking the right questions.

### 1. Is It Really Over?

You should never rush out before making sure that the coast is clear. What feels like an earthquake might have just been a foreshock followed by even more powerful seismic activity. (Small aftershocks can also cause major damage.) The same question should be asked following hurricanes and tornadoes. A lull in activity should not be confused with the end unless you've been told otherwise by the authorities.

### 2. Is It Safe To Return Home?

After an evacuation, most people are eager to return home to assess the damages and potentially start the rebuilding process. However, it can be dangerous to return home without knowing what kind of post-disaster conditions you'll encounter. Downed power lines, fallen trees, broken gas lines, and other forms of debris can present new dangers and should be left to the professionals. Your homeowner's policy could cover relocation costs or temporary housing, so check with your insurance provider.

### 3. Is The Water Safe To Use/Consume?

There are several reasons why water supplies may be deemed unfit for human (or animal) consumption, including sewage backups and chemical spills, so pay attention to boil water alerts or other warnings against bathing or drinking from the tap. Bottled water should also be a part of your disaster kit; local governments and rescue agencies may even supply some.

### 4. Who Is Responsible For Cleaning Up?

Unfortunately, natural disasters tend to disrupt life in very tangible ways. Wind, water, and other elements can make a pretty big mess, but it's not always up to you to clean up the destruction they've caused. Check with your local sanitation department or housing association to see if the job is one that you can opt-out of. There may be legal or safety reasons why you shouldn't touch that fallen tree.

### 5. Does Your Insurance Cover The Damage?

This question should come before and after any disaster. When purchasing a policy, be sure you understand what your insurance covers in the event of an emergency; afterward, don't be afraid to reach out to your insurance company for guidance. After all, that's what they're there for.

### 6. Where Can You Go For Help?

Dealing with the aftermath of any disaster can be hard, but you don't have to go it alone. News outlets and police stations generally broadcast details on where to go for assistance, whether you need food or temporary shelter.

### 7. What Can You Do To Help?

If you are safe and your home is safe, remember that your friends and neighbors may not have been so fortunate. Offering time, energy, or resources is the right thing to do. After all, you're helping rebuild your community—and safeguard its future.