

# Many more U.S. households ready for disasters: CDC

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Photo: Liz Roll/FEMA

But most don't have a written evacuation plan, researchers find.

(HealthDay)—Many households in the United States are ready should a disaster—such as a hurricane or earthquake—strike, federal officials said Thursday.

Almost 90 percent of those surveyed said they had a three-day supply of medications, nearly 83 percent had enough food for three days and 54 percent had a three-day supply of water, according to the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

"However, the majority of American citizens don't have an evacuation plan, which is critical," said CDC health scientist and lead author, Summer DeBastiani.

Only 21 percent said they had a written evacuation plan, according to the

findings published in the Sept. 14 issue of the [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) (*MMWR*).

Most of those who were prepared were English-speaking and better educated, the researchers found.

The study, conducted in 14 states over five years, is part of CDC's [Behavioral Risk Factor](#) Surveillance System, which is an ongoing telephone health survey that tracks health conditions and [risk behaviors](#) in the United States.

In another report in the same issue of the *MMWR*, the Tennessee Department of Health found only about one-third of households in two counties in that state were "well-prepared" for a disaster.

Moreover, in one Tennessee county, only 11 percent of households had a written evacuation plan.

The reasons for the disparity in the number of those prepared for a disaster between the CDC and the Tennessee reports aren't clear and the CDC could give no explanation for the differences.

To be prepared for a disaster, one should have a written evacuation plan that shows the best routes to take when conditions call for leaving the area, according to the U.S. [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) (FEMA).

In addition, FEMA recommends maintaining a disaster kit that includes:

- Water: 1 gallon per person per day for at least three days.
- Food: at least a three-day supply.
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and a National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio.

- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- First-aid kit.
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Dust mask to filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- Manual can opener.
- Local maps.
- Cellphone with chargers, or solar charger.

"Greater effort is needed to stress the importance of disaster and emergency preparedness, especially the need for a written evacuation plan. Public [health](#) and emergency services agencies should increase the accessibility of household preparedness materials and information to the Hispanic population and persons with resource and language barriers," the researchers concluded.

**More information:** For more details on disaster preparedness, visit the [U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency](#).

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