

Prepare for a disaster with a family safety plan

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From Florida hurricanes to California wildfires, these events are

reminders of the need to have a family natural disaster plan in place, no matter where you live.

The following steps will help you be prepared for an evacuation due to fire or flooding, whether the source is environmental or starts in your own home.

Start by putting together an evacuation supply carton with essentials, from needed over-the-counter and [prescription medications](#) and a first aid kit to three days' worth of nonperishable food and water. If you have pets, add in non-perishable pet food and any medications they take. Keep the carton in a cool, dry place to maintain the integrity of canned foods. Include a set of clothes and a blanket for each person, and small games to occupy children. Once a year, rethink your needs for the carton, update your kit and replace expired items as needed.

Next, organize important papers such as birth certificates, property titles and insurance records. Set aside time to scan them as well as photos and other irreplaceable documents and store them in the cloud or on DVDs that you can place with hard copies in a fireproof case near your emergency kit. Try to keep jewelry and small heirlooms in a place that allows you to grab them in a hurry.

Finally, create a family fire escape plan in the event of a house fire, and practice it twice a year. Identify two ways to get out of each room in case one becomes blocked, like a collapsible ladder for escape from a second-story window should the hallway become impassable from smoke. Consider mobility limitations of any family members. Make sure windows, screens and any security bars can be easily opened. Practice feeling your way out of the house in the dark or with your eyes closed.

More information: Learn more about being prepared for [emergencies](#) at Ready.gov.

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