

September is National Preparedness Month; USU Extension Gives Tips

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The fear of not knowing what to do in the event of a disaster, how to gather and care for loved ones and how to survive until help arrives can be more traumatizing than the actual disaster.

According to Carolyn Washburn, Utah State University Extension professor, by taking the time to prepare now, families can diminish fear and loss in the event of a future calamity.

September is National Preparedness Month, a great time for people to begin designing a family preparedness plan. The Ready Campaign and Citizen Corp organizations (<http://www.ready.gov/citizen-corps> and <http://www.ready.gov/about-us>) are now in their 13th year of encouraging awareness and preparedness for families and are helpful resources.

Disasters affect thousands of people every year in the United States and worldwide, disrupting daily functions and leaving lasting effects, but the American Red Cross reports that only 65 percent of Americans have emergency preparedness plans in place.

“When families have a plan in place, each family member can feel a sense of security and have the necessary tools to survive,” said Washburn. “For Utah, the biggest threat is a major earthquake; however, the most common occurrences are floods, which affect and destroy many homes and properties each year, and wildfires that rage throughout the state projecting heat, ash and smoke. It may be impossible for your family to prepare for all

disasters, but they should be informed of the most likely disasters and have a plan in place.”

Washburn recommends building an emergency plan with the following:



Points of

- contact - Make sure family members know how and where to reunite with each other.
- Stored food - Begin with a 3-week supply and then work toward building a longer-term supply.
- 72-96 hour emergency kits - Have one for each family member (including pets) and one for each vehicle. According to Cindy Nelson, USU Extension assistant professor, the following contents should be included: first aid kit, including basic first aid supplies and necessary medications for allergies, pain, etc.; snacks, water, non-perishable foods and a can opener; water bottle with a purifier or a filter so water from a stream or melted snow can be used; emergency thermal blanket to provide warmth or shelter; warm clothing including gloves; microfiber towels that are highly absorbent and quick drying and/or compressed towels to save space; tissues or toilet paper; matches or a lighter; cash (small bills); notebook and pen; contact information for family members, doctor, insurance, mechanic, etc., either on a piece of paper or stored in a cell phone. Also include a car charger for cell phones as well as a backup charger that is either battery or solar powered, flashlights, batteries and a portable radio.
- Sanitation supplies - Following a disaster, water and the use of plumbing may be unavailable. Without

proper emergency sanitation accommodations such as a portable toilet and waste treatment chemicals, conditions may become unsanitary causing diarrhea, respiratory illness or infections from wounds or sores that could lead to disease or even death.

- Grab and go financial kit - Take the time now to prepare a financial kit that includes your important financial information and copies of documents, family pictures and a listing of the value of important items.

According to the National Terror Alert Response Center, no matter who you are or where you live, you can be touched or devastated by a calamity, terrorist attack or natural disaster. Preparing for an emergency now provides the best chance of survival. Emergency preparedness should always be considered in the home, workplace and school.

“Once you are prepared, help others build their emergency plans so we have safe, strong communities,” Washburn said.

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