

TerranearPMC Safety Share

Week of March 2, 2015 – Family Emergency Planning

Emergency situations cannot be predicted. Although certain conditions such as severe weather (i.e. hurricanes, tornados, etc) may be forecasted, the time needed to prepare for such catastrophic events is so minimal that if you are not ready, chances are you and your family members and friends would be danger (grave danger? And as Colonel Jessup from *A Few Good Men* would respond, "Is there any other kind?"). This is why it is so important to discuss emergency planning with your family BEFORE a critical event occurs.

It is important that family members understand where to go and what to do in an emergency. This may mean writing down where your family members spend the most time, such as work, school and other places. Schools, daycare providers, workplaces, and apartment buildings should all have site-specific emergency plans that you and your family need to know about. A family emergency plan should contain the following:

- Escape routes
- Utility shut-off valves
- Records of insurance and other important family information
- Elderly and persons with special needs
- Family communications (contact information)
- Safety needs
- Caring for pets

A floor plan of your home should be drawn, showing two escape routes for each room. It is important that children understand the drawings and post a copy of the drawings at eye level in each child's room.

Chances are, when an emergency strikes, your family will not be together. Therefore, it is important to have a plan that explains how everyone will contact one another and to review what each family member will do in different situations (someone may be at school while someone else could be at a sporting event or shopping). Review what is to be done in each different scenario. Family members need to know the contact information (e-mails, phone numbers, etc) of specific friends or relatives. It may be easier to make a long distance phone call than to call across town (as the emergency event may have affected an entire community), so an out-of town contact – away from the potential impacted area - may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.

When it comes to your home utilities, such as electricity, water and gas lines, contact your utility companies so you understand what the shut-off requirements are. Be sure you keep a copy of these instructions handy (and write it down in your emergency plan).

Important documents such as property, health and life insurance policies need to be reviewed annually as insurance companies may not issue or change policies during storm season. This may mean that your coverage should be revised depending on your changing circumstances. As we have seen on television advertisements, flood insurance is not part of a typical home owner's policy. Therefore, depending on your particular situation, flood insurance may need to be considered.



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Important information regarding personal property may need to be documented. This includes taking pictures of high-value items.

Store important documents such as insurance policies, deeds and property records in a safe place such as a safety deposit box and make copies of important documents for your emergency supply kit.

Saving money specifically for an emergency account is advisable as this money would then be available during a crisis. Many financial institutions recommend having immediate funds available such as small amounts of cash or traveler's checks at home (and in a safe place) where you can quickly access them in case of an evacuation.

If you have a family member that is elderly or is disabled or has special needs, you may have to take additional steps to protect your family. This may be to have special arrangements to receive warnings or transportation to a shelter. It may be advisable to find out what special assistance is available within your community.

Ensure that you and other family members know how to use a fire extinguisher (and make sure that you have the right kind – an ABC-type is recommended as it can extinguish fires for combustible materials, flammable liquids and electrical installations). In addition, family members should be trained in first aid and CPR. Many times when taking these classes within a work environment, the instructor even points out that chances are CPR will be used on a family member rather than someone at work.

Pets are also affected by emergencies. Plan by identifying shelters and gathering pet supplies and making sure your pet has proper ID and up-to-date vaccination records. Have a pet carrier and leash on hand for smaller animals. Unfortunately pets are not allowed in most shelters.

Emergency kits are an essential tool during crisis situations. A kit should be prepared and available at your home. Having one in your car is also advisable. Emergency kits should have provisions/supplies for three days. Here are some important items that need to be included in your kit:

- Water (at least one gallon per person)
- Nonperishable food (at least three days' worth). Select items that do not require preparation, refrigeration or cooking. Examples are: high-energy foods, ready-to-eat meat, vegetables and fruit.
- A manual can opener
- A whistle (to signal for help)
- First aid kit
- Special needs items such as prescription medications, eye glasses, contact lens solution, and hearing aid batteries (after all if someone is hard of hearing, an emergency situation would only be exacerbated with a diminished sense of sight and/or hearing)
- Personal sanitation supplies (moist towelettes, garbage bags)
- Battery-operated flashlights and radio
- Cell phones-keep them charged or have a solar charger
- Extra batteries
- Local maps AND your family emergency plan

A bad attitude is like a flat tire: you can't go anywhere until you change it



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