

## **National Preparedness Month Tips**

**Who wants to think about disasters and unplanned emergencies?** Fires, theft, storm damage, medical emergencies . . . Most of us are in denial that any of these things will happen to us, or else overwhelmed at the thought of doing anything to prepare. So we do nothing; it's only human.

But these things do happen.

**National Preparedness Month was established in 2004** in an effort to encourage Americans to take steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and communities. It takes place in September, but any month is a good month to think about getting prepared. Please don't let this be a source of undue stress, however. The chances of these disasters and emergencies happening are miniscule, and you have plenty of time to get started in taking on some of these tasks.

**Here are some important things you may consider.** Look over the suggestions, see what seems doable, and just get started! It will be a great relief to cross any of them off of your list.

**Create a home inventory** so you can prove what you've lost in case of fire, property damage or theft:

1. **Make a list of all your possessions, by room, and take pictures or videos of them.**
2. **If you choose to use apps or software designed specifically for this purpose,** make sure that this sensitive information is secure. Also, regardless of whether you choose to use paper or digital lists, **be sure that at least one copy resides outside your home.**
3. Take home inventory one step further, and **make sure expensive items are appraised and listed** on your home owner's insurance policy. Update when necessary. **Save receipts** you have for big purchase items.

**Put together "Grab and Go" items** that you and your family would need if you were forced out of your home:

1. **Create an evacuation kit.** Lists of suggested items to include can be found at [redcross.org](http://redcross.org), and [ready.gov](http://ready.gov). Ready-made kits can be purchased at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), [beprepared.com](http://beprepared.com), and [redcross.org](http://redcross.org). Use these lists and kits and personalize them for your own needs.
2. **Make sure to collect copies of Vital Documents that you can grab to go if needed.** Suggested items include: Birth Certificate, Social Security Card, Driver's License, Health Insurance information, declaration pages from all insurance policies, contact information for banks and insurance agents, deeds, checks, marriage and divorce documents, passports, etc. There are more complete lists at [ready.gov](http://ready.gov), [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) and at many other sites online.
3. **Purchase grab and go "briefcases"** that house these documents for you, as well as suggest documents to include. Two popular ones are: LifeinCase, and The Vital Records Portavault.
4. **Learn how to turn off various utilities in your home,** e.g. natural gas, water, electricity.

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**Create a “Stay Put” Emergency Kit for several days without power:**

1. **Create an emergency kit** that would cover you and your family remaining at home for at least 3 days without power. Include things such as canned food or MRE's, bottle water, flashlights, batteries, first aid kit, medications and toiletries, rain gear, baby and pet supplies, etc. Many lists online, including at redcross.org and ready.gov. You can create your own emergency kit, or buy one online at the Red Cross store, amazon.com, and beprepared.com.
2. **Consider backup energy sources:** Buy a battery-operated cell phone charger, a battery operated weather radio, a “power inverter,” solar charger, or some form of a portable generator.
3. **Learn how to turn off various utilities in your home**, e.g. natural gas, water, and electricity.

**Pull together information that would be needed in a medical emergency:**

1. **Create a list of information, about yourself and others for whom you are responsible**, that would be helpful to have in a medical emergency. This list should include: medications, doctors and their contact info, insurance and pharmacy info, food and drug allergies, emergency contacts, advance care directive, immunizations, significant personal and family medical history, important information for a first responder, etc. Many sample medical history lists can be found online.
2. **Check out The Vial of Life**, a program that allows individuals to have their complete medical information ready in their home for emergency personnel to reference during an emergency.
3. **Look into “ICE” (in case of emergency) apps**. The information they collect (about medical conditions and people to contact in an emergency) will appear on the lock screen of your phone.
4. In case you or a loved one is incapacitated, **make sure that important computer usernames and passwords can be accessed**.

**Other general preparedness tasks:**

1. **Take photocopies of everything in your wallet** in case it is lost or stolen.
2. **Create a Family Communication Plan**, indicating how you will communicate with loved ones during an emergency. Make sure to include an out of state contact. See sample Plan forms at redcross.org, ready.gov and FEMA.gov.
3. **Remember your pets**. Put a “pet rescue” sticker on your home, and add pet supplies to your Emergency Kits.
4. **Create an emergency kit for your car**. Include items such as a blanket, sneakers, flashlight, flares, non-perishable food, water, cash, first-aid kit, tire gauge, gloves, multipurpose utility tool, snow shovel, ice scraper, etc. See redcross.org and ready.gov for more complete lists and for ready-made kits.