

Plan, Prepare and Pass the Test:

*6 Simple Ways to Prep for
Emergencies at Home*



**Construction Services, Inc.
Cleaning & Restoration**

Disaster Restoration Specialists

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Don't Panic. Prepare.

Remember those kids who aced every test in school? Maybe you were one of them. There were at least two in every class. One was an academic overachiever, a born genius who could be voted "most likely to win a Nobel Prize." But there was always another one, someone who was about average in intelligence, but nailed question after question under stress. Why? Because he or she was an expert at test prep. They spent time getting ready, knowing the subject inside and out, ensuring they were ready for anything the teacher might throw at them.

There's a test coming up. It may be a fire, a flood or even a terror attack. It may happen today, tomorrow or next year. There's a lot on the line for you and your loved ones, and there's no grading curve. This test is strictly pass/fail.



Like any other test, the secret is preparation. Putting a disaster plan in place for your family today **will** make a huge difference when disaster strikes. You'll be more likely to survive, more prepared to handle obstacles and able to return to a normal life when the crisis has passed.

Know the threats. Plan your response. Prepare what you need. Practice frequently. Decide to stay or go. Recover in the aftermath.

These steps will make all the difference. Let's get started.



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Step #1: Know the threats

Though some disasters, such as fire or severe storms, can strike almost any home, it's important to understand the specific dangers in your local area so you can plan effectively.

Fire is not only a common disaster, it usually strikes without warning. Ensure you know the basics of fire prevention, how to best utilize smoke detectors (see sidebar) and how to use an extinguisher properly.

Flooding is the most common disaster in the United States. Homes far from rivers and other bodies of water can be affected by flash flooding or by rainwater entering your home.

Severe storms and tornadoes almost never arrive without warning because of the improvements in weather technology, radar and communications. Be aware of any watches and warnings in your area and that you have a space in your home where you can shelter from severe weather.

Earthquakes are rare in the Midwest, but not unknown. The New Madrid fault, source of the four most violent earthquakes in U.S. history, runs from Southern Illinois to Arkansas.



Smoke detector tips

1. Install detectors on every level of your home, and outside every bedroom.
2. Make sure your detectors are approved by Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) or some other recognized testing lab.
3. Choose "combination" or "dual sensor" detectors if you can. These have an ionization sensor, which detects flame, and a photoelectric sensor, which detects smoldering fires.
4. Buy a detector with a "hush" button for your kitchen so you can silence the alarm temporarily if cooking sets it off. Don't ever remove the batteries.
5. Replace the batteries in your smoke detectors when you change you clocks for daylight saving time, i.e., twice a year. Replace the whole unit if it's more than 10 years old.



Industrial disasters are rare, but can be just as deadly as natural ones. Consider the area around your home and what plants and transportation installations are in the area. Are there railways nearby? A derailment could release toxic chemicals. If there is a major incident at a nearby plant, what would be the best response and how much warning would you receive?

Nuclear accidents are even more rare, but most Americans live within 100 miles of a nuclear power plant. Note what plants are near you, as well as those that are not so near, but upwind. These may send radioactive material your way in a major accident.

Terror attacks can be anything from a single bomber to a chemical attack across a wide section of a city to a biological attack spreading an epidemic across an entire nation.

Don't just look at sources, look at the **terrain** around you, and your home itself. You may be high on a hill, but are you on a slope that may experience flash flooding? Where are the closest emergency services? What features of your home might be most affected by certain disasters? What in the surrounding area will help or hinder you if you need to evacuate?



Step #2: Plan your response

In many ways, creating the family disaster plan is the most important part of your preparations. If you know what your options are in a dangerous situation and have made some of the choices ahead of time, you won't panic and all of you will be moving in the same direction.

Each plan will be unique, just like the family that makes it. Here are some tips for constructing yours:

Plan with your family. Call a family meeting and involve everyone in the process. The more involved they are, the more likely they are to provide good ideas or notice gaps in the plan.

Plan for each type of disaster. Consider each calamity you may have to deal with. Begin with fire, planning your escape routes, where your meeting place will be when you get out of the house, etc. Move on to disasters that will require you to remain in your home (such as a tornado) and those that may require evacuation, such as flooding. Choose what room or rooms will be best for a shelter at home and what routes and methods you will take if you have to leave. Decide where you will seek medical attention if necessary, and how you will deal with injuries if medical personnel aren't immediately available.



Know your neighbors

Any disaster which affects you is likely to affect all those living in your neighborhood. Now is the time to make sure you know who will need extra help or be able to give extra help in an emergency.

- Are any of your neighbors disabled or otherwise in a situation where they will need special assistance?
- If a disaster happens during certain hours, will there be children who are separated from their parents, such as latchkey children or kids at a home day care?
- Do any of them have special skills or equipment? Don't forget leadership skills, language skills, etc., that may seem to have little to do with emergency services but can be valuable in a crisis.

Knowing these needs and skills can save lives later. Your family's disaster plan may look very different if you know there's a trauma nurse living three doors down.



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Plan for wherever you will be. Some members of your household may be at school, work or other sites away from the home. Be sure you discuss how you will handle being separated, and make sure you know what the disaster plans at those locations are so you can adapt your family plan accordingly.

Plan in writing. Write down the basics of your plan. This will not only aid memory, it will make it available for you to review periodically.

Plan to be flexible. The basics of your plan should be firm, but leave room for changing conditions and common sense. Surprises should allow you to change your mind, not derail you.

Plan for special needs and special skills. Account for any family members who will need extra assistance or special items. Know who will help them and how you will attend to their needs. If you have medical training, trade skills or language skills you can use to help yourselves or your community, consider how you will put them into practice. Consider taking courses in first aid and CPR.

Plan to communicate. A family communication plan is crucial. No matter how bad things are, being able to locate your loved ones will be a major stress reliever, save time and perhaps save a life.



**Emergency Preparedness:
It's Your Business**
Five Tips to Kick-Start
Your Company's Disaster Plan

a publication of
LDR
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Plan for emergencies at work too

If your workplace doesn't have a complete disaster plan, be sure to download the eBook from LDR, *Emergency Preparedness: It's Your Business* (<http://blog.ldr4service.com/free-ebook-emergency-preparedness-its-your-business>), a free manual for putting one in place.



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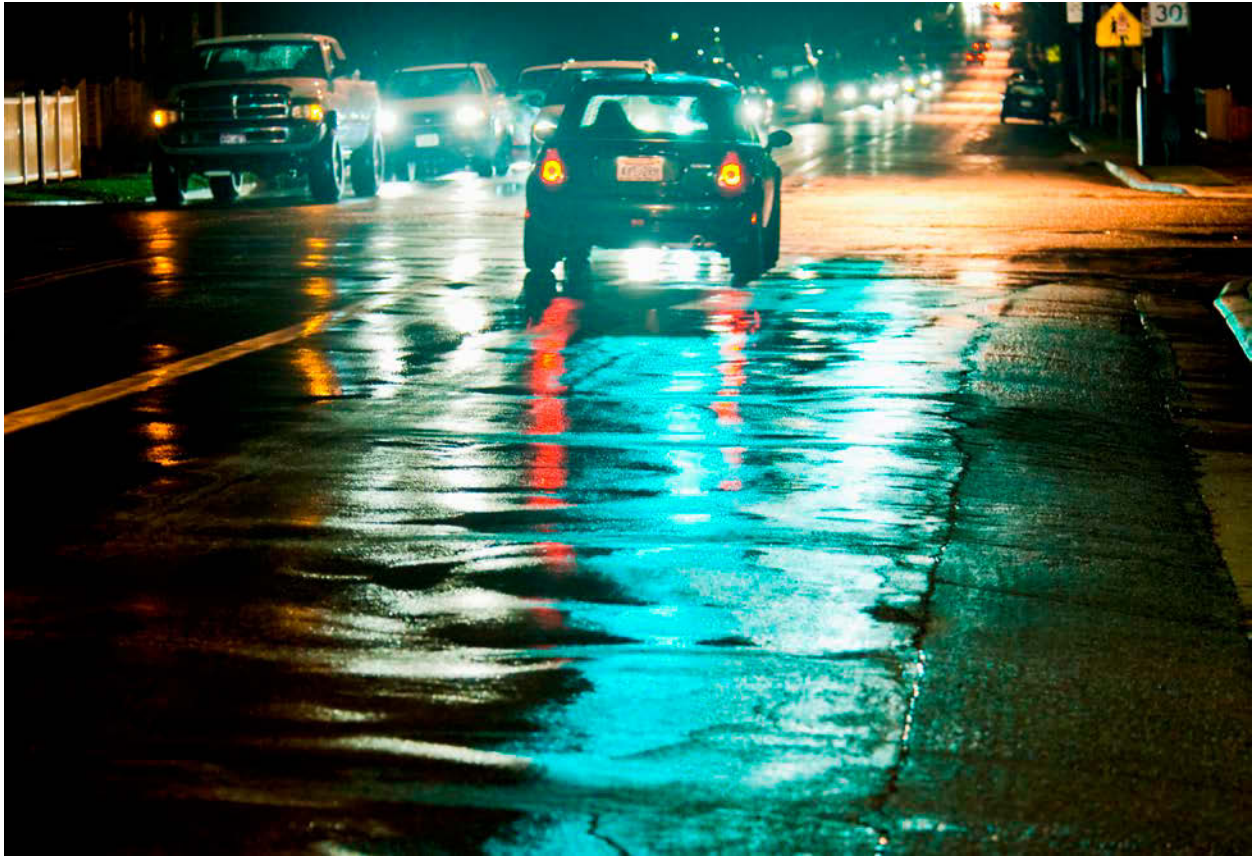
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The good news? It only takes three simple steps:

1. List each person's name, important personal information (such as allergies and medical conditions), email address and cell phone number.
2. List the workplaces, schools and other places they frequent. Each listing should have an address, main phone number, the separate extension of your loved one if they have one, and the location that the school or business will evacuate to in a disaster.
3. Add the contact information for a person out of town you can all contact (see sidebar) as well as a place you can meet in your neighborhood and a place you can meet in the region if your neighborhood is in danger. Add the police non-emergency phone number, the numbers of your doctors, pharmacist, religious leaders, insurance companies, restoration company and veterinarian and/or kennel. Include the address of Safe and Well (<http://www.safeandwell.org>), a website where you can post a message letting friends and family know you're OK.

Give a copy of this list to each member of the family. Keep one in an easily accessible spot in your home and place one in each of your emergency kits. Give one to a trusted neighbor or friend in case of fire.





Think out of the box and out of town

Damage from the disaster may make it impossible to make calls to family members in the local area. Being able to call someone far outside the disaster zone who can relay communications between you may be the answer.

Make sure you choose someone who will be easy to get hold of and is well outside your immediate area. Send them your family communications plan list and go over it with them. If you have a location you are likely to evacuate to, make sure they are aware of it so if you don't arrive there they can alert authorities you may need help. Make sure they will have no trouble putting an announcement on Safe and Well (<http://www.safeandwell.org>) for you if you are unable to access the Internet.



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Step #3: Prepare what you need

In a disaster, you'll either be safest by staying in your home or by getting far away from it very quickly. In this step, you'll prepare for both choices.

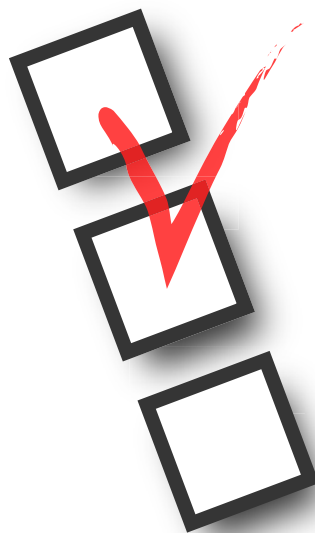
Your home shelter in some cases can be your entire house, but you should choose a particular room to deal with certain situations, such as tornadoes.

Basements are ideal. The below-ground location is best for riding out tornadoes or severe winds and gives extra protection in the case of radiation. In any case, your shelter should be a strong interior room with as few windows and doors as possible.

Move your emergency supplies into the room, and don't forget the battery powered radio. Make sure you know where all the vents in the room are, and if the threat you're dealing with involves air contamination, seal all of them off.


Your home emergency kit should contain what you need to remain in your home for three or more days. These items have been recommended by the Department of Homeland Security:

- ✓ Water—At least one gallon per person per day in sealed plastic containers
- ✓ Food—Non-perishable foods that won't need to be cooked. Canned foods, nuts, dried fruit, peanut butter and granola bars are ideal
- ✓ A manual can opener
- ✓ Battery-powered radio
- ✓ Flashlights
- ✓ Extra batteries for both
- ✓ Sanitation or "baby" wipes
- ✓ Soap
- ✓ Feminine hygiene products
- ✓ Garbage bags
- ✓ Warm clothes for winter storms
- ✓ First-aid kit
- ✓ Local map
- ✓ Utility and/or pocket knives
- ✓ Plastic sheeting (preferably precut)
- ✓ Duct tape



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- ✓ Dust masks or cotton t-shirt to filter dust
- ✓ Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- ✓ Whistle—To signal for help
- ✓ Entertainment items—Books, paper, pens, crayons, cards, etc.
- ✓ Family communication list



We've made it easy for you to plan for an emergency. Download our free Disaster Planning Checklist at <http://blog.ldr4service.com/disaster-planning-checklist>

Special items: Make sure you include diapers, baby food, medications and medical equipment, pet food, etc.

Your getaway bag should be a smaller version of your home kit. It should be pre-packed in a sturdy duffle-type bag and stored in a place where it can be accessed quickly. You will need smaller quantities of most items, because you will be moving to a shelter or pre-selected evacuation site. Make sure you also include some cash, important personal information (such as medical insurance numbers) and a sleeping bag or blankets.

Consider carefully what you will need, and if in doubt, put it in the bag. It is better to find you didn't need something (or even discard it) than discover you left it at home.



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Clearing the air

Nuclear accidents and some industrial accidents and terror attacks can scatter poisonous substances into the air. Even a conventional fire or explosion can contaminate the atmosphere for miles around. Take these steps to protect yourself:

- If you are caught outside during the event, cover your mouth with a cloth and get to shelter as soon as possible.
- Prepare ahead of time. Keep plastic sheeting pre-cut to the size of your windows and vents in your home emergency kit. These can be labeled with permanent marker. Make the pieces large enough that the edges will lie flat on the wall so you can stick them down with duct tape.
- Turn off your AC and heat systems before you seal the room.
- Stay inside unless you absolutely need to leave or authorities declare it safe.
- If you must evacuate, use a dust mask or cotton cloth to cover your mouth. When you drive, keep all your windows closed; shut off your vents.

In the case of radioactive threats, such as a dirty bomb or nuclear accident, try to put as much dense material between you and the radiation source as possible, and limit the time you spend in any unshielded location.



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Step #4: Practice frequently

How does a wide receiver effortlessly sidestep a 400 pound linebacker? He has practiced those moves again and again with a 400 pound linebacker who works for his team. There's little possibility of hesitation or indecision because the moves have become second nature.



Practice makes perfect. When the smoke detector or tornado siren goes off in the middle of the night, you want your best moves to be second nature, too.

Practice your emergency plans, especially fire evacuation, often. Run a fire drill in your home at least once per month. Each family member should know multiple ways to get out of the house safely and just one place to meet outside.

Practice on paper. Sit down and go over the details of your disaster plan every six months or even every quarter. Reviewing what you have planned will keep it fresh in your minds and allow you to identify changes you need to make. Try a "tabletop exercise" like those run by government emergency management agencies. Take a specific disaster and ask your family what they should do in that situation.

Don't forget to practice evacuation and communication. Just as you practice a fire drill to avoid chaos later, practice getting your getaway bags and closing up your house and loading them in your vehicle. Consider doing a similar drill with your family communication plan.



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Step #5: Decide whether to stay or go

A disaster has occurred. You'll need to make a simple but weighty decision: Stay or go?


Get informed. Use media or Internet sources to determine what sort of event has happened and what areas are affected. If you're told by authorities to stay put or to evacuate, do so. Pay close attention to these announcements because you may be advised to take certain routes or to assemble at a certain location.

Know why you're staying or going. Don't allow fear or stress to keep you in a home that's in peril or rush out into a dangerous environment. Remain calm, consider your options and act decisively.

Know where you're going and how to get there. During your planning stage, choose one or more destinations you can reach on your own if you need to evacuate. Make sure they're well outside the area that might be affected by a wide-scale disaster like a tornado. Also make sure you can reach them by more than one route, in case the main route is blocked or congested. If you don't own a car, know what method you will use to evacuate.

If you go: Do it quickly and calmly. Take your pets with you, but remember that they may not be allowed inside a public shelter. Take your getaway bag with you and lock your doors on the way out. If you suspect there are contaminants in the air, wear a mask and keep your car's vents and windows closed until you're in a safe area.

**No matter what,
remain calm and
follow common
sense.**



EAS
Emergency Alert System

Emergency Alert System

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is the national warning system used on radio and television stations in the United States. In addition to alerting the public of local weather emergencies such as tornadoes and flash floods, the official EAS is designed to enable the President to speak to citizens within 10 minutes.



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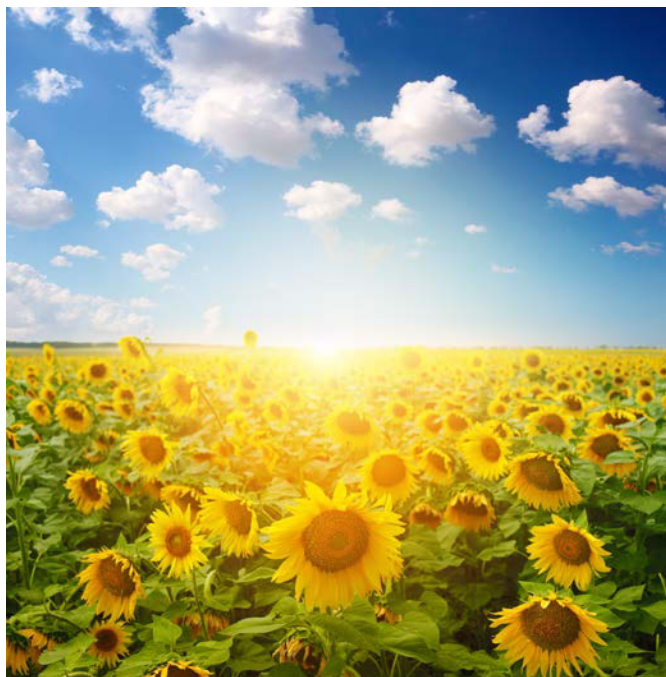
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Step # 6: Recover in the aftermath

Firefighters have returned to their station and hung up the hoses to dry. Angry skies have cleared. Waters have receded. You're left with a question:

Now what?

Returning to normal will be different for each family and each situation, but here are some tips anyone can use:



Don't enter your home until it's been declared safe.

If you haven't already done so, call your insurance company and your restoration company. It's important to choose a disaster restoration company before disaster strikes. Choose the right firm during your planning stage, when you're free of stress. Check their references and credentials carefully. Putting them in place beforehand may reduce the amount of time you wait to be served. Ask if they have an "emergency response" program that makes your home a top priority. The sooner your possessions are restored or replaced and your home is repaired, the better.

Take it slow. The event you just survived will likely be the most stressful you ever experience. "Normal" is just a word. Don't feel you need to hit a certain benchmark or compare yourself to others; this will only add to your stress.

Don't be afraid to reach out for help. If you need help with physical needs, stress or mental trauma, don't suffer alone. Reach out to a family member, doctor, religious leader or a relief organization such as the Salvation Army or Red Cross. As you recover, nothing is more important than your health.



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Plan, prepare and pass the test

No matter what their source, disasters can threaten your life and way of life, but those who plan ahead carefully—and practice their plan regularly—have a distinct advantage. To recap, follow these steps to establish a family disaster preparedness plan and use it successfully:

Know the threats. Understand the disasters that may occur in your area, natural, accidental or man-made, and what damage they can do. Know your neighbors and what assistance they may need or be able to provide.

Plan your response. Engage your family in planning how you will handle various disasters. Make your plan adaptable to changing circumstances and be sure to prepare a family communications plan.



Prepare what you need. Choose an appropriate shelter location within your home. Prepare emergency kits that will allow you to stay on your own for at least three days or evacuate immediately.

Practice frequently. Hold regular fire drills and rehearse your evacuation plan. Go over your plan together on a regular basis so it's fresh in your minds.

Decide whether to stay or go. When disaster strikes, assess the situation calmly and decide if you will shelter in place or evacuate. Gather the information you need, then act quickly.

Recover in the aftermath. Get your insurance agent and disaster restoration company involved as soon as possible. Take your time and get help if you need it so you can return to normal.



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About LDR Cleaning and Restoration

LDR Cleaning and Restoration specializes in complete fire restoration, water restoration and repairs from smoke, wind and vandalism damage to both commercial and residential properties in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin.

For more information, contact:

LDR Cleaning and Restoration
www.LDR4service.com

24-HOUR SERVICE: 888-874-7066



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