

# To *Your* HEALTH *Fresno County*

**Highlighting public health issues and ways to improve personal, family, neighborhood and community health.**



## **Preparing for Disaster**

June 28, 2017

One of the most important functions of our public health department is assuring the community's readiness to respond to disaster or emergency.

Such disasters or emergencies can occur at any moment, at any place, and with very little, or no, warning. Causes can be natural, as with an earthquake, tornado, infectious illness outbreak, wildfire, extreme heat or flood. Or they can be man-made, as in a biological, chemical, blast, or radiological attack or accident. They can also come in the form of a personal accident (a fall, poisoning, near drowning, choking or severe cut). The results are too often very tragic.

While the health department and its numerous public health partners stand ready in response to these threats, it is up to us as individuals to take action, before such disasters and emergencies strike, that can make the difference, for you and your family, between surviving and succumbing to such events.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently found that nearly 60 percent of American adults have not practiced what to do in a disaster and that only 39 percent have developed an emergency plan and discussed it with their household. This is despite the fact that 80 percent of Americans live in counties that have been hit with a weather-related disaster.

To prepare for personal accidents in your home, everyone old enough to understand the concepts should know basic first aid and CPR. A first aid kit containing all of the essentials should be stored in a designated, easily accessible (but young child-proof) place, and the contents checked twice a year. A fire extinguisher should be in a designated location, and the family should know how to use it. The number for poison control should be readily available to everyone (in cell phones and posted beside land lines).

Larger scale disasters generally require one of two primary responses, evacuation or sheltering in place. You should develop a disaster plan for both that consists of:

- A family communication plan
- Knowing which places in your house are safest, depending upon the threat
- Knowing escape routes and meeting places outside the home
- Knowing how to shut off water, electricity, and gas
- Fire resistant and waterproof storage of important documents
- An emergency kit, in waterproof and easily transportable containers with:
  - At least three days' supply of non-perishable food, water, medicines, medical supplies, personal care items, and baby supplies
  - A manual can opener
  - Alternative cooking equipment (not reliant upon natural gas or electricity)
  - First aid kit
  - Emergency blankets
  - A multi-purpose tool
  - Flashlights
  - Battery powered radio
  - Batteries
  - Activities for children

Keep in mind that it is extremely important to include your children in planning for disasters and emergencies, and to plan for pets. I encourage you to check out Ready Wrigley, the Preparedness Pup at <https://www.cdc.gov/phpr/readywrigley>. Further information is also available at <https://emergency.cdc.gov/preparedness/kit/disasters> and [www.fcdph.org/beprepared](http://www.fcdph.org/beprepared).

Here's to your health!



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