

Having an Emergency Plan

When disaster strikes, it is important for your family to have a comprehensive emergency plan that includes emergency contact information and detailed escape plans. By making your plans now, you can ensure your whole family will know the best course of action for any emergency situation. Consider the following suggestions.

Emergency Contact Info:

Designated emergency contacts will allow communication to occur faster and easier among family members and emergency responders.

- **Contact Cards:** Each family member should carry a small contact card with information about how to reach other family members and emergency contacts. This card should be taken everywhere – in a wallet, purse, backpack, etc. Include multiple emergency contact names and their telephone numbers. At least one number should be an out-of-state friend or relative, as it may be difficult to get in contact with those in the area, depending on the disaster.
- **ICE Contact:** List one or more “ICE” (In Case of Emergency) contacts in your cell phone. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), emergency personnel will oftentimes look for a contact saved under the name “ICE.” If an accident occurs, they know the right person to contact. Tell your ICE contacts that they are programmed in your phone and inform them of any potential medical issues.

Escape Plan:

Developing and knowing your family’s escape plan is an essential step in ensuring everyone stays safe and is able to locate each other after an emergency. Decide the details of your plan and discuss it with your family once every six months in order to be frequently reminded of the information.

- **Escape Route:** Each room in your home should have two escape routes. Have a floor plan of your home marked with these routes. Be sure that each family member, especially children, understands how to leave in all emergency situations.
- **Meeting Location:** Your family needs to know where to meet after fleeing from an emergency. Have a set location to meet if you are close to home, such as the next door neighbor’s mail box. Additionally, know where to meet if you are farther from home, such as the parking lot of the grocery or drug store closest to your house.

In addition to having contact information and creating an escape plan, it’s a good idea for you and your family to participate in First Aid and CPR training. The American Red Cross and American Heart Association offer training classes that will teach you these lifesaving skills. Also make sure you have a fire extinguisher on each level of your home and teach each family member how to use it. After the details of your plan are put together, make sure you and your family review it regularly. Being prepared for an emergency situation will help you and your loved ones during and after a disaster.