do 1 thing

SMALL STEPS TOWARD BEING PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY

Make a Plan

THE GOAL: Understand what puts you at risk from disasters and take steps to lower your risk.

Disasters change things. When an emergency happens you may have to decide what to do very quickly, while you are worrying about what might happen. By planning ahead, it will be easier to make the right decisions when the worst happens.

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH TO BECOME BETTER PREPARED:

❒ Learn what disasters can happen in your area and decide what you will do in a disaster.

It is important to know what types of disasters can happen where you are. Is your home in a floodplain? Are you in an area that has earthquakes? When are tornadoes most likely to happen? Knowing what disasters could happen can help you know how to be prepared and what to do. Contact your local American Red Cross or emergency management office to learn more about the disasters in your area.

Meet with your family or household members. Discuss how to prepare and respond to emergencies that are most likely to happen where you live, learn, work, and play. Identify responsibilities for each member of your household and plan to work together as a team. If a family member is in the military, plan how you would respond if they were deployed.

TALKING ABOUT DISASTERS

Talking about disasters can be scary, especially with children, or with someone who may have difficulty coping with daily life. Be open and positive. The unknown often causes more anxiety than knowing the facts. Listen to what the individual has to say, learn how they feel and what they may be afraid of. Older people and people with disabilities may worry that asking for help during a disaster will take away their independence. Talk about different options for assistance and make a plan with them.

❒ Take steps now to prevent damage to your home in a disaster.

Once you know what disasters could happen in your community, there are things you can do to lower your risk of injury or property damage. Here are some suggestions:

TORNADO

Add a tornado safe room to your home, or add extra protection to an existing room to keep your family safe in a tornado. Look for FEMA publication 320 for more information.

HURRICANE

Install hurricane shutters. Keep trees around your house trimmed to prevent damage from falling branches. Secure your soffits to make sure that they won't provide a way for wind and water to get into your home. Make sure entryway doors have three hinges and a deadbolt lock.

WILDFIRE

Use fire-resistant building materials like shingles and siding. Cut back branches and brush within 30 feet of your home. Keep firewood at least 30 feet away. Check into the National Fire Protection Association's Firewise program for more ideas.

FLOOD

Elevate your home above the base flood level or take steps to floodproof. Elevate your utilities above the base flood level. Make sure you have adequate flood venting. Use flood-resistant building materials when you build or remodel. Taking steps like these can lower your flood insurance rates.

EARTHQUAKE

Secure your furniture, appliances, and water heater to walls and floors. Install safety catches on cabinets and cupboard doors. Make sure your appliances are connected with flexible connections. Consider using a safety film on your windows or installing laminated glass to prevent injuries from broken glass.

For more information on any of these projects, or other things you can do to protect your home and family, contact your local sheriff's department or emergency management office.

❒ Plan what to do if you have to evacuate.

Choose two places for your family to meet. One should be right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, such as a fire. The other should be outside of your neighborhood, in case you cannot return home or are asked to evacuate.

Decide where you would go and what route you would take to get there. You may choose to go to a hotel, stay with friends or family in a safe location, or go to a shelter. Hold evacuation drills at home. Practice getting out of the house quickly, and drive your planned evacuation route. The more you practice, the more confident you will be if you really have to evacuate.

Plan ahead for your pets. Due to health concerns, pets are not allowed in Red Cross shelters. Keep a phone list of pet-friendly hotels and animal shelters that are along your evacuation route in case a designated pet shelter is not available. Contact your local humane society or animal shelter to ask if pet emergency shelters will be opened in a disaster.