

# *Hope for Pennsylvanians*



## **Healthy Planning to Stay Calm in an Emergency**

**And**

## **How to Cope Following Disasters and**

## **Emergencies**

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Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services  
Office of the Medical Director  
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## **Emergencies and Disasters**

Emergencies and Disasters can be frightening events for all of us. Floods, hurricanes, or man-made disasters like terrorism can cause stress that affects our mental and physical health.

Preparing for a disaster or an emergency is a healthy way to deal with this stress and will help you and your loved ones stay calm if a disaster occurs.

This pamphlet will help you, your family, and neighbors to prepare for an emergency or disaster.

**REMEMBER:** Many people trained in disaster response will help victims affected by the disaster.

Since September 11, 2001, we have learned about heroic efforts to help each other. Every day, in every town, city, and state there are men and women preparing to help you and respond to whatever emergency or disaster may occur.

Many Americans want to know how they might volunteer to help. To volunteer, you may contact USA Freedom Corps at 1-877-872-2677 or online at [www.freedomcorps.gov](http://www.freedomcorps.gov).

## **Planning for Emergencies and Disasters**

It is important for everyone to have an emergency plan. Sudden storms, floods, or terrorist acts may catch us unprepared. Therefore, it is important for you to have a plan in case you are asked to evacuate an area, or are asked to stay where you are.

If an emergency is occurring, you should listen to your radio or television for news and instructions. Some information on emergency plans, instructions, and rumor control phone numbers may be found in your local phone book.

If you have children, contact their school to learn of evacuation and shelter-in-place plans that are already in place.

Have emergency numbers easily available in several areas (your home, wallet, purse, car, office). Have a person (relative or friend) outside your local area be the contact for family members to call if separated.

There are many organizations that have available information about disaster and emergency preparedness for families, individuals, schools, neighborhoods, and businesses. These resources will be listed on the last page of this pamphlet.

### **Stay Calm**

There are several things you can do to help you stay calm during an emergency or disaster. Preparing before a disaster occurs is the key!

Work with your local Neighborhood Town Watch, places of worship, community centers, and other groups to develop a community disaster response plan. Help others in your neighborhood, including elderly, persons requiring assistance with communications, and people who are homebound or have mobility problems.

### **Following Directions – Evacuation or Shelter in Place**

Before, during, or following a disaster, you may be advised to *evacuate*, *or stay where you are which is also called “shelter in place”*. Listen to your radio for directions. It is very important to follow these directions, as first responders such as police, fire, and rescue persons will be trying to help people.

If you are directed to “shelter in place” or “stay where you are” and do not follow these instructions, you could place rescuers, victims, yourselves and your family in harms way.

If you are directed to evacuate, listen for the names of the roads/routes you are to take. Assist responders by cooperating to help ensure everyone’s safety.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO LISTEN TO THE DIRECTIONS GIVEN TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE. Directions will be given through the Emergency Alert Broadcasting System on your radios and televisions.

## **Basic Disaster Supplies Checklist**

It is important to have certain items on hand in case you are told to shelter in place, and in an easy carry-all bag in the event you are told to evacuate. You may learn more about items to consider by visiting [www.pema.state.pa.us](http://www.pema.state.pa.us) or [www.homelandsecurity.state.pa.us](http://www.homelandsecurity.state.pa.us) or [www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us) or [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

(Excerpt from Pennsylvania Department of Health's Emergency Preparedness Guide)

**Basic Supplies:** There are six basics you should have in your home in case of any emergency. They are: water, food, a first aid kit, clothing and bedding, tools and supplies, and special items. Items you would need in case of an evacuation should be kept in an easy-to-carry container such as a large covered trash container, a backpack or a duffel bag. You also should keep a smaller version of a disaster supply kit in your car. Below are listed items from each of the basic categories which you may want to consider:

### **Water**

- Store one gallon of water per person per day. Have a three day supply (replace supply every six months).

### **Clothing and Bedding**

- Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person.
- Sturdy shoes or work boots
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Thermal underwear
- Sunglasses
- Rain gear
- Hats and gloves

### **Special Items**

- Remember family members with special needs such as infants and elderly or those with disabilities.

#### Children

- Baby formula/food
- Diapers
- Bottles
- Powdered milk
- Medications
- Games/activities

#### Adults

- Prescription drugs
- Denture needs
- Contact lenses/supplies
- Playing cards/books
- Important legal documents

## Special Items Continued

### Pets

- Medications/records
- Food and water
- Cat litter/pan
- Copies of licenses
- Current photo if pet is lost
- Name and phone number of veterinarian

### **Food**

- Store at least a three day supply of non-perishable food for each person. Select foods which need no refrigeration, cooking, or preparation, and are compact, lightweight. Rotate food every six months.
- Ready to eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables
- Soups, bouillon cubes, or dried soups
- Milk – powdered or canned, needing no refrigeration
- Baby formula/food
- Sugar cookies
- Hard candy
- Sugar
- Salt and pepper
- Juices – canned, boxed, powdered or crystallized
- Smoked or dried meats such as beef jerky
- Vitamins
- High energy foods – peanut butter, nuts, trail mix

## Tools and Supplies

- Mess kits or paper cups, plates, plastic utensils
- Battery or gyro-operated radio and extra batteries
- Small fire extinguisher
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Paper/pen/pencil
- Non-electric can opener
- Utility knife
- Tent
- Plastic sheeting
- Duct tape
- Pliers
- Compass
- Signal flares
- Needles and thread
- Aluminum foil
- Matches
- Shut-off wrench for gas and water
- Work gloves
- Plastic storage containers
- Medicine dropper
- Cash or traveler checks and change
- Dust mask (for dust/debris)
- Toilet paper
- Personal hygiene items
- Feminine supplies
- Disinfectant
- Plastic garbage bags and ties
- Soap
- Household chlorine bleach
- Small shovel (to dig toilet, etc.)
- Plastic bucket with tight lid (indoor toilet)

## **First Aid Kit**

You should have two first aid kits- one for your home, and the other for your car. Each kit should include:

- Sterile adhesive bandages (assorted sizes)
- Gauze pads (2 and 3 inch)
- Triangular bandages
- Hypoallergenic adhesive tape
- Sterile roller bandages
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Needle
- Safety razor blade
- Safety pins (assorted sizes)
- Bars of soap
- Moist towelettes
- Non-breakable thermometer
- Antiseptic spray
- Latex gloves
- Petroleum jelly or other lubricant
- Tongue blades and wooden applicator sticks
- Aspirin and non-aspirin pain reliever
- Antacid
- Laxative
- Eye wash
- Rubbing alcohol
- Antiseptic or hydrogen peroxide
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Emetic (to induce vomiting)

## **Other Items of Importance**

- Keep car gas tank full
- Meeting place if separated
- Physician phone number
- Insurance cards
- Pharmacy phone number
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## **Healthy Coping following a Disaster or Emergency**

### **Remember Resiliency And Recovery Are Possible!**



#### **Pennsylvanians are Resilient!**

Disasters and emergencies can be frightening events for all of us and can cause stress. In times of disasters and emergencies you can call on your strengths that saw you through difficult times in the past. Learn about how stress affects you, and build on the resources and strengths you already have to get through the stressful times.

Emotional and physical reactions to disasters and emergencies are **NORMAL**. For many people, these reactions are short lived, but for some, they seem to go on without end. It is a good idea to seek professional help if you feel your reaction to a disaster is lasting too long, or is getting progressively worse instead of better.

## **Stress**

People feel and express their emotions to a crisis, disaster, or stressful situation differently. It is important to:

- Understand normal reactions to stress
- Identify healthy ways to deal with stress
- Identify if you or your family members need some assistance in dealing with the stress and
- Prepare for future disasters and emergencies to help decrease the stress of feeling unprepared.

## **Emotional Reactions to Stressful Situations**

- Feel very nervous, helpless, fearful, sad, or angry
- Feel hopeless about the future
- Feel detached or unconcerned about others
- Feel numb and unable to experience love or joy
- Feel irritable or have outbursts of anger
- Become easily upset or agitated
- Have frequent distressing dreams or memories
- Avoid people, places and things related to the disaster
- Have trouble concentrating
- Feel things are unreal

## **Physical Reactions to Stressful Situations**

- Upset stomach, change in eating habits, or other stomach problems
- Experience a pounding heart, rapid breathing, sweating, or severe headache when thinking about the stressful event
- Difficulty sleeping
- Startle easily at sudden noises
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions
- Exhaustion

If you are experiencing these feelings talk to someone you trust, such as your family doctor, spiritual advisor, or a trained counselor. Should you or anyone you know feel like hurting yourself/themselves or others, or if you are relying on alcohol or drugs to cope, contact a local mental health crisis center, or your

behavioral health managed care organization immediately. If you or someone else is a danger to self or others, call the police, or 911 if activated in your area.

### **Children and Disasters**

A child's reaction to a crisis will depend on his or her age, whether he or she has experienced trauma in the past and how involved or close he or she was to the disaster event. Children may fear the event will occur again.

Children – ages five and younger Typical reactions include fear of being separated from a parent, fear of the dark, increased crying, clinging to a parent, and a return to younger behavior, such as thumb-sucking and bed-wetting.

Children – ages six to eleven Common responses may include withdrawal, disruptive behavior, trouble paying attention, avoidance of school, sleep problems, irritability, outbursts of anger, and physical complaints.

Adolescents ages twelve and older Teens show symptoms more like those of adults, including flashbacks, nightmares, emotional numbing, depression, substance abuse, and antisocial behavior. They may also feel extreme guilt because of a failure to prevent injury or loss of life.

If your child is having trouble coping, please contact your family doctor, county mental health agency, or behavioral health managed care organization.

### **Coping with Disaster Related Stress**

There are a number of ways you can help yourself and your loved ones.

- Take care of yourself. Remember to H-A-L-T. Don't get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired.
- Increased stress can lead to physical problems or worsening of pre-existing medical problems. See your doctor, keep your appointments, and take medication as prescribed.
- Eat healthy foods to promote well being. Stay away from too much sugar and salt. Eat fruits and vegetables, and drink plenty of water.
- Regular exercise and activities help people relieve stress and cope in healthy ways with difficult circumstances.

- Refrain from alcohol and drug use to numb feelings. People with a substance abuse history may need to increase involvement with support groups.
- Talk with those you trust, read “coping” literature, call resource numbers for materials to help you and your loved ones.
- Reach out to others. Studies show that reaching out to help others promotes well being.

### **Resiliency and Recovery**

- Look back over your life at times where stress was particularly acute.
- What inner resources and inner strength did you use to get through the tough time?
- What other resources did you use? Faith based, exercise, dietary changes, communication with others in the same situation, reaching out to others?
- Who was helpful to you at that time?

These are questions to ask yourself, and to help you remember that you were able to get through difficult times in the past and will do so again.

Pennsylvanians are resilient!

**Emergency Contact Information**

Out of State Contact Name:

Phone:

Email:

Meeting place:

**Family Member Information**

Name:

Date of Birth:

Social Security Number:

Medical information:

Name:

Date of Birth:

Social Security Number:

Medical information:

Name:

Date of Birth:

Social Security Number:

Medical information:

Name:

Date of Birth:

Social Security Number:

Medical information:

Doctor's name and phone number:

Doctor's name and phone number:

School name and phone number:

Pharmacist name and phone number:

Medical Insurance Carrier and phone number:

Homeowner's Insurance Carrier and phone number:

Veterinarian name and phone number:

## Resources

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
1-202-566-1600  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
(FEMA) site for children  
1-202-566-1600  
[www.fema.org/kids](http://www.fema.org/kids)

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency  
[www.pema.state.pa.us](http://www.pema.state.pa.us)

Pennsylvania Department of Health  
[www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us)

Center for Mental Health Services  
1-800-789-2647  
[www.mentalhealth.org](http://www.mentalhealth.org)

Salvation Army  
1800-SAL-ARMY or 1-800-725-2769  
<http://www.salvationarmyusa.org/>

American Red Cross  
(202) 303-4498  
[www.redcross.org/services](http://www.redcross.org/services)

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill – Pennsylvania  
1-800-223-0500; 1-717-238-1514 TTY: 1-800-890-6093 1-717-238-3593  
<http://namipa.nami.org/>

United States Department of Homeland Security  
[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

National Mental Health Association  
1-800-969-NMHA or 1-800-969- 6642  
<http://www.nmha.org/>

USA Freedom Corps  
1-877-USA-CORPS or 1-877-872-2677  
[www.freedomcorps.gov](http://www.freedomcorps.gov)

Schuylkill County Emergency Management Agency  
570-622-3739  
[WWW.SCEMA.ORG](http://WWW.SCEMA.ORG)