



Be Ready DC



A Guide to Family Preparedness



Government of the District of Columbia
Mayor Adrian M. Fenty

Dear Residents,



The District Government is always working to protect our city from terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and other emergencies. Our goal is to ensure that residents, businesses, and visitors are as safe and secure as possible. You play an important part in this effort—it is up to you to make sure that your family is prepared in the event of an emergency.

Be Ready DC: A Guide to Family Preparedness was designed to help you prepare in advance for any emergency. It tells you how to:

- Develop your own emergency plan;
- Make an emergency kit; and
- Know what to do in specific types of emergencies, ranging from a severe winter storm to a disease outbreak.

I strongly encourage you to read this guide carefully, use the checklists, and share this information with friends, family, and neighbors.

The better prepared you are, the safer and more secure you and your family will be.

Sincerely,
Adrian M. Fenty
Mayor

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1 → Before an Emergency Strikes

Emergencies can occur quickly and without warning. The best way to keep yourself and your family safe is to be prepared *before* an emergency strikes. In other words, get ready now. We encourage all households in the District of Columbia to take these four steps to prepare for an emergency: 1. Get Informed, 2. Make a Plan, 3. Make an Emergency Kit, 4. Be Aware.

Get Informed

Information is the first step in planning for any emergency. Here is what you need to know to protect yourself and your family.

- Use this Guide to learn about the different kinds of possible emergencies and how you and your family should respond to each one.
- Sign up with *Alert DC* to receive emergency messages. For more information, see page 5.
- Make sure that each member of your family knows how to get official information during an emergency. For more information, see page 5.
- Ask if your employer has an emergency plan. If so, get a copy and review it. Also get the emergency plan for your child's school or daycare center. Review it and go over it with your child.
- Take a basic First Aid and CPR class. Contact the American Red Cross at <http://redcross.org> for more information.

 **For more information about emergency preparedness, visit the following websites:**

- Official DC emergency information:
<http://alert.dc.gov>
- More information from the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency:
<http://hsema.dc.gov>
- DC evacuation information and maps:
<http://ddot.dc.gov>

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security information:
<http://ready.gov>
- More information from the federal government:
<http://fema.gov/areyouready>
- The American Red Cross:
<http://redcross.org>

Make a Plan

Preparedness starts with a plan. Use the checklist below to make a simple plan that can help you and your family take control during an emergency.

- Hold a family meeting and develop an emergency plan based on this checklist.
- Draw a floor plan of your home and mark two escape routes from each room.
- Learn how and when to turn off utilities (water, gas, and electricity) at main switches.

 **Never attempt to restore gas service yourself. Call Washington Gas at (703) 750-1400 or (800) 752-7520 to restore service.**

- Choose an out-of-state friend or relative for all family members to contact if you get separated. (If local phone circuits are busy during an emergency, it may be easier to call out-of-state.) Give their name, phone number, and e-mail address to each member of your family.

- Teach children how to make long-distance telephone calls and how to dial 911 for emergency assistance. Program emergency numbers into all phones.
- Choose two places where your family will reunite after an emergency: a place near your home, and a place outside the District in case you cannot return home after an emergency. Make sure everyone knows the addresses and phone numbers of both meeting places.
- Know and practice all possible exit routes from your neighborhood.
- Put important family records (birth certificates, healthcare records, passports) in a safe place, such as a fireproof and waterproof safe or a bank safety deposit box.
- Practice your plan with all household members.
- Fill out the Emergency Information Form on page 15 and post it prominently in your house.
- Fill out the Emergency Pocket Cards on page 15 and make a copy for each family member. Everyone should carry one at all times.
- Whistle to signal for help.
- First Aid kit.
- Prescription medications for at least one week.
- List of family physicians, important medical information, and the style and serial number of medical devices, such as pacemakers.
- Cell phone charger.
- Extra set of eyeglasses, or contact lenses and solution.
- Rain gear, sturdy shoes, and a change of clothing.
- Blankets, bedding, and/or sleeping bags.
- Identification, credit cards, cash.
- Photocopies of important family documents including bank and home insurance information.
- Extra set of car and house keys.
- Local maps.
- A copy of this Guide.
- N95 dust masks to help filter contaminated air (available at hardware stores).
- Plastic sheeting, duct tape, and scissors to shelter in place.
- Tools: screwdrivers, waterproof matches, a fire extinguisher, flares, plastic storage containers, needle and thread, pen and paper, a compass, garbage bags, moist towelettes, and regular household bleach.
- Special items for seniors, family members with disabilities, infants, and young children (see page 13).



Planning ahead with your neighbors can help save lives and property.

- Before an emergency occurs, meet with your neighbors to plan how you could work together until help arrives.
- Participate in emergency preparedness activities for your community.
- Know your neighbors and consider how you could help those with special needs, such as seniors and people with disabilities.

Make an Emergency Kit

Preparing an Emergency Kit in advance can save precious time if you must evacuate or seek shelter. Put the following items in a sturdy, easy-to-carry container such as a backpack or suitcase with wheels. Keep your kit in an easily accessible place.

- At least a three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day). Store in sealed, unbreakable containers.
- A three-to five-day supply of non-perishable canned food, and a non-electric can opener.
- Flashlight.
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio.
- Extra batteries.
- Wrench and/or pliers to turn off utilities.



Change batteries in all your equipment at least once a year. An easy way to remember is to do it when you turn your clocks back in the fall.

Be Aware

You can help protect yourself and your family by being aware of your surroundings wherever you go.

- Keep an eye out for suspicious or unattended bags or people acting strangely.
- Immediately report unusual behavior, suspicious or unattended packages, and strange devices to the police or security personnel.
- Never accept packages or other items from strangers.
- If you feel uncomfortable, or if something seems wrong, don't hesitate to leave the area.
- Know where the nearest emergency exits are.

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→ During an Emergency

The first thing you need during an emergency is information. Familiarize yourself in advance with both official (government) and non-official (news media) sources. You may also have to make a critical decision: should you shelter in place or evacuate? You need to plan for both possibilities.

Getting Information

During and after an emergency, it might be difficult to get information or instructions right away. If possible, listen to official emergency personnel to know what you should do. Try to access the sources listed below. If that is not possible, then you should get information from television or radio news broadcasts, news websites, or newspapers.

Getting Official Information: *Alert DC*

You can get official emergency information directly from the DC government in the following ways: on the Web, by text alert, on the radio, or by telephone voice messaging.

■ The Emergency Information Center Website and Emergency Text Alerts (<http://alert.dc.gov>)

Visit this official DC government website for emergency information. Sign up here in advance to get emergency text messages on your cell phone, e-mail, pager, or fax.

■ DC Emergency Alert System

Tune in to the following radio stations, which have agreed to broadcast official information and instructions from the District government.

WTOP 103.5 FM

WMAL 630 AM

WPRS 104.1 FM

WJZW 105.9 FM

WKYS 93.9 FM

WPGC 95.5 FM

■ DC Emergency Voice Alerts, or “Reverse 911”

You may receive telephone voice messages notifying you of emergencies requiring protective action. Citizens are automatically enrolled.



If power outages or other disruptions make it impossible for you to access these sources, trained volunteers from the District’s Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) will be circulating through your neighborhood to help inform you about what to do. You can identify these volunteers by their green hats and vests.

Stay or Go?

Should you stay where you are or evacuate? This may be the first big decision you’ll need to make in an emergency situation. Plan for both possibilities.

Whenever possible, you should follow instructions from emergency personnel in deciding whether to shelter in place or evacuate. If you need to decide on your own, use all available information, including what you are learning here, to determine whether to shelter in place or evacuate. The *Types of Emergencies* section of this Guide provides emergency-specific information about sheltering in place and evacuating.



A sensible way to decide whether to stay or go is to ask yourself, “Will going outside or traveling expose me to more or less danger?”



For more information about evacuating and sheltering in place: http://ready.gov/america/makeaplan/stay_or_go.html

Shelter in Place

In some types of emergencies, being outside will increase the danger. In these emergencies, the best, safest response is to shelter in place. This means staying inside a safe building—your house, workplace, school, or other building—or entering a nearby building and seeking cover.

If you are asked to shelter in place:

- Shelter in a room with the fewest doors and/or windows possible. Ideally choose a room that has just one door and at least 10 square feet per person.
- Seal any doors, windows, and fireplaces.
- If the emergency is airborne (such as a disease, chemical release, or radiation) turn off ventilation and hot air heating systems (radiator heat may remain on).
- Keep at least one phone line open for emergency calls.
- Stay tuned to your radio or television, or scan official websites for information and updates.
- Use your Emergency Kit.

Evacuation

In some emergencies, you may be told to evacuate your home or neighborhood. Officials will tell you when to evacuate. If you have not received official word or been told to shelter in place, you may decide to evacuate on your own if you sense you are in immediate danger. If you are being told to evacuate, look for information about available shelters through the official information sources discussed above.



If you have time, close windows, lock doors, and unplug appliances. Authorities will tell you if you need to turn off your utilities (water, gas, electricity).

Evacuation by Walking

Many times, walking may be an effective means of evacuating a neighborhood. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing, and don't forget to take your Emergency Kit with you.



It is important to have an evacuation plan for your pet. Visit <http://hsus.org/disaster> for more information. Also, create a kit for your pet, including ID collar and rabies tag, carrier and leash, medications, newspapers and plastic trash bags, veterinary records, and at least a two-day supply of food and water.

Evacuation by Car or Other Vehicle

There are 19 primary evacuation routes out of the city. They are clearly marked with signs directing motorists to the Capital Beltway (I-495) and beyond.

Pennsylvania Avenue will be the North/South dividing line during an evacuation. No vehicles will be permitted to cross Pennsylvania Avenue during an evacuation. Take this into account as you plan where your family will reunite after an emergency.

During an emergency, stay tuned to your local emergency station or Highway Advisory Radio station (1650 AM), or listen to emergency personnel for instructions about which route to follow. If possible, take your Emergency Kit with you.

On the Metro

- If there is an emergency while you are on the Metro, wait for the train to stop. Wait for instructions.
- Do not exit the train unless instructed to do so. The safest place is usually inside the Metro car.
- Identify the side of the train where you will be exiting:
 - In a tunnel, look for the side of the tunnel with lights and a raised walkway.
 - On elevated tracks outside, look for the side with railing and walkway.
 - On ground-level tracks outside, look for the side away from the other set of tracks and the third rail, which generally has a white cover along it.
- Use the box with the emergency door release handle located to the left of the center doors of the car. Pull the handle down, slide the left-center door to the left, and exit the train.



Do not touch the third rail or the paddles protruding from beneath the train. They carry high voltage electricity. Also, stay away from the tracks. A train could come without warning, and there may be electric current in the rails.

- The walkway in Metro tunnels switches from one side to the other and may run between two sets of tracks. To get from one walkway to another, cross the track bed. Do not attempt to cross the third rail.
- Look for emergency exits marked with lighted signs. Use these exits, unless Metro or emergency response personnel tell you not to do so. Follow the stairs up to the hatchway doors, and exit to the surface.

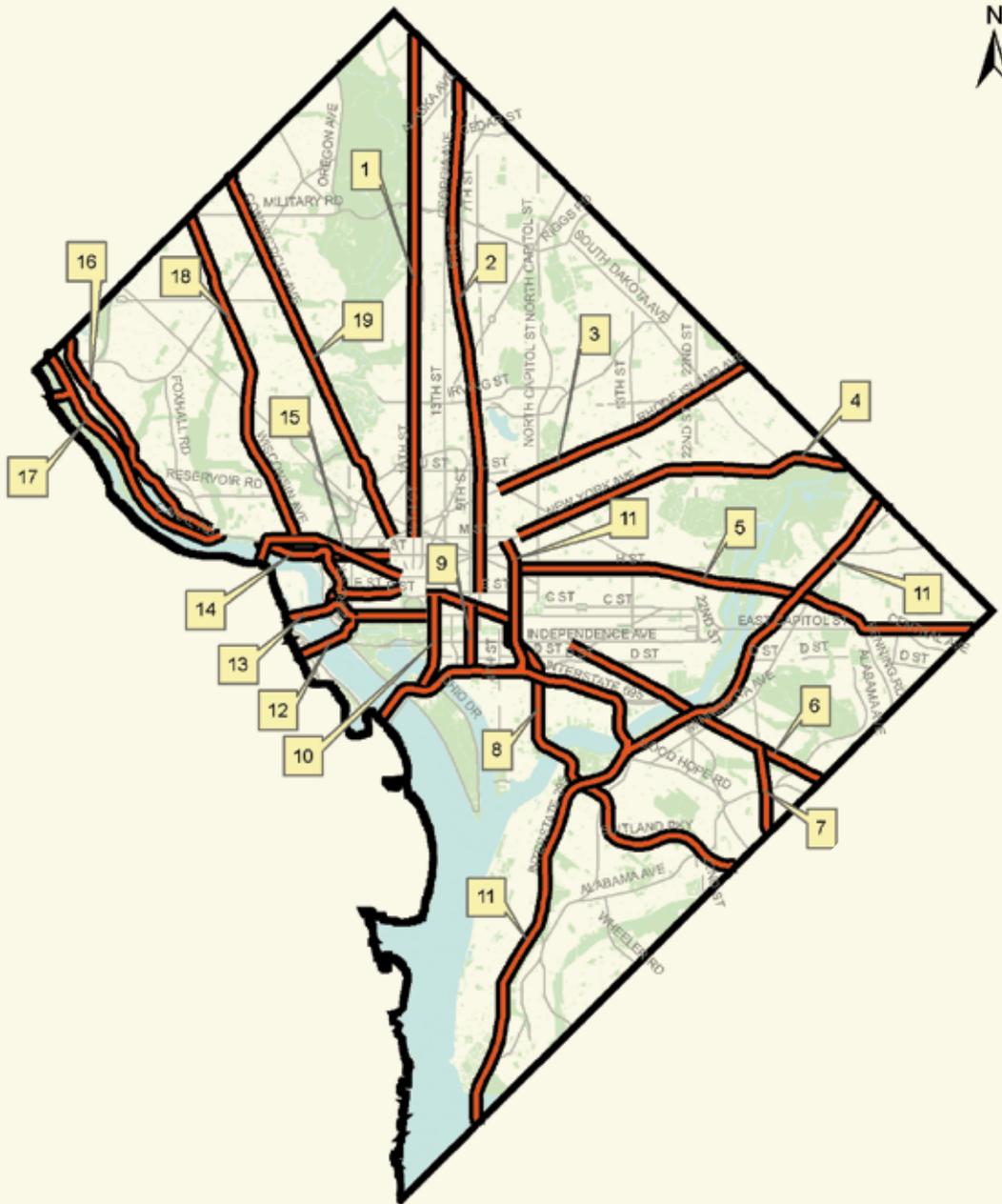
On the Bus

- If there is an emergency while you are on a bus, wait for the bus to stop. Listen to the bus operator's instructions.
- Windows and ceiling hatches serve as emergency exits. Use the red levers on either side of a window to release it.



For more information, visit Metro's website at <http://wmata.com> or call (202) 637-7000.

→ DC Evacuation Map



Legend

- Primary Evacuation Routes
- Roads
- Parks
- Water

Index of Primary Routes

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1 16th St. NW | 8 Pennsylvania Ave. NW/3rd St./Independence Ave./Washington Ave. SW/S. Capitol St./Suitland Pkwy. | 13 E St. Expressway |
| 2 Georgia Ave. (7th St.) NW | 9 9th St. NW | 14 K St. NW |
| 3 Rhode Island Ave. NE | 10 14th St. NW | 15 Pennsylvania Ave. NW/M St. NW |
| 4 New York Ave. NW | 11 Interstate 395/295 | 16 Macarthur Blvd. NW |
| 5 Benning Rd. NW (via H St. NW and E. Capitol St. SE) | 12 Constitution Ave. NW | 17 Canal Rd. NW |
| 6 Pennsylvania Ave. SE | | 18 Wisconsin Ave. NW |
| 7 Branch Ave. SE | | 19 Connecticut Ave. NW |

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→ Types of Emergencies

Different types of emergencies require different types of responses. It is important for you to know what to do in each of the following emergency situations.

Extreme Weather

The District is vulnerable to severe weather including thunderstorms, hurricanes, flash floods, snowstorms, and tornadoes. The safest place to ride out any storm is inside a secure building. Also:

- Listen to weather updates and stay informed.
- Be ready to evacuate if necessary.
- Keep away from windows and doors.
- Have your Emergency Kit handy.



A severe weather **watch** means that severe weather may develop, and you should be alert to further warnings and information.

A severe weather **warning** means a storm has developed and is on its way—take cover immediately!

Thunderstorms may produce heavy winds and lightning. In general, if you are close enough to a storm to hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning. If caught outside:

- Try to get inside a building as quickly as possible. If a building is not available, move into a car with windows rolled up, if possible.
- In a group of people, spread out so that you are several yards apart from each other.
- Do not stand beneath trees.



For more information on severe weather conditions, visit the National Weather Service website at <http://nws.noaa.gov>.

Tornadoes are dangerous because of their high winds and ability to lift and move heavy objects. If you receive a tornado warning, seek shelter immediately.

- If you are in your car, stop. Get out and lie flat face down in a low area (such as a ditch or gully). Cover your head and wait for the tornado to pass.
- At home: Go to the basement or storm shelter, or rooms near the center of the house. Stay away from doors and windows.
- In a high-rise or other public building: Move to the interior of the building, preferably a stairwell or hallway.

Flash Flooding can be very dangerous because of strong, swift currents.

- Move immediately and quickly to higher ground. The force of six inches of swiftly moving water can knock people off their feet.
- Never attempt to drive your vehicle through standing water.



Always yield for ambulances, fire trucks, and police vehicles. It's the law—and the right thing to do.

Winter Storms can include any combination of heavy snow, ice accumulation, freezing temperatures, and dangerous wind chills.

- If possible, stay inside.
- If you do not have heat, contact your building owner or utility provider. Make sure your heat source is safe. If you're unsure, call **(202) 673-3331** for a free home fire safety inspection.



Never use your range or oven to warm your home—it can start a fire.

- If you have to go outside, wear layers and water-repellent outerwear to stay warm and dry.
- Make sure small children—especially babies—stay warm. They are far more vulnerable to cold conditions than adults are.
- Avoid overexertion. Take your time shoveling snow and drink plenty of fluids.
- Use public transportation whenever possible.
- If you must drive, be sure to clear any snow from your tailpipe before you start your car to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. While driving, stay aware of road conditions, use extreme caution, and maintain safe speeds and distances from other vehicles. Bring a shovel and blankets.



SUVs and other vehicles with four-wheel drive will skid just as easily as any other cars in icy conditions. Drive responsibly and leave enough distance between you and the cars around you.

Extreme Heat

During the summer, District residents are especially vulnerable to hot weather. Follow these steps to stay cool:

- Stay indoors as much as possible; turn on an air conditioner or fan.
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated fluids.
- Wear light-colored, lightweight, and loose-fitting clothes.
- Limit your exposure to the sun, and apply sunscreen at least 20 minutes before going outside (at least SPF 15).
- Watch for heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke.
- If necessary, find a cooling center, which the city opens when the heat index reaches 95 degrees.



Never leave children in unattended vehicles. Even with a window slightly open on a warm day, the temperature inside a car can reach potentially deadly levels within minutes.



The District government implements a heat emergency plan when the heat index reaches 95 degrees. The plan includes cooling centers, street showers, and the distribution of fans to people with special needs. Call (202) 727-1000 or visit <http://hsema.dc.gov> and click on “Extreme Weather” for more information including cooling center locations.



Extreme heat is particularly dangerous for young children, seniors, and people with special needs. On hot days, check on your neighbors and offer them assistance.

Fires

It's important to know that fires spread quickly. In just two minutes a fire can become life threatening, and in five minutes a home can be engulfed in flames. In addition, the heat and smoke from a fire can be even more dangerous than the flames.

If your smoke detector goes off, or if you see, smell, or hear a fire or explosion:

- Use water or a fire extinguisher to put out small fires.



Do not try to put out a fire that is getting out of control. Leave the building immediately. Don't stop to bring anything with you.

- Never use water on an electrical fire. Use only a fire extinguisher approved for electrical fires.
- Smother oil and grease fires in the kitchen with baking soda or salt, or put a lid over the flame if it is burning in a pan. Do not attempt to take the pan outside.
- If smoke is entering your room under the door, find another way out.
- Before opening any door in a fire, feel the door with the back of your hand. If it is hot, find another way out. Close all doors behind you.
- If you must exit through smoke, crawl or stay as close to the floor as possible.
- Do not use elevators.
- If your clothes catch on fire, stop, drop to the ground, and roll over and over to smother the flames.
- After you get out, call 911 from a safe location.
- Count family members and others who were in the building to determine if everyone is out. Give this information to the firefighters.
- Never go back into the burning building.
- If you are trapped in a burning building, stay close to the floor by a window and try to signal for help.



If you smell gas, exit the building immediately. Call (703) 750-1400 or (800) 752-7520.



Always properly store and dispose of flammable materials. Call the Mayor's Citywide Call Center at (202) 727-1000 for more information.



Install smoke detectors in your home or apartment. Change smoke detector batteries at least once a year. An easy way to remember is to do it when you turn your clocks back in the fall.

Explosions

An explosion can cause a fire or a building collapse. If there is an explosion in your building:

- Exit the building as quickly as possible.
- Leave all possessions behind.
- Never use elevators.
- Take shelter under a sturdy table or desk if you can't exit the building.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a cloth or piece of clothing.
- If there is a fire, follow the directions above.

If you are trapped by debris:

- Move around as little as possible to avoid kicking up dust.
- Cover your nose and mouth with cloth or a piece of clothing.
- Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can hear where you are.
- Use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort because it could cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

Once you are out:

- Don't stand in front of windows, glass doors, or other potentially hazardous areas.
- Move away quickly to leave streets and sidewalks clear for emergency officials or others still exiting the building.

Chemical and Biological Emergencies

A chemical emergency can result from either an accidental or malicious release of a chemical that can make you sick. A pandemic or biological emergency can result from either a natural outbreak of disease or a deliberate release of germs or other biological substances that can make you sick.

If you become aware of an unusual and suspicious substance:

- Get to a safe area (either by evacuating or sheltering in place).
- Inform authorities.
- Protect yourself by covering your mouth and nose with layers of fabric to filter the air.
- Seek information from public health authorities via official alerts or the media.
- Seek medical assistance if you become sick.

If you believe that you have been exposed to a dangerous chemical:

- Get to a safe area.
- Remove all clothing immediately and wash thoroughly.
- Seek medical assistance.

Get informed

During a pandemic or biological emergency, public health officials may not immediately be able to provide information on what you should do. Watch for official alerts that give you the following information:

- Are you in the group or area authorities consider in danger?
- What are the signs and symptoms of the disease?
- Are medications or vaccines being distributed? If so, where? Who should get them?
- Where should you seek emergency medical care if you become sick?

During a pandemic or biological emergency, take steps to avoid exposure:

- Practice good hygiene: wash your hands regularly; don't share food, drinks, or utensils; and cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid areas where the threat has been identified.
- Avoid crowded areas.

If you or someone in your family becomes sick:

- Take the illness seriously—don't just pass it off as a cold.
- Follow the steps provided in official alerts to determine if you have been exposed.
- If your symptoms match those described and you are in the group considered at risk, immediately seek emergency medical attention or follow any specific instructions that have been provided by public health officials.



For more information about responding to a chemical release: <http://ready.gov/america/beinformed/chemical.html>



For more information about responding to a biological threat: <http://ready.gov/america/beinformed/biological.html>



For more information about responding to a pandemic emergency: <http://ready.gov/america/beinformed/influenza.html>

Radiological Emergencies

A radiological threat can result from an accidental or intentional release of radiation. An intentional release can be the result of either a "dirty bomb" or other radiological dispersion device, or a nuclear explosion. Radiation is odorless and invisible, and unless there is some form of explosion, you may not be immediately aware of the risk.

In a radiological emergency, there are three keys to increased safety:

- Time: Reduce the amount of time that you are exposed to radiation (either by evacuating to a safe area or by sheltering in place in a safe area).

- Distance: Moving farther away from the radiation source will reduce your exposure.
- Shielding: If you shield yourself from the radiation source (for example by staying within the walls of a building), you will be exposed to less radiation.

If you have advance warning of a nuclear explosion or radiation release:

- Take cover immediately, preferably below ground.
- If you can't get underground, any shield or shelter will help protect you.

In the event of a radiation release outside:

- Cover your nose and mouth and immediately seek shelter inside a building.
- If you are already inside a building and the building is stable, shelter in place—close and seal (using plastic or other materials) all doors, windows, and fireplaces. Shut off air conditioners, hot air heating, and other ventilation systems (radiator heat may remain on).

If the release is inside a building where you are located:

- Cover your nose and mouth.
- Get out of the building and to a safe area.

In the event of a nuclear explosion:

- If you are outside, immediately take cover from the blast and cover your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Take immediate steps to either seek shelter and remain there, or evacuate to a safe area outside the area of radiation.
- If you shelter in place, try to do so below ground. Close and seal (using plastic sheeting and duct tape if available, or other materials) all doors, windows, and fireplaces. Shut off air conditioners, heating, and other ventilation systems.

Get informed. Watch for official alerts that provide the following information:

- Are you in an area where radiation is present? Or are you in a safe area?
- Are authorities instructing you to remain sheltered in place, or are you being told to evacuate?
- What routes do authorities want you to use to evacuate?
- Who should seek medical care? Where is such care available? When is it safe and appropriate to seek such care?

If, after a radiological release, you feel nauseous, vomit, or feel generally sick, you may have been exposed to radiation.

- Remove all clothing and wash thoroughly.
- Put contaminated clothing and other items where you will not be exposed to them.
- When safe and appropriate, seek emergency medical assistance.



For more information about responding to a radiation emergency: <http://ready.gov/america/beinformed/radiation.html>



For more information about responding to a nuclear emergency: <http://ready.gov/america/beinformed/nuclear.html>

Loss of Utilities

If Your Power Goes Out

Loss of utilities (electricity, gas, or water) can occur for many reasons including severe weather, blackouts, or equipment failure.

- Use a flashlight. Do not use candles or kerosene lanterns—they are a fire hazard.
- Turn off and unplug major appliances and sensitive electric equipment, such as computers, VCRs, and televisions.
- Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- Do not use your range or oven to heat your home—this can cause a fire or fatal gas leak.
- Use extreme caution when driving. If traffic signals are out, treat each signal as a stop sign—come to a complete stop at every intersection and look before you proceed.
- Do not call 911 to ask about the power outage. Listen to the news radio stations for updates.



Always keep a traditional, non-cordless telephone available. Cordless phones may not work when the power is out.

If You Need Clean Water

Flooding can contaminate water supplies. Bad water can contain microorganisms that cause diseases such as dysentery, typhoid, and hepatitis.

- If you think your water may be contaminated, you should purify it before using it. This includes water used for drinking, cooking, cleaning dishes, or bathing.
- The best way to purify water is to bring it to a boil for 3–5 minutes, and then allow it to cool before drinking.
- If necessary, you can use bleach to treat water by adding 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use bleach if it has added cleaners, or if it is scented or color-safe.

4 → After an Emergency

During and after an emergency, stay tuned to your local emergency station and follow the advice of emergency personnel. Unless told to evacuate, avoid roads to allow emergency vehicles access.

Family Records and Financial Recovery

Taking steps to protect and ensure access to important family records and financial information can make recovery easier.

- Keep copies of your identification and other important family papers, such as marriage licenses and birth certificates.
- Keep a record of all your financial accounts (bank accounts, loans, credit cards), including the name of each institution, its contact information, and your account numbers.
- If you keep important information on your computer, regularly back up your data.
- Keep a copy of this information in your Emergency Kit.



You may want to store important information in a fireproof and waterproof safe, or in a secure place away from your home, such as a bank safety deposit box.

If you run a home-based or small business, you should take additional steps to prepare yourself.

- Back up and store all computer records offsite.
- If you have a store or office, have an evacuation plan in place for staff and customers.
- Maintain sufficient insurance coverage.
- Identify critical business functions (such as shipping, inventory control, payroll) and develop processes to ensure these will carry on.
- Develop a communications plan so that employees can get information after a disaster, and so you can keep track of any staff.



In the wake of a disaster, many financial institutions offer victims help (such as flexibility with payments). You may want to discuss this with your bank, lender, or credit card company.

Disaster victims may also be eligible for federal, local and/or charitable assistance to help recover from the financial impacts of a disaster. Look for information about various assistance programs that may be available.

Emotional Recovery

Recovery from an emergency continues even after you return home, as you deal with the emotional and psychological effects of the event. Reactions vary from person to person, but may include:

- Restless sleep or nightmares
- Anger or wanting revenge
- Numbness or lack of emotion
- Needing to keep active, restlessness
- Needing to talk about your experiences
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss or gain
- Headaches
- Mood swings

All of the above are normal reactions to stressful events, and it is important to let people react their own way. It may be helpful to:

- Talk with your family and friends about what happened and how you feel about it.
- Volunteer at a local shelter, blood bank, or food pantry to assist emergency victims.
- Spend time doing things other than watching or listening to news of the disaster.
- Consult your minister or other religious leader or spiritual advisor.

In particular, children may need reassurance and extra attention. Encourage them to share their feelings. They may tell stories about the emergency over and over again—this is a common way for them to grasp what they've experienced. You may also want to share your feelings about the event with them.

5 → Special Information for You and Your Loved Ones

Seniors and people with disabilities may have special needs that you need to consider in preparing for emergencies. If you or someone in your family has special needs, consider the following tips when preparing your emergency plans.

Seniors and People with Disabilities

- Create a personal support network of family and friends who can help you in an emergency.
- Make sure that someone in your network has a key to your home and knows where you keep emergency supplies.
- Keep at least a week's worth of medications on hand. Also keep a copy of all prescriptions as well as dosage or treatment information.
- If you undergo any regular medical treatments, or if you require home health care services, talk to your service provider about its emergency plans.
- Talk to your pharmacist or doctor about what else you need to prepare.
- If you are dependent on electricity for a wheelchair or any life-sustaining device, consult your power provider.
- Make copies of important documents, including your health insurance and Medicare and Medicaid cards. Keep this list in your Emergency Kit, along with the names and phone numbers of the people in your support network.
- Keep emergency cash or travelers checks on hand.
- For your Emergency Kit, consider items such as eyeglasses, hearing aids and hearing aid batteries, wheelchair batteries, oxygen, dentures, and emergency foods that meet any special dietary needs.



For more assistance:

→ Contact the DC Office on Aging at (202) 724-5622.

→ Visit the DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services website for evacuation planning tips: <http://fems.washingtondc.gov/fems/cwp/view,a,3,q,637654.asp>.

→ Visit <http://ready.gov> for readiness brochures for seniors and people with disabilities.



If you have elderly or disabled neighbors, offer to help them prepare for any emergency. Become part of their personal support network.

Parents and Families

- Include your children in your planning, practice your plans with them, and periodically quiz them to make sure they understand what to do. Always stress that this is a “just in case” plan.
- Get a copy of your child's school or daycare emergency plans.
- Make plans for where you can meet your child after an evacuation.
- Make sure that the school has up-to-date contact information for you and other family members.
- If possible, authorize a friend or family member to pick up your child in an emergency if you are unable to do so.
- If you have young children, make sure your Emergency Kit includes toys, books, and other personal items for your child.



The American Academy of Pediatrics provides emergency planning resources for families: <http://aap.org/family/frk/frkit.htm>.

What Your Child Needs to Know:

- How to dial 911 for emergency assistance
- His/her name, phone number, and address.
- How to reach you and other family members.
- Contact information for the family's out-of-state contact.
- How to make long-distance telephone calls.

Special Emergency Kit Items for Infants:

- Formula, bottled water, bottles, nipples
- Jars of baby food and baby spoons
- Diapers and diaper rash ointment
- Medications
- Moist towelettes and hand sanitizer
- Blankets, pacifiers, and layers of clothing
- Sunhat in warm months, warm hat in cool months
- Several small, lightweight toys

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→ Get Involved

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In addition to preparing yourself and your family to respond to emergencies, you can also volunteer to help the District and your neighborhood become better prepared through the following Serve DC programs.

DC Citizen Corps

DC Citizen Corps creates opportunities for people to help their communities prepare for and respond to emergencies by providing training and exercise opportunities. DC Citizens Corps programs include:

- **Neighborhood Corps** organizes trained volunteers at the neighborhood level. These volunteers are mobilized to respond to emergencies in their communities as part of the District's overall emergency response.
- **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** volunteer program trains individuals in basic emergency preparedness and response. When emergencies occur, CERT members assist and support first responders, provide assistance to victims, and organize volunteer response efforts.
- **Commander Ready Program** is a specialized preparedness training component designed to educate and engage young people ages 5–13 in emergency preparedness training and exercises. The Commander Ready Team—Reggie, Rachel, and Rodney—educates young people about preparedness and provides practical, service-oriented lessons to improve math, science, language arts, health, and social studies skills.



For more information on the DC Citizen Corps visit:

- DC Citizen Corps: <http://serve.dc.gov/cncs/cwp/view,a,1197,q,493979.asp>
- Neighborhood Corps: <http://serve.dc.gov/cncs/cwp/view,a,3,q,553927.asp>
- CERT: <http://serve.dc.gov/cncs/cwp/view,a,1197,q,525633.asp>
- Commander Ready: <http://serve.dc.gov/cncs/cwp/view,a,1197,q,557987.asp>



You can also get involved through the National Capital Area chapter of the American Red Cross, which offers training on First Aid and emergency response. Visit <http://redcross.org>.

→ Resources

Before an emergency occurs, fill out these forms. Post a copy of the Emergency Information Form on your refrigerator or by a phone. Give each family member an Emergency Pocket Card and make sure they carry it at all times.

→ Emergency Information Form

Out-of-Town Contact
 Address _____
 Telephone _____
 E-mail _____

Home Evacuation Meeting Place
 Telephone _____

Regional Evacuation Meeting Place
 Telephone _____

Important names and telephone numbers:

Police and Fire Emergency **911**

Doctor
 Telephone _____

Pediatrician
 Telephone _____

Pharmacy
 Telephone _____

Insurance (Home)
 Telephone _____

Insurance (Health)
 Telephone _____

Fill out the following for each family member:

Name _____
 Date of Birth _____
 Social Security Number _____
 Important Medical Information _____
 Emergency Telephone (cell) _____
 Work or School Evacuation Location _____

Name _____
 Date of Birth _____
 Social Security Number _____
 Important Medical Information _____
 Emergency Telephone (cell) _____
 Work or School Evacuation Location _____

Name _____
 Date of Birth _____
 Social Security Number _____
 Important Medical Information _____
 Emergency Telephone (cell) _____
 Work or School Evacuation Location _____



Be Ready DC A Guide to Family Preparedness

→ Emergency Pocket Card

Out of Town Contact Name _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____

Neighborhood Meeting Place
 Phone _____

Out-of-State Meeting Place
 Phone _____

Family Member _____
 Family Member _____

Be Ready DC



→ Emergency Pocket Card

Out of Town Contact Name _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____

Neighborhood Meeting Place
 Phone _____

Out-of-State Meeting Place
 Phone _____

Family Member _____
 Family Member _____

Be Ready DC





→ Important District Telephone Numbers

→ <http://hsema.dc.gov>

Police and Fire Emergency	911
Police Non-Emergency	311
The Mayor's Citywide Call Center	(202) 727-1000
DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (24-hour)	(202) 727-6161
For the hearing impaired	(202) 730-0488
Department of Mental Health Access HelpLine	(888) 793-4357
American Red Cross, National Capital Chapter	(202) 728-6401
Verizon (phone)	(800) 275-2355
PEPCO (electric)	
Customer service	(202) 833-7500
Power outages	(877) PEPCO-62
Life-threatening emergencies	(202) 872-3432
Poison Control Center	(800) 222-1222
Washington Gas	
Customer service	(202) 624-6049
Natural Gas Emergency Number	(703) 750-1400
DC Water and Sewer Authority	(202) 787-2000
Water and Sewer Emergency Number	(202) 612-3400
DC Department of Health	(202) 671-5000
West Nile Virus Call Center	
(Department of Health)	(202) 535-2323
DC Animal Control (24-hour)	(202) 576-6664

Be Ready DC  A Guide to Family Preparedness