

## What to Do in a Natural Disaster

Natural disasters can and will occur at any hour of the day or night. It is the responsibility of the homeowner to prepare exits, escape routes and/or safety zones from or in the home in the event of a fire, flood, tornado, or any other type of natural disaster. Pre-planning can save lives, as well as extensive property damage.

In the event of a natural disaster in which you can or must leave your home, stock your car with emergency supplies to be evacuated with you. Some of these items might include:

- Special medications or dietary foods
- Eyeglasses
- Hearing aid batteries
- First aid supplies
- Baby formulas and supplies
- Supply of non-perishable foods
- Pet food
- 5.25% sodium hypochlorite liquid laundry bleach for purifying water
- Valuables and cherished articles
- Sanitary and toilet supplies
- Flashlight, batteries and bulbs
- Battery operated portable radio
- Tools, shovel, hammer, pliers, screwdriver, axe
- Blankets
- Dry clothing (shoes & socks)
- Rubber boots, gloves and hard hat
- Important papers
- Bank books and check books
- Games for group play for adults and children

Disconnect any utilities if possible before the disaster occurs. If you have a circuit breaker panel board, switch each circuit to the OFF position. If you have fuses, remove fuses from the circuit box.

Close the main gas valve, the water valve and anchor fuel tanks to prevent them from overturning or floating. Also close fuel tank valves.

Before you leave your home, notify a responsible person of where you are going and your anticipated arrival time. Then contact that person when you arrive. If you do not report, this individual can notify the authorities that there may be a problem.

In the event you must evacuate your home, do not return until the following has been done:

- Check with the utility companies to see if the electric and gas were shut off and whether they are still off.
- If you are served by a municipal water supply, find out if the water is contaminated. If your water comes from a private well, determine if the well was flooded. If so, it is considered contaminated.
- If you must travel through a flooded area, stay away from downed electrical lines.

- Check the foundation of the house from the outside in order to determine if there is any major structural damage which may create a hazardous situation upon entry.
- Check the interior of the house for structural damage by moving around slowly. Use a flashlight for your light source. Do not light any flame as there may be a gas leak. Be cautious of ceilings which sag. In case of flood, they could be soaked with water.
- If you did not turn off the main electric switch before the disaster, do it now, but use **EXTREME CAUTION**. In case of flood or heavy rain, do not stand on a wet or damp floor when handling electrical equipment. If your home was severely damaged or flooded, do not restore electric service until a qualified electrician has checked the entire electrical distribution system.
- If the water supply is contaminated, drink only purified water until the normal water supply has been certified potable. Available water may be purified by adding 1 teaspoon liquid chlorine laundry bleach (label must specify 5.25% sodium hypochlorite with no additional active ingredients) to 5 gallons of water. Mix well and let stand for 30 minutes before drinking.
- Discard all foods which have been exposed to flood water except those in hermetically sealed metal cans. Permanently mark the cans in order to identify the contents and wash them with soap and warm water. Then immerse in a solution of  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup 5.25% sodium hypochlorite liquid laundry bleach per gallon of water for two minutes to disinfect the outside of the cans. Rinse immediately in clear water. Chlorine may discolor some metal cans. Do **NOT** treat aluminum cans, such as soft drink cans with chlorine solution.

After flood water is removed from a basement, shovel mud from the basement and rinse down walls and floors to remove dirt. To remove odors, mop concrete floors and walls with a solution of  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup 5.25% sodium hypochlorite liquid laundry bleach per gallon of water. Rinse and dry after 5 minutes.

Keep safety in mind and do not move the family back into the house until there is electricity, an adequate and safe water supply, toilet facilities, clean and dry bedding and a safe heat supply, if needed. Because of the number of hazards in a disaster area, it is wise not to bring children into the area during cleanup.

### References:

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Flood Emergency & Residential Repair Handbook.