

How to Prepare for Disasters

National Preparedness Month, podcast transcript

This podcast is brought to you by Military OneSource.

Impending disasters can be frightening, and the media tends to increase the anxiety levels surrounding disasters with the 24/7 coverage, including a theme song and logo specific to each disaster event. But the best way to combat fear is to gain knowledge and be prepared to take action. Turn fear into action by taking these four simple steps to help your family prepare for any disaster: Build a disaster supplies kit, make an emergency plan, be informed before disaster strikes and get involved in your community's disaster preparations.

There is no time like the present to build a disaster supplies kit. You can prepare a basic disaster kit for little time, money and effort. Start by building a core emergency kit and add in extra supplies, depending on the disasters that may occur in your location. Gather and store the core emergency supplies you need, per person, to remain in your home for at least three days. In addition to the basic survival supplies, make a to-go kit that contains all the medications your family needs for good health, and include copies of important legal and financial documents. To find specific checklist items for your emergency disaster kit, visit the Military OneSource website at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil> and read the article, "Preparing Your Disaster Kit," or visit <http://www.ready.gov> for more information.

Make an emergency plan and include your family in on the planning. Your family will need to have a few basic rules in place so everyone knows how to communicate and meet up before, during and after the event. In many cases, when natural disasters occur, military members deploy to support recovery efforts for those hardest hit during the event. Make your emergency plans before your military member deploys. As a family, decide how you will communicate with each other and where you will meet in different disaster situations. Find out what emergency plans and precautions are in place at your work, children's day care and school, faith organization or other places your family frequently visits. Download a Family Communication Plan for Parents and Kids from the Federal Emergency Management Agency website at <http://www.fema.gov>.

Be informed about what to do before disaster strikes. An essential part of preparedness is to know what protective measures to take before, during and after an emergency. At each new duty station, military families should become familiar with the potential disasters that might occur in that area, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanoes, flash floods, winter storms or even manmade disasters. Identifying these potential threats can allow you to take steps to prepare yourself, and those in your care, by inquiring about the emergency procedures on your installation or signing up for installation alerts. Every military unit on the installation has an emergency management representative assigned to ensure the military members and their family members are informed of the actions they need to take in an emergency. Seek and follow official guidelines. Military personnel may be required to check in with their unit after an emergency for accountability purposes through their Personnel Accountability and Assessment System, or PAAS. The PAAS Web address for each service are as follows:

- Army <https://adpaas.army.mil>
- Marine <https://navyfamily.navy.mil>
- Navy <https://navyfamily.navy.mil>
- Air Force <https://afpaas.af.mil>
- Coast Guard <https://cgpaas.uscg.mil>

Get involved in your community's preparedness; it is a shared responsibility. There are many ways your community can come together to improve the readiness and safety of families, homes and communities in the event of an emergency or threat. Consider getting first aid and emergency response training, participate in community exercises, or donate your time or goods to help your community in a disaster situation. Volunteer to support your local first responders. Major disasters can overwhelm first responder agencies and they may not be readily available to help your community. Seek training through Community Emergency Response Teams, or CERT, which offer disaster preparedness and training in basic disaster response skills to enable CERT members to respond to neighborhood or workplace emergencies before the professional responders arrive.

For additional tips, information and resources on how to prepare for a disaster, visit your local Military and Family Support Center office, the American Red Cross or visit Military OneSource at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>, an official Department of Defense website.

--

For more information, visit Military OneSource at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>, an official Department of Defense website.