

Your Health

by Dr. Paul Roumeliotis

Being Prepared for Emergencies

Emergencies can occur at any time and can take many shapes or forms. Natural emergencies include flooding, earthquakes, illness outbreaks or pandemics, ice storms, severe thunderstorms, tornados, hurricanes and heat waves. There can also be man-made emergencies such as air and rail accidents, transport vehicle accidents, industrial accidents and terrorist attacks. Some emergencies occur suddenly without warning, while others may have warning signs beforehand.

One thing that all major emergencies have in common is that they can potentially disrupt our normal daily activities, cause damage to property and the environment and in some cases may even threaten our lives and those of our loved ones.

Governments at all levels have developed their own emergency preparedness plans which include a review of local potential hazards or risks and preparation of an emergency plan for a variety of emergencies. This involves the coordination of many people, many departments and many levels of government starting from municipal to county to the provincial or state level. However, the main point of this article is that emergency preparedness begins at home. It is important for you to have your own emergency plan and a survival kit ready at all times in case of an emergency that would require you to leave your home or be without power and other amenities at home. For everybody's sake it is worth all the time and planning in order to be as prepared as possible. When preparing your home and family for an emergency, make sure you hazard-proof your home, keep emergency numbers handy and prepare a survival kit. An emergency survival kit should contain enough to keep you and your family self-sufficient for at least 3 days.

An emergency survival kit should contain:

- water
- non-perishable food
- flashlight
- crank radio or battery-operated radio with spare batteries
- blankets and sleeping bags (1 per person)
- first aid kit
- candles and matches or lighter
- extra car keys and cash
- important papers (identification card for everyone, personal documents)
- clothing and footwear
- toilet paper and other personal supplies
- medication
- whistle
- playing cards, games

All these items should be stored in a bag that you can take with you. Remember to review your emergency kit on a regular basis, and try not to use its contents except during an emergency.

Recent events such as the ice storms and severe flooding are examples of what can happen in our area. For the near future, experts are predicting very unstable and extreme weather as a result of global warming. So now is a good time to prepare if you have not already done so. It is worth the time and energy for peace of mind knowing that you and your family are ready for an emergency.

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