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Are you prepared for an emergency? Do you have a Family Home Emergency Plan and exercise it? A family emergency preparedness plan is a written guide to prepare family members for disasters in order to secure the safety of your family. The plan should meet your family's needs for three days and all family members should know how and when to use the plan.

Have all your family members participate in your plan. At a minimum, your family emergency preparedness plan should include:

- A home escape plan. Select two exits for each room of your house. Get your children involved. Have them draw a diagram showing those exit routes so everyone will know about it.
- Establish meeting places. You should have two meeting places in case of emergencies. One should be close to your home where family members can gather when forced to quickly evacuate the home. The other location should be in a park or other area for emergencies that occur when away from home.
- Maintaining communications with all family members is very important during an emergency. Everyone in your family needs to know how to reach others to report their status. Everyone should know, or have on their person, telephone numbers for a local contact and out-of-state contact to be used during emergencies. Often in times of emergencies, long distance trunk lines are open and working when local lines are jammed. Family members should be trained to use the out-of-state contact to report their status.
- Inquire now how your children's schools would handle various emergencies during school hours. Will the school maintain supervisory control of your children or want them picked up by you?
- Your emergency plans should include provisions for your pets. If sheltering in place, you will need food and water for each pet for at least 72 hours. If evacuating, remember, shelters will not accept pets. You must make alternative plans now for the care and safety of your pets.
- A good emergency food pantry for at least 72 hours of nourishment is a must. Included as an attachment is a sample food pantry, plus household, medical and personal items you will want to have in your "Go Kit."
- A good booklet to download from your computer is **READY TOGETHER NEW JERSEY**. It will give you tips for almost any emergency situation. You can download it by visiting the Ocean County Health Department Web site at www.ochd.org.
- For more information regarding many types of emergencies, visit www.ochd.org/72hour.

By preparing now, you and your family will be able to reduce your stress and anxiety during any unexpected emergency situation. Be prepared. Be ready. In today's world, an emergency is not a question of "If" but one of "When and Where."

The heart of a family emergency preparedness plan is the emergency food pantry. Limit your items to foods your family normally enjoys, but do not need a lot of preparation or cooking. These items should be rotated on about a 3-month basis with your regular pantry to assure freshness. Some examples include:

- Canned meats and tuna fish
- Canned fruits and vegetables
- Peanut butter
- Raisins and nuts
- Granola bars and trail mix
- Canned milk and juices
- Boxed cereals
- Crackers and cookies
- Water (One gallon per person per day and don't forget your pets)
- Other dry foodstuffs your family enjoys
- Avoid salty items, as they can increase thirst
- At least one manual can opener in case of power outage

For your safety and comfort, you need to have emergency supplies packed and ready in one place before a disaster hits. You should assemble enough supplies to last for a minimum of three days.

- Battery powered radio with extra batteries
- One flashlight per household member with extra batteries
- Blanket or sleeping bag for each family member
- Change of clothing, rain gear and sturdy shoes
- Personal hygiene items
- A whistle (To alert people that you need help)
- Matches, lighter and fluid
- Paper products (plates, cups, towels, toilet tissue)
- Disposable knives, spoons, forks
- Maps of local areas with exit routes to shelters or to leave area
- Cash in small denomination bills
- Books, games and cards
- Social Security Card
- Driver's License
- Credit cards
- Extra set of keys
- Insurance agent's name and phone number
- Extra prescription medicines
- Eye glasses/contact lenses
- Lists of medications and doses you are taking
- List of any allergies
- Lists of doctors with phone numbers
- Health insurance cards
- Medicare card, if applicable