

## Have a Plan

**Basic Tips** – Knowing what to do before, during and after an emergency is a critical part of being prepared and may make all the difference when seconds count. In order for you and your family to be safe before, during and after an emergency, planning in advance is critical.

You may not be with your family when a disaster strikes so it is important to plan..

Consider the following:

### How will you contact family and friends?

Be sure to create a [family emergency plan](#). Complete a contact card for each adult family member and have them keep these cards handy in a wallet, purse or briefcase. Additionally, complete contact cards for each child in your family. Put the cards in their backpacks or book bags.

### How should you prepare?

Purchase additional batteries and car-charger adapters for wireless devices; make sure to keep the batteries fully charged. Keep phones, laptops, PDAs, batteries, chargers and other equipment in a dry, accessible location. It is a good idea to keep them in a waterproof bag. Consider purchasing a solar-powered charger.

### Your wireless device may be your greatest resource during an emergency or disaster

Maintain a list of emergency phone numbers – police, fire and rescue agencies; power companies; insurance providers; family, friends and co-workers. Distribute wireless phone numbers to family members and friends and forward your home phone to your wireless number if you will be away from your home or have to evacuate.

Send brief text messages rather than voice calls – often text messages get through when wireless networks are overwhelmed during a crisis. Finally, limit non-emergency calls to conserve battery power and free-up wireless networks for vital communications.

### Have a plan to communicate when even when cellular systems may be inundated to reunite with family members and loved ones.

Identify a contact such as a friend or relative who lives out-of-state for household members to notify that you are safe. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.

Be sure every member of your family knows vital land-line phone number as well as cell lines. Consider adding coins or a prepaid phone card to your emergency kit. If your cell phone has an “ICE” (In Case of Emergency) contact function, program your contact today. If you are in an

accident, emergency personnel will often check your ICE listings in order to get a hold of someone you know. Make sure to inform your ICE contact that they have been you have selected them as an emergency contact.

During a crisis or emergency timely information is needed in order to make smart decisions.

[Be Informed](#) about many types of emergencies and disasters that may occur.

### **Other considerations**

While making your emergency or disaster plans, here are a few considerations and links that can provide guidance with the [care of pets](#), [aiding family members with access and functional needs](#) and [safely shutting off utilities](#).

Make sure to discuss the information in your family plan after all the information has been gathered. Practice your plan at least twice a year and update it according to any issues that arise

### **Next steps**

Inquire about the emergency plans where you work in addition to related daycare centers and schools. If no plans exist, consider [volunteering](#) to help create one.

### **Other general preparedness tips:**

- Take photos or videos of all personal possessions for insurance purposes.
- Have at least \$200 in cash in the house for emergencies.
- Store several gallons of water.
- Make sure a trusted neighbor or friend has a spare key to your home, cars, boats, recreational vehicles and safe deposit boxes.
- Place emergency items in car trunk.
- Store enough food and water to sustain each person and animal for three days in your home.
- Have two flashlights with extra batteries strategically located in your home.
- Purchase plywood to cover windows.
- Check out [this link](#) for a general preparedness guide

To learn more about preparing for disasters, visit [ready.gov](#).

## **Getting Help**

This section provides practical “dos and don’ts” on getting emergency assistance through your mobile device during an emergency.

Remember “Text, Don’t Talk.”

## **Accessing 9-1-1**

If you need life-saving aid, you should CALL 9-1-1. Do NOT text or tweet to 9-1-1.

## **Maximizing battery life**

Minimize non-emergency uses of your cell phone. Limit non-emergency calls to conserve battery power and free-up wireless networks for vital communications. If you do need to communicate, send brief text messages rather than voice calls – often text messages get through when wireless networks are overwhelmed during a crisis.

For non-emergency communications, use text messaging, e-mail or social media instead of making voice calls on your cell phone to avoid tying up voice networks. Data-based services like texts and emails are less likely to experience network congestion.

If traditional hardwire Internet is available use it as oppose to using your mobile device to check weather and news reports.

## **Use of traditional phone land-lines**

If you have a traditional (non-broadband or VoIP) phone, keep at least one non-cordless receiver in your home because it will work even if you lose power. If you are evacuated and have call-forwarding on your home phone, forward your home phone number to your cell phone number.

## **Cell phone use while driving during an emergency**

If you do not have a hands-free device in your car, stop driving or pull over to the side of the road before making a call. Do not text on a cell phone, talk or “tweet” without a hands free device while driving.

## **Streaming videos to watch the news on my smartphone following an emergency and disaster?**

Getting information during an emergency is one of the most valuable resources afforded to you from your mobile device. Immediately following a disaster resist using your mobile device to watch streaming videos or perform non-vital services such as downloading music or videos. These can all lead to network congestion and delay emergency response times.

## Smart Tips

Keep your calls brief and convey only vital information to emergency personnel and/or family. If you cannot complete a call using your cell phone, wait ten seconds before redialing. This will increase the likelihood of completing your call.

If you lose power on your device consider using a car charger. If you need to start the vehicle, be sure it is in a well-ventilated place (remove it from the garage if applicable). Your car radio is also a great way to stay informed as you charge your device. Broadcasters will be distributing important news alerts. For additional tips on getting tech ready click [here](#).

## During a significant crisis or emergency CMAS may be activated.

### What is the Commercial Mobile Alerting System (CMAS)?

#### CMAS is a new public safety system:

Allows enabled mobile devices to receive geographically targeted, text-like messages alerting them of imminent threats to safety in their area. These emergency alerts are delivered with high priority within the communications system.

#### So how does CMAS alerting work?

Authorized national, state or local government officials send alerts regarding public safety emergencies such as a tornado warning or a terrorism alert to CMAS. CMAS authenticates the alert, verifies that the sender is authorized and sends it to participating wireless carriers. The wireless carriers then push the alerts from their cell towers to CMAS-enabled mobile devices in the affected area. Alerts appear like text messages.

#### What should you expect during an emergency?

- Alerts are geographically targeted; they are issued based on where you are physically located at the time of the alert.
- CMAS covers only critical emergency alerts.
  - alerts issued by the President of the United States
  - alerts involving imminent threats to life safety; and,
  - AMBER Alerts
- Consumers are automatically signed up assuming they have a CMAS-enabled mobile device and are a subscriber with a participating wireless carrier.
- You do not need to sign-up for this service.
- Alerts are Free - customers do not pay to receive CMAS alerts.
- A CMAS alert will be accompanied by a unique alert sound and vibration, which is particularly helpful to people with hearing or vision-related disabilities.

## Tune In To Stay Informed

[Staying informed](#) - This section includes advice on how to get emergency alerts (including via texts from government agencies) and how to take advantage of various social media platforms used by FEMA and other government agencies.

Disasters not only devastate individuals and neighborhoods, but entire communities. They can take various forms including:

- Natural: Floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes.
- Man-made related: acts of terrorism
- Technology related: wide-spread failure or malfunction of systems, equipment or software

### **Learn what disasters occur near where you live and work and opt-in for preparedness and emergency notifications**

Disasters, natural and accidental, can occur in your area and emergency managers have ways of sending critical notifications.

Many offer the ability to subscribe to alert services. Communities now have systems that will send instant text alerts or emails to let you know about bad weather, road closings, local emergencies, etc. You can sign up for these notices by visiting your local Office of Emergency Management website.

You can also use your cell phone's text messaging capability to receive text message updates from FEMA (standard message and data rates apply). To sign-up to receive monthly preparedness tips: text PREPARE to 43362 (4FEMA)

FEMA also offers a mobile app that is available for Android, Apple and Blackberry devices. Download it [here](#).

### **Other notification systems**

Methods of pushing emergency notifications vary from community to community. One common method is to broadcast via emergency radio and TV broadcasts. You may hear a special siren, or receive a reverse 9-1-1 telephone call or emergency workers may go door-to-door. Other notifications include:

- [The Emergency Alert System \(EAS\)](#) can address the entire nation on a very short notice in case of a grave threat or national emergency. Ask if your local radio and TV stations participate in EAS.
- [National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Weather Radio \(NWR\)](#) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from a nearby National Weather Service office to specifically configured NOAA weather radio receivers. Determine if NOAA Weather Radio is available where you live. If so, consider purchasing a NOAA weather radio receiver.

- Many [communities](#) also offer emergency alert notifications through their own systems. Check with your state or local government to learn what is available in your area.

### **Social media in the case of a disaster or emergency?**

You may check your local town or county's web or Facebook page to find resources such as Cooling Centers during a power outage, advisories on routes, detours and road closures and requests for volunteers and assistance. You can also use social media from your mobile device to post your status to let family and friends know you are safe. In addition to Facebook and Twitter, you can use resources such as the [American Red Cross's Safe and Well Program](#).

But remember, while social media is a great tool to Stay Informed, you should always call 9-1-1 if you find yourself in a life-threatening emergency.

FEMA offers national updates on Twitter by following [@FEMA](#) [@ReadyDotGov](#) [@CraigatFEMA](#). Be sure to frequently check FEMA's [Ready.gov](#) site, the Weather Channel, NOAA and other reliable weather news sites to stay alert and be [Ready](#).

### **Additional steps**

Consider bookmarking important sources of information on your phone, PDA or other wireless device. Your local news affiliate provides updates specific for your area such as immediate area weather, recovery efforts, and resources for assistance. There are additional emergency resources available [here](#).