



# THE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS HANDBOOK

HOW TO PREPARE, STAY AWARE, AND TAKE ACTION  
TO KEEP YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY SAFE

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# THE NEXT DISASTER IS COMING. DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO?

**Your heart pounds. Your mind races. Your body freezes up. You're caught in an emergency, risking the consequences of a wrong move. It's terrifying. And life threatening. But not if you know what to do.**

**With planning, knowledge, and supplies, you can prepare for just about any emergency or disaster that might strike. You can protect yourself and your family. You can stay safe.**

That's what this guide is all about.

It comes to you with the expertise of The Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services team. These experts make up a nationwide network of skilled, caring volunteers and staff members. Their mission is to respond to any disaster no matter where it strikes, to keep helping until every need is met, and to do it with concern and compassion for all.

And now, explore what you need to know and do to keep you and your family safe in an emergency.



# THREE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF SURVIVING A DISASTER

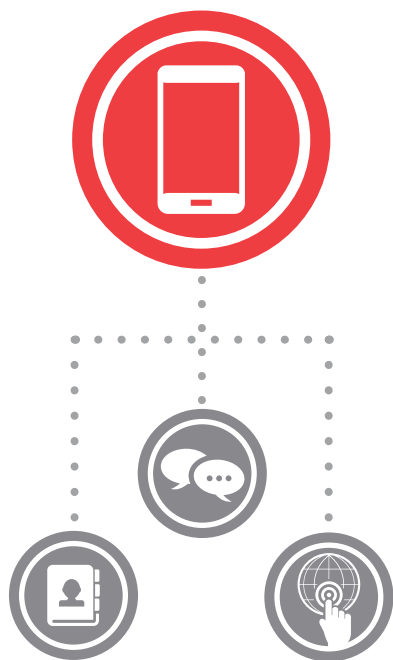
Each disaster is different, of course, presenting unique risks that you need to be aware of. But there are basics that will serve you well in any situation you might find yourself in. With the right tools and the right information, you can keep yourself and your family safe.

## 1 CREATE AN EMERGENCY KIT

If you're forced to ride out a storm, shelter in place, or take action in almost any disaster that might strike, this kit is vital. Your basic emergency kit should include:

- A gallon of water per person per day for at least three days
- A three-day supply of nonperishable food
- Radio
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Signal whistle
- Dust mask for contaminated air
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape
- Towelettes, garbage bags, and ties for sanitation
- Pliers and some basic hand tools
- Can opener
- Local maps
- Cell phone with charger



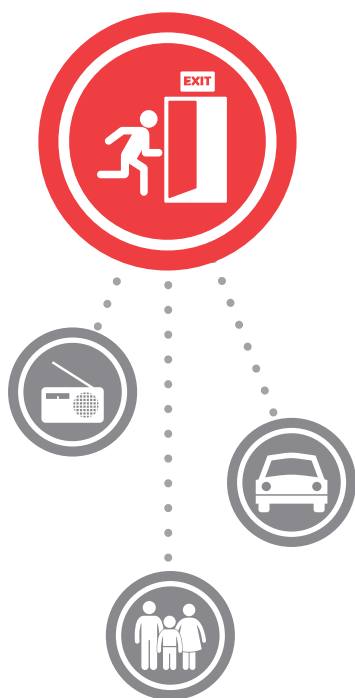


## ② CREATE A COMMUNICATION PLAN

The first concern is the safety of your family and loved ones. Because your family may not be together when a disaster strikes, it's vital to create a network of communication to ensure that everyone is accounted for and safe.

**You and your family members should have:**

- Each other's phone numbers
- School and workplace names, addresses, and phone numbers
- Procedure for who will contact who. It's sometimes faster to send a text instead of talking on phone lines that may be overloaded in an emergency.
- Known locations of where to go and meet in an emergency



## ③ CREATE AN EVACUATION PLAN

A fire or flood is the typical reason for an evacuation. But other disasters, like industrial accidents, can also require evacuation.

In some cases, evacuation is mandatory. In others, it's optional. The amount of time you have to react will depend on the disaster. You'll have more time for weather emergencies like hurricanes, but many other disasters require immediate evacuation. That's why planning is vital.

**Here's what to do:**

- Use your Communication Plan (above) to know in advance how you will contact your family members and where you will meet.
- Keep your car in good repair and try to have at least a half tank of gas at all times. If you don't have a car or don't drive, make arrangements with family members or neighbors.
- Familiarize yourself with evacuation routes in advance to avoid confusion.
- Leave early. If you wait too long, you may reduce your options or be forced to remain in place.
- Take your Emergency Kit with you.



# THE MOST FREQUENT DISASTERS AND HOW TO STAY SAFE

No one knows what the next disaster will be — a fire, a flood, a hurricane. But one thing's for certain. It's coming. So the most important thing you can do is to know what to do. Here's the information you need.



# HOUSE FIRE

You have less than 30 seconds before a small flame rages out of control. You have less than 2 minutes before your life is threatened. In 5 minutes, flames can engulf your home. Black smoke, toxic fumes, heat, and flames are all present in a house fire, and they're all deadly.

## Here's how to stay safe:

- Create and practice an escape plan that includes two ways out of each room and feeling your way out in the dark or with your eyes closed.
- Make sure that windows, screens, locks, security bars, and similar items can be easily opened.
- Install a smoke detector on every floor, and test the units and replace batteries regularly.
- Move fast when the smoke detector sounds. Don't waste precious seconds collecting possessions.
- Crawl low, under the smoke, to safety.
- Feel the doorknob and door. If either is hot, don't open it.
- Leave a door closed if you see smoke coming out.
- Close the door, and cover vents and cracks around the door with cloth or tape if you can't get out.
- Stop, drop, and roll if your clothes catch fire.
- Return to your home only after the fire department determines it's safe.
- Inventory and photograph damaged property.
- Contact your local Salvation Army for help after any disaster.



# HURRICANE

Violent winds,  
deadly flooding,  
and the power to  
level buildings.  
Your risk from a  
hurricane skyrockets  
in summer and fall.  
It's wise to keep your  
home prepared by  
removing damaged  
trees, securing gutters  
and downspouts,  
reinforcing the roof,  
and buying a portable  
generator.

## If a hurricane strikes, here's what to do:

- Know the difference: "Hurricane watch" means dangerous conditions possible in 48 hours. "Hurricane warning" means dangerous conditions expected in 36 hours.
- Bring loose items like patio furniture and garbage cans inside.
- Check your Emergency Kit.
- Evacuate if notified, and let family members know where you are.
- Plan to shelter in place if you're not being evacuated, and let family members know.
- Close storm shutters or board up windows. Stay away from windows because of flying glass.
- Turn your refrigerator or freezer to the coldest setting. If you lose power, food will last longer.
- Tune in to weather and emergency updates on the TV, radio, or internet.
- Watch for downed power lines and debris.
- Don't walk or drive through flood waters.
- Return home only when local authorities say it's safe if you had to evacuate.
- Photograph property damage for insurance claims.
- Contact your local Salvation Army for help after any disaster.





# TORNADO

This is nature's most violent, most destructive act. A tornado's spinning funnel can reach speeds of 300 miles per hour, devastating entire communities within minutes. But it is possible to stay safe if a tornado strikes.

## If a tornado strikes, here's what to do:

- Check and update your Emergency Kit and Communication Plan before tornado season.
- Stay alert to changing weather systems, because a tornado can gather and strike within minutes.
- Go to a basement, storm cellar, or the lowest possible level if you're in a structure like a school, hospital, or shopping center.
- Go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor if you're in a high-rise building.
- Get out immediately, and move to a safe area like the lowest floor of a sturdy building or a storm shelter if you're in a home or office.
- Get in a vehicle and drive to the closest shelter if you're outdoors when a tornado hits.
- Take cover in a stationary vehicle if possible.
- Lie in an area lower than the roadway, and cover your head with your arms and a blanket, coat, or similar item if there's no vehicle available for shelter or transportation.
- Never shelter under a bridge or overpass. It's safer in a low, flat area.
- Never try to outrun a tornado.
- Constantly watch out for flying debris.
- Consider building a safe room inside your home or in some other structure.
- Contact your local Salvation Army for help after any disaster.



# FLOOD

Flood waters are  
deceptively dangerous.  
Six inches of moving  
water can knock you  
down. Two feet can  
sweep your car away.

## When the waters rise, this is how to stay safe:

- Know the difference: “flood watch” means be aware, while “flood warning” means take action.
- Check your Emergency Kit.
- Move important items in your home to the highest floor.
- Disconnect electrical appliances. Never touch electrical equipment that’s wet.
- Turn off gas and electricity if instructed.
- When flood waters start to rise, move to higher ground, and evacuate if notified.
- Don’t drive or walk through flooded areas. Standing water may be electrically charged, conceal debris, or be contaminated.
- Return home only when it’s safe, determined by local authorities.
- Photograph property damage for insurance claims.
- Contact your local Salvation Army for help after any disaster.



# EARTHQUAKE

You are at risk for earthquakes wherever you live, and they can happen at any time of the year.

## Here's how to protect yourself:

- Identify places in your home or work where you can be safe, such as under sturdy pieces of furniture, archways, or interior walls.
- Store supplies and documents in a safe, accessible place.
- Create a family communication plan.
- Stay where you are until the earthquake stops. If you're indoors, get to the floor and cover your head with your arms. If you're outdoors, move away from buildings. If you're in a car, stop as quickly as you can, and stay inside the car.
- After the earthquake, find a clear path to safety. If you're trapped, use your cellphone, tap on a pipe or wall, or use other ways to alert first responders.
- Stay alert for aftershocks.
- Contact your local Salvation Army for help after any disaster.



# WILDFIRE

A wildfire can strike and spread with alarming speed. All it takes is a dry climate, vegetation, and a spark. In seconds, roaring flames erupt.

## Here's how to protect yourself and your family:

- Know the term "fire weather watch." It means dangerous fire conditions are possible in 12 to 72 hours.
- Keep the roof and gutters of your home clean.
- Maintain a 30-foot area around your home free of wood piles, dry leaves, or other items that burn.
- Make sure your car is fueled and equipped with emergency supplies and a change of clothes.
- Evacuate immediately if instructed, and be aware of evacuation routes.
- Return home only when local authorities okay it.
- Use caution in burned areas. Hot spots can flare up without warning.
- Stay alert after the fire, checking periodically for sparks and smoke.
- Contact your local Salvation Army for help after any disaster.

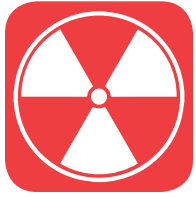


# BLIZZARD

**You're at grave risk in a blizzard from snow, sleet, freezing rain, frigid temperatures, and more. This is potentially a life or death situation.**

## **Here's what you can do against a deadly winter storm:**

- Know the difference: "Winter weather advisory" means wintry conditions are expected. "Winter storm watch" means a storm is possible. "Winter storm warning" means a storm is soon to happen.
- Check your Emergency Kit, and include ice melt, heating fuel, snow shovels, sand, and extra clothing and blankets.
- Winterize your home with insulation, caulking, and weather stripping, and clean and inspect your furnace.
- Winterize your car by checking antifreeze, battery, winter tires, heater, windshield wipers, and other components.
- Carry emergency items in your car like a shovel, flashlight, radio, matches, first aid kit, road salt, tow rope, and flares.
- Drive only if absolutely necessary.
- Remain in your car if you're stranded in a blizzard, running the heater for 10 minutes every hour and conserving battery power.
- Check your home for carbon monoxide from stoves, furnaces, and other heating sources, and install carbon monoxide alarms.
- Stay indoors during the blizzard.
- Take care not to overexert when shoveling snow after the storm.
- Keep dry, and change wet clothes to maintain body heat.
- Watch for frostbite, including loss of feeling in extremities.
- Watch for hypothermia, including disorientation, slurred speech, and drowsiness.
- Contact your local Salvation Army for help after any disaster.



# HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Dangerous chemicals are everywhere, and as they're being produced, stored, transported, used, or disposed of, there's the potential for an accident with deadly consequences.

## Here's what you need to know:

- Contact your community's Local Emergency Planning Committee for information on what's being done to minimize the risk from hazardous materials.
- Evacuate immediately if you're instructed to, and go to a designated public shelter.
- Minimize contamination inside your house by closing windows, shutting vents, and turning off attic fans, if there's time.
- Stay upstream, uphill, and upwind of the contamination, and try to get at least a half mile away, if possible.
- Avoid touching or walking into any spilled liquids or airborne gases.
- Seek shelter in a building if you're in a car when the emergency occurs.
- Close all windows and vents, turn off air conditioners, seal gaps under doorways and windows, and shelter in a room with the fewest openings if you're being told to stay indoors.
- Follow decontamination instructions from local authorities if you contact hazardous chemicals, and seek medical care if necessary.
- Monitor local radio and television for emergency updates.
- Return home only when authorities say it's safe.
- Report any lingering vapors or other potential hazards.
- Contact your local Salvation Army for help after any disaster.

# EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

## FAMILY MEMBERS

Name

Address

Phone

Name

Address

Phone

Name

Address

Phone

Name

Address

Phone

Name

Address

Phone

# EMERGENCY CONTACT PERSON OUTSIDE OF THE FAMILY'S IMMEDIATE AREA IF FAMILY MEMBERS ARE SEPARATED:

Name

Address

Phone

## CHILDREN WHO ARE AT SCHOOL OR DAYCARE WILL BE EVACUATED TO:

Child's Name

Evacuation Site

Child's Name

Evacuation Site

Child's Name

Evacuation Site

Child's Name

Evacuation Site

## FAMILY MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES ASSIGNED TO:

Maintain Emergency Kit

Monitor NOAA, local radio, or TV for information

Take family medical information if evacuated

Manage bank statements, cash, and credit cards

Evacuate pets and maintain a list of pet shelters

Complete and share evacuation and communication plans



**EVACUATION ROUTES FROM OUR HOME:**

**RENDEZVOUS POINT IF FAMILY MEMBERS ARE  
SEPARATED IN A DISASTER:**

# EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE AGENCIES

## THE SALVATION ARMY

To find your local Salvation Army for disaster relief and recovery assistance, visit: [www.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.salvationarmyusa.org)

To learn more about The Salvation Army's Emergency Disaster Services, visit: [www.disaster.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.disaster.salvationarmyusa.org)

## FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

FEMA will provide assistance for a major disaster in your area. To find your local office and for other information about FEMA, visit: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

FEMA Regional Office Phone

## DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

The Department of Homeland Security responds to the threats that we face as a nation, including disasters. To find out more, visit: [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)

## STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES

To find the disaster assistance agencies in your state and local community, visit: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

State Agency Name

Phone Number

Local Agency Name

Phone Number

## LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENT

Address

Emergency Phone Number

Non-emergency Phone Number

## LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENT

Address

Emergency Phone Number

Non-emergency Phone Number

## LOCAL MEDICAL FACILITY

Address

Emergency Phone Number

Non-emergency Phone Number

## FAMILY DOCTOR

Name

Office Address

Phone Number



# THE SALVATION ARMY: THERE WHEN IT MATTERS

The Salvation Army's disaster work began in the United States after the hurricane in Galveston, Texas, in 1900.

The National Commander at the time, Frederick Booth-Tucker, ordered Salvation Army Officers from across the country to the disaster site to provide spiritual counsel and practical assistance. The Army's first food service was performed, not from a mobile kitchen, but by caring for people with water and coffee who helped those suffering and those involved in the recovery efforts.

After Galveston, early Salvationists developed simple vehicles to rush food and beverages to victims and first responders. These early trucks developed over the years into specialized pieces of equipment. The Salvation Army even has several tractor-trailer-sized field kitchens for added capacity during catastrophic events.

Since 1900, The Salvation Army Emergency

Disaster Services teams have answered the call, creating the ministry of presence. The Salvation Army is known for in such emergencies as:

- The 9/11 Terror Attack on the World Trade Center
- Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans
- Superstorm Sandy in New Jersey
- The Waldo Canyon and High Park fires in Colorado, two of the worst in the state's history, as well as other wildfires in Colorado and surrounding areas
- Thousands of fires, floods, hurricanes, storms, chemical spills, and more in local communities across the country

No matter what the emergency, when people are hurting, The Salvation Army responds with compassion and continues to serve until every need is met.



DOING THE  
MOST GOOD®

# THE SALVATION ARMY'S ROLE IN A DISASTER

The Salvation Army is officially recognized by federal, state, and local governments across the country as a sanctioned disaster relief and assistance organization. All members of our Emergency Disaster Services team are ministering in that they serve as a means of expressing God's love to those in need.

We provide spiritual comfort and emotional support to people coping with the trauma of a disaster. This is our ministry of presence, and it's a key part of our work in every disaster or emergency.

# THREE PHASES OF THE SALVATION ARMY'S WORK

1

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

We recognize that preparedness is critical, so we make sure that we can respond quickly and efficiently to any disaster.

- 📌 **Emergency vehicles.** We maintain a fleet of emergency response vehicles, including mobile canteen and kitchen units, throughout the country. We also operate warehouse facilities nationwide for stockpiling food, water, and medical supplies.
- 📌 **Disaster training.** We sponsor events across the country to educate first responders and the public about emergency preparedness and response.

2

## IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Because each disaster is unique, our response varies depending on the situation and the magnitude of the disaster. But overall, The Salvation Army's response will include:

- 📌 **Food and hydration** for victims, emergency workers, and first responders
- 📌 **Emergency shelter** for victims in local facilities, including municipal shelters and Salvation Army buildings
- 📌 **Cleanup supplies** like mops, brooms, buckets, shovels, detergents, and tarps
- 📌 **Emergency communications** through The Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network

3

## LONG-TERM DISASTER RECOVERY

We offer long-term support depending on the disaster and the number of people affected. Coordinating with local, state, and federal agencies, we provide:

- 📌 **Restoration and rebuilding** by working with volunteer rebuilding teams, and establishing warehouses for building supplies.
- 📌 **Social services** that provide help with essential living supplies, emergency household needs, disaster-related expenses, and more.
- 📌 **Donated goods**, such as clothing and other items, through warehouses and distribution centers.



DOING THE MOST GOOD®

“Doing The Most Good.” These four words reflect The Salvation Army’s mission to feed, to clothe, to comfort, to care. The Salvation Army operates 7,546 centers in communities across the United States offering a range of social services as well as disaster relief and recovery. Your generous support makes this vital work possible.