

STAY CALM KNOW WHAT TO DO AFTER A DISASTER STRIKES!

Right after the emergency, you may be confused or disoriented. Stay calm and remember the following procedures.

HELP THE INJURED

Help anyone who is injured. Get your emergency survival kit (the first aid kit should be with it).

LISTEN TO THE RADIO

Listen to your local radio station on your battery operated radio for instructions.

DON'T USE THE TELEPHONE

Don't use the telephone unless it is absolutely necessary. Emergency crews will need all available lines.

CHECK YOUR HOME

Check for damage to your home. Remember the following points:

Use a flashlight - don't light matches or turn on the electrical switches if you suspect damage.

Check for fires, fire hazards or other household hazards.

Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas, turn off the main gas valve, open windows and get everyone outside quickly.

Shut off any other damaged utilities.

Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline, and other flammable liquids immediately. Wear protective clothing. For major spills or leaks, call in professional help.

Confine or secure your pets.

Check on your neighbours, especially the elderly or people with disabilities.

IF YOU TURN OFF THE GAS, IT SHOULD ONLY BE TURNED BACK ON BY A PROFESSIONAL FROM THE GAS COMPANY.

BE READY TO EVACUATE

If the emergency is serious enough, you may be asked to leave your home and go to a nearby evacuation centre, like a school gym or a community hall.

If you have to evacuate

- Leave immediately.
- Take your emergency survival kit with you.
- Listen to the radio and follow instructions from local emergency officials.
- If you are instructed to do so, shut off water, gas and electricity.
- Make arrangements for pets.
- Wear clothes and shoes appropriate to conditions.
- Lock the house

• Follow the routes specified by the officials. Don't take shortcuts. A shortcut could take you to a blocked or dangerous area.

• If you have time, leave a note telling others when you left and where you went. If you have a mailbox you could leave the note there.

• If you are evacuated, sign up with the registration centre so you can be contacted or reunited with your family and loved ones.

• If you have to evacuate your home for a prolonged period during a winter power failure, drain the water from the plumbing system. Starting at the top of the house, open all taps and flush toilets several times, and open the drain valve in the basement. Drain your hot water tank by attaching a hose to the tank drain valve and running it to the basement floor drain. (If you drain a gas-fired water tank, the pilot light should be turned out - the local gas supplier should be called to re-light it!). Unhook washing machine hoses and drain.

EXPECT EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

You won't "act like yourself" for a while

Most people caught in a disaster usually feel confused. They may tremble, feel numb, vomit or faint. Immediately after the disaster they often feel bewildered, shocked, and relieved to be alive. These feelings and reactions are perfectly normal.

Later many survivors sleep poorly, have no appetite, are angry with those around them, or panic at the slightest hint of a storm. Children might start thumb sucking or bed wetting. These feelings and reactions are perfectly normal too.

How to help your children

Children exposed to a disaster can experience a variety of intense emotional reactions such as anxiety, fear, nervousness, stomachaches, loss of appetite and other reactions. These are normal and temporary reactions to danger. Parents can help relieve such reactions by taking their children's fears seriously, by reassuring them, giving them additional attention and hugging them.

A child who feels afraid is really afraid

After a disaster, children are most afraid that

- the event will happen again
- someone will get hurt or injured
- they will be separated from the family
- they will be left alone.

So comfort and reassure them. Tell them what you know about the situation. Be honest but gentle. Encourage them to talk about the disaster. Encourage them to ask questions about the disaster. Give them a real task to do, something that gets the family back on its feet.

Keep them with you, even if it seems easier to look for housing or help on your own. At a time like this it's important for the whole family to stay together.

How to get back on track

Here are some suggestions to help get yourself and your family back on track after the disaster.

Talk about your feelings. Talk about what's happened.

Encourage your children to express their feelings. They may want to do this by drawing or playing instead of talking. Understand that their feelings are real. Recognize that when you suffer a loss, you may grieve. (Yes, you can grieve the loss of a wedding photo or your grandfather's favourite ring.) You may feel apathetic or angry. You may not sleep or eat well. These are normal grief reactions.



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