



30 TIPS FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, PART 1

Let's face it, the road to becoming personally, organizationally, or institutionally prepared can be long and daunting. How do I even begin drafting an emergency plan? What supplies do I need? How much food? How much water? What about sanitation? How do I deal with medical needs? Emergency lighting? Communications? Power generators? The list goes on and on. So what's the very best advice we can offer? If necessary, start small, start slow, *but just start*. Whatever level of preparedness you achieve today is more than you had yesterday!

Here's Part 1 of a three-part series of tips for emergency preparedness...

Preparedness Tip #1:

- Take a moment to image that there is an emergency, like a fire in your home, and you need to leave quickly. What are the best escape routes from your home? Find at least two ways out of each room. Now, write it down—you've got the beginning of a plan.

Preparedness Tip #2:

- Pick a place to meet after a disaster. Designate two meeting places. Choose one right outside your home, in case of a sudden household emergency, such as a fire. The second place you choose needs to be outside your neighbourhood, in the event that it is not safe to stay near or return to your home.

Preparedness Tip #3:

- Choose an emergency contact person outside your area because it may be easier to call long distance than locally after a local/regional disaster. Take a minute now to call or e-mail an out-of-town friend or

family member to ask him or her to be your family's designated contact in the event of an emergency. Be sure to share the contact's phone number with everyone in the family. During an emergency, you can call or better yet, text your contact who can share with other family members where you are; how you are doing; and how to get in contact with you.

Preparedness Tip #4:

- Complete an emergency contact card and make copies for each member of your family to carry with them. Be sure to include an out-of-town contact on your contact card. It may be easier to reach someone out of town if local phone lines are out of service or overloaded. You should also have at least one traditionally wired landline phone, as cordless or cell phones may not work in an emergency. Often, texting will work when a voice call will not.

Preparedness Tip #5:

- Dogs may be man's best friend, but due to health regulations, most emergency shelters cannot house animals. Find out in advance how to care for your pets and working animals when disaster strikes. Pets should not be left behind, but could be taken to a veterinary office, family member's home, or animal shelter during an emergency. Also, be sure to store extra food and water for pets.

Preparedness Tip #6:

- Go through your calendar now, and put a reminder on it—every six months—to review your plan, update numbers, and check supplies to be sure nothing has

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expired, spoiled, or changed. Also remember to practice your fire escape and other disaster plans.

Preparedness Tip #7:

- Check your child's school website or call the school office to request a copy of the school's emergency plan. Keep a copy at home and work or other places where you spend a lot of your time and make sure the school's plan is incorporated into your family's emergency plan. Also, learn about the disaster plans at your workplace or other places where you and your family spend time.

Preparedness Tip #8:

- Teach your children how and when to call 9-1-1 for help. Post this and other emergency telephone numbers by telephones.

Preparedness Tip #9:

- Practice. Conduct fire drills and practice evacuating your home twice a year. Drive your planned evacuation route and plot alternative routes on a map in case main roads are blocked or gridlocked. Practice earthquake drills at home, school, and work. Commit a weekend to update telephone numbers, emergency supplies, and review your plan with everyone.

Preparedness Tip #10:

- A community working together during an emergency makes sense. Talk to your neighbors about how you can work together during an emergency. Find out if anyone has specialized equipment, like a power generator, or expertise such as medical knowledge, that might help in a crisis. Decide who will check on elderly or disabled neighbors. Make back-up plans for

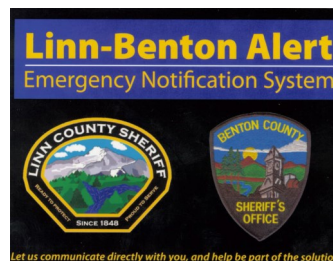
children in case you can't get home in an emergency. Sharing plans and communicating in advance is a good strategy.

End of Part I. Watch for Parts II and III coming soon!

One of the goals of the Emergency Services Division of the Sheriff's Office is to provide you with the information you need to prepare for the natural and manmade disasters you may encounter. If every family takes action to prepare for emergencies, we can build a more resilient community.

The preparedness and safety tips given here are designed to help you "jump start" your family's preparedness plans. You're also encouraged to:

- ◆ explore the information on the Emergency Preparedness section of the Benton County Sheriff's Office website at: www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff
- ◆ sign up for the Emergency Alert Notification System, and
- ◆ consider becoming a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) member.



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