

TERRORISM: PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Devastating acts, such as the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, have left many concerned about the possibility of future incidents in the United States and their potential impact. They have raised uncertainty about what might happen next, increasing stress levels. Nevertheless, there are things you can do to prepare for the unexpected and reduce the stress that you may feel now and later should another emergency arise. Taking preparatory action can reassure you and your family that you can exert a measure of control even in the face of such events.

What You Can Do To Prepare

Finding out what can happen is the first step. Once you have determined the events possible and their potential in your community, it is important that you discuss them with your family or household. Develop a disaster plan together.

- Create an Emergency Communications Plan

Choose an out-of-town contact your family or household will call or e-mail to check on each other should a disaster occur. Your selected contact should live far enough away that they would be unlikely to be directly affected by the same event, and they should know they are the chosen contact. Make sure every household member has the contact's, and each others, e-mail address and telephone numbers (home, work, pager and cell). Your family should know that if telephones are not working, they need to be patient and try again later or try e-mail. Many people flood the telephone lines when emergencies happen but e-mail can sometimes get through when calls don't.

- Establish a Meeting Place

Having a predetermined meeting place away from your home will save time and minimize confusion should your home be affected or the area evacuated. You may even want to make arrangements to stay with a family member or friend in case of an emergency. Be sure to include any pets in these plans, since pets are not permitted in shelters and some hotels will not accept them.

- Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit

If you need to evacuate your home or are asked to "shelter in place", having some essential supplies on hand will make you and your family more comfortable:

1. Prepare a Disaster Supplies Kit in an easy-to-carry container such as a duffel bag or small plastic trash can.
2. Include "special needs" items for any household member (items for people with disabilities or older people), first aid supplies (including prescription medications), a change of clothing for each person, a sleeping bag or bedroll for each person, a battery powered radio or television and extra batteries, food, bottled water and tools.
3. It is also a good idea to include some cash and copies of important family documents (birth certificates, passports and licenses) in your kit.