

Family Preparedness Plan

When a disaster strikes, your family might not be together, and communication channels might be down.

It is important to plan how you will contact one another and discuss how you will communicate in different disaster situations. When creating a [family communications plan](#), keep the following tips in mind.

Before a disaster

- Have a list of emergency contacts (fire, police, ambulance, etc.) in your cell phone and near your home phone.
- Agree on a family meeting place, both in your neighborhood and out of town, in case you cannot get in touch or are unable to go home.
- Program “I.C.E” (in case of emergency) numbers into your phone and family members’ phones. If someone is injured, emergency personnel can use these numbers to notify friends and family.
- Prepare a [family contact sheet](#) with the names, addresses and phone numbers of important contacts. Include an out-of-town contact for family members to get in touch with when they are unable to contact other family members. Often, during disasters, it’s easier to make long-distance calls than local calls.
- [Create a contact card](#) for each member of the family. Keep these cards in a purse, wallet or child’s backpack. Include an emergency contact name and number, an out-of-town contact name and number, a neighborhood meeting place and any other important information.
- Be sure every family member has emergency phone numbers and a cell phone.
- Teach children how and when to call 911 for help.
- Make sure everyone in your family knows how to send a text message. Texts can often get around network disruptions when phone calls cannot.
- Subscribe to alert services. Many communities have systems that will send out text messages and emails with the latest

information during a disaster. Visit your local emergency management website to sign up.

During a disaster

- If you have a life-threatening emergency, call 911.
- Avoid making phone calls except in serious emergencies. If you must make a call, keep the conversation brief.
- For non-emergency communication, use text messages, email and social media instead of making phone calls. Too many phone calls can cause network congestion, meaning people in real, life-threatening emergencies can't get help.
- Keep your out-of-town contact updated on your location and condition.

After a disaster

- After a disaster, register yourself and your family members as "safe and well" on [the American Red Cross website](#) to let friends and family know you are safe.
- Update any contact information as needed.

Additional resources

- [American Red Cross](#)
- [Step-by-step actions to prepare for an emergency from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [FCC and FEMA: How to Communicate Before, During and After a Major Disaster](#)
- [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)
 - ["Make a plan"](#)