

## Onondaga County “Be Prepared” Fact Sheet:

# Emergency Preparedness Advice For You and Your Family

**E**mergency preparedness is as simple as planning ahead. It’s easy and inexpensive for anyone. Go over the checklists below with your household to determine how you can take control of an emergency. Check and update your kits when you change your clocks during daylight-saving times. Make sure they are complete and ready to go.

## Household Disaster Plan

### What to Have in Your Plan

Consider developing a disaster plan with your household members to prepare for what to do, how to find each other, and how to communicate in an emergency.

- Decide where your household will reunite after a disaster. Identify two places to meet: one right outside your home and another outside your neighborhood, such as a library, community center or place of worship.
- Make sure everyone knows the address and phone number of your second meeting place.
- Know and practice all possible exit routes from your home and neighborhood.
- Designate an out-of-state friend or relative that household members can call if separated during a disaster. If Onondaga County phone circuits are busy, this out-of-state contact can be an important way of communicating between household members. When local phone circuits are busy, long-distance calls may be easier to make.
- Account for everybody’s needs, especially seniors, children, people with disabilities and non-English speakers.
- Ensure that household members have a copy of your household disaster plan to keep in their wallets and backpacks.
- Practice your plan with all household members.

## Go Bag Checklist

### What to Have in Your Hand

Every household should consider assembling a Go Bag – a collection of items you may need in the event of an evacuation. Each household member’s Go Bag should be packed in a sturdy, easy-to-carry container such as a backpack or suitcase on wheels. A Go Bag should be easily accessible if you have to leave your home in a hurry. Make sure it is ready to go at all times of the year.

- Copies of your important documents in a waterproof and portable container (insurance cards, birth certificates, deeds, photo IDs, etc.)
- Extra set of car and house keys.
- Credit and ATM cards and cash, especially in small denominations. We recommend you keep at least \$50-\$100 on hand.
- Bottled water and non-perishable food such as energy or granola bars.
- Flashlight, battery-operated AM/FM radio and extra batteries. You can also buy wind-up radios that do not require batteries at retail stores.
- Medication for at least one week and other essential personal items. Be sure to change medications before they expire. Keep a list of the medications each member of your household takes and their dosages, or copies of all your prescription slips.
- First-aid kit.
- Sturdy, comfortable shoes, lightweight raingear and a mylar blanket (available where camping supplies are sold).
- Contact and meeting place information for your household, and a small regional map.

# Emergency Supply Kit Checklist

## What to Have in Your Home

Keep enough supplies in your home to survive on your own for at least three days. If possible, keep these materials in an easily accessible, separate container or special cupboard. You should indicate to your household members that these supplies are for emergencies only.

- One gallon of drinking water per person per day.
- Non-perishable, ready-to-eat canned foods, and manual can opener.
- First-aid kit, medications and prescriptions.
- Flashlight, battery-operated AM/FM radio, NOAA radio and extra batteries.
- Whistle.
- Personal hygiene items: soap, feminine hygiene products, toothbrush and toothpaste, etc.
- One quart of unscented bleach or iodine tablets (for disinfecting water ONLY if directed to do so by health officials) and eyedropper (for adding bleach to water).
- Sturdy shoes, heavy gloves, warm clothes, lightweight raingear and a mylar blanket (available where camping supplies are sold).
- Extra fire extinguisher, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors.
- Child care supplies or other special care items.
- Other supplies and tools.

## General Emergency Response

### Evacuation

In some cases, it may be necessary to evacuate your home or neighborhood. County officials will tell you when to evacuate through the media and direct warnings. Evacuation is used as a last resort when a serious threat to public safety exists.

#### Evacuate Immediately When You:

- Are directed to do so by an emergency official.
- Are in immediate danger.
- Smell gas or smoke.
- See fire.

#### Be Prepared To Evacuate:

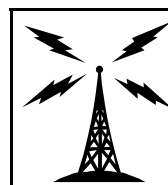
- Secure your home: close and lock windows and doors and unplug appliances before you leave. Authorities will instruct you if it is necessary to turn off utilities.
- Wear sturdy shoes and comfortable, protective clothing such as long pants and long sleeved shirts.
- Bring your Go Bag with you when you evacuate.
- Know your workplace evacuation plan.
- Know your child's school evacuation plan.

### Shelter In Place

When evacuation to shelters is neither appropriate nor possible, you may be asked to stay where you are. Sheltering in place is an effective way to protect yourself in many emergencies involving contaminated air. However, you should only do so if directed by emergency officials.

#### If You Are Asked To Shelter In Place:

- Go inside your home or the nearest appropriate facility (school, library, place of worship, etc.)
- Take shelter in a room that has few doors or windows. Ideally, a room to shelter in place should allow at least 10 square feet per person.
- Close and seal, if possible, all doors and windows.
- Turn off all ventilation systems.
- Do not use the phone – keep the phone line available for emergency calls.
- Stay tuned to your radio or television for emergency information and updates.
- Make use of your Go Bag and Emergency Supply Kit.



*During any type of emergency, tune in to local radio and TV for updates and specific instructions from authorities.*

# Disaster Sheltering

Some emergencies may require that you leave your home and travel to an emergency shelter. The County has a list of shelter sites appropriate for various types of disasters. Local officials will inform you when sheltering is necessary.

## Disaster Sheltering Guidelines:

- If you can, try to seek shelter with friends or relatives outside the affected area.
- County-run shelters can be set up in schools, municipal buildings and places of worship. They provide basic food, medicine and water. If possible, bring clothing, bedding, bathing and sanitary supplies, special food and pre-filled prescriptions and other medications to shelters.
- Alcoholic beverages, firearms and illegal substances are not allowed in emergency shelters.
- You cannot bring pets to shelters. Only service animals are allowed.
- Take your Go Bag to the shelter with you.

# Information for You and Your Loved Ones

## Parents & Families

Include your children in planning for an emergency. Teach them how to get help and what to do in different situations. Practice your family emergency plan with your children and quiz them about preparedness information.

### Every Child Should Know:

- Family contact information for use in an emergency.
- Never to touch wires lying on the ground or hanging from poles.
- How to identify the smell of gas. Tell them that if they smell it, tell a grown-up or leave the building.
- How and when to call 911.
- A "key word" for your child that is known only to immediate family members and can be used if you need someone to pick up your child in an emergency. Your child will make sure the person knows the key word and will know that you have sent them. Practice this with your child.

### Information to Know About Your Child's School or Day Care Facility:

- Find out what your child's school does in the event of an emergency and know the school's emergency plans.
- Find out where you can pick up your child during an evacuation.
- Ensure that the school has up-to-date contact information for you and at least one other relative or friend.
- Find out from your child's school or daycare if you can authorize a friend or relative to pick up your child in an emergency if you cannot.

### Go Bag:

- Pack child care supplies as well as games and small toys in your family's Go Bag.

### Reassurance:

- Children are particularly vulnerable to emotional stress after a disaster and may exhibit excessive fear of the dark, crying, fear of being alone and constant worry. Reassure children that they are safe. Encourage them to talk about their fears, emphasize that they are not responsible for what happened, and comfort them.

# Tips For Pet Owners

Pet owners should include provisions for their pet in a household disaster plan. Please note that pets are not allowed in shelters (only service animals are allowed in shelters). Therefore, it is important that you have a plan for your pet in the case of an evacuation.

## **Pet Emergency Planning Tips:**

- Contact friends or relatives outside your area to see if they would be willing to accommodate you and your pets in an emergency. Also, ask a neighbor, friend or family member if they will look after your pet if you cannot return home due to a disaster.
- See if your veterinarian or groomer provides shelter for animals during an emergency.
- Transport your pets in a carrier for the duration of the disaster. This makes pets feel safer and more secure.
- Know your pet's hiding places so that you can easily find them in times of stress.
- Make sure each pet has a license and ID tag.

## **Assemble a "pet survival kit" that can be ready to go if you are evacuating your pet to a kennel or to friends or family. You should include:**

- Water, food, and containers.
- A leash/muzzle/harness.
- A copy of all current vaccination and health records, license numbers, and microchip numbers.
- Medication for your pet (if needed).
- A pet carrier or cage (a luggage carrier can be used to wheel the carrier around).
- Plastic bags for pick-up.
- Photo of your pet.

# Seniors And People With Disabilities

Seniors and people with disabilities may need to take additional steps to prepare for emergencies. If you or someone in your household has special needs, consider the following tips when preparing your disaster plans:

- Keep a 7-14 days supply of necessary medications on hand at all times.
- Develop a personal emergency plan for each place where you spend time – at home, work, school, and in the community.
- Evaluate your capabilities, limitations, needs, and surroundings to determine what type of support you may need in an emergency.
- Include your home care attendant and other people in your network in your planning process.
- If you are dependent on electricity for your wheelchair, breathing machine, or any other life-sustaining device, plan for a loss of power. Consult your power provider.
- The hearing-impaired may need to make special arrangements to make sure they receive emergency warnings.
- Mobility-impaired people may need assistance to get to a shelter or to evacuate from buildings. Keep in mind elevators will not work in a power outage. Technologically dependent people should check in with 911 or their doctors.
- People with special dietary needs should have an adequate emergency food supply.
- It is a good idea to write down your support needs and numbers. Medical conditions, medications and dosages, allergies, special equipment, medical insurance, Medicaid insurance cards as well as personal and medical contact details are important to have available. Keep this list with you in emergencies and supply a friend with a copy.
- If you have a service animal, make sure that it is registered for a service tag.

## Non-English Speakers

Non-English speakers should consider their special needs in an emergency. Make special preparations to get the information and special assistance you may need in advance. For more planning assistance, you may contact.:

- Spanish Action League at 475-6153
- Refugee Resettlement Services at 472-1544

## What Else You Can Do to Prepare Your Household For Emergencies:

- Use the websites and phone numbers listed on the [Onondaga County Emergency Preparedness Website](#) to learn about more ways to protect yourself and your household in an emergency.
- Take a first-aid class or participate in a Red Cross disaster preparedness training to learn how to help family and neighbors in an emergency.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in all areas of your home and check them regularly to make sure they're working.
- Install fire extinguishers in your home and make sure all household members know where they are and how to use them.
- Change batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and check on emergency supplies twice a year during daylight-saving times.

## Mental Health

Disaster victims are likely to experience at least one of several emotional responses: anger, fatigue, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, nightmares, depression, inability to concentrate, hyperactivity, or increased alcohol or drug use. Mental health experts suggest a number of ways to relieve the symptoms of emotional distress:

- Talk about your feelings with family, friends and neighbors. These people are good medicine, and sharing common experiences helps people overcome anxiety and feelings of helplessness.
- Get back into daily routines as soon as you can, and try to maintain a healthy diet and get plenty of sleep.
- Get some physical exercise every day.
- If you continue to have the symptoms described above for an extended period of time, think about consulting a mental health professional.

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*These materials are adapted from the New York City Office of Emergency Management (NYCOEM) "Ready New York" brochure. Onondaga County greatly appreciates NYCOEM's permission to adapt their format for the benefit of our citizens.*

For more information, call Onondaga County  
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