

# Disaster Preparedness - Just in Case

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Home Helpers, Making Life Easier

Severe weather often strikes with little notice. In the recent weeks there has been heightened awareness of natural disasters. From the earthquake in Illinois, flooding in Louisiana, and tornados in Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, and Minnesota we are reminded of the power of nature. "Since we never know where or when a disaster might strike and with the first of June being the start of the hurricane season and the wildfire season, we thought this might be a good time to share a few general safety tips," said Cindy Johnson, president of Home Helpers.

**Watch vs. Warning** – When there are severe weather conditions, the National Weather Service often issues a watch or a warning. A watch indicates conditions are favorable for severe weather. A warning indicates there is severe weather in the area or is indicated on weather radar. Whenever you hear warning sirens indicating severe weather, move to a designated place within your home for safety.

**Prepare and Practice** – At the start of each season, take the time to review and run through your safety plans. If you do not already have plans in place, you might:

- Designate a safe place in the home to take cover in the event of severe weather.
- Keep a fire extinguisher, weather radio, and flash light in a central location.
- Identify potential hazards you might want to secure such as outdoor furniture or a gas grill, and services you may wish to shut off such as gas, electric and water to your home.
- Identify an emergency exit plan should you need to quickly get out of your home.
- Make sure you know what county you are in and how to call for emergency assistance.
- Determine how you might meet the unique needs of people who are elderly or disabled.
- Review your insurance coverage and/or contact

your insurance agent to make sure you are covered against earthquakes, fire, flooding, and severe weather.

**Get Out and Get Away** – With certain types of disasters, people are encouraged or forced to leave their homes. In case you need to get out and get away, you might:

- Become familiar with evacuation routes and keep a map handy should roads be impassable due to standing water or downed trees.
- Make sure you have easy and quick access to important papers, emergency contact numbers and valuables you might want to take with you.
- Designate a meeting place or out of town destination should you wish to regroup with family.
- Identify an out of town family member relatives might all call to indicate you're okay.
- Keep emergency supplies (e.g. water, food) and a first aid kit handy.

When considering weather related disasters, you might also wish to address home safety concerns such as fire and fumes. Did you know that home fires are one of the most common disasters and cause more deaths than any other type of disaster? In addition to smoke detectors you may want to purchase and install carbon monoxide detectors to help protect against potentially deadly and odorless fumes. Johnson added, when it comes to disaster preparedness; remember the popular saying "better safe than sorry".



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