

ARE YOU READY? PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED.....

Leader's guide

Lesson objectives:

- Participants will learn to prepare to communicate with family members in an emergency
- Participants will determine what items to include in an emergency supply kit
- Participants will learn what information to gather before an emergency

Materials:

- FCD09-08 Participant handout
- FCD09-09 Consent letter/evaluation form
- Disasters and Emergencies: 50 Things You Should Know to Be Better Prepared.

Before the lesson:

- Request copies of brochure “Disasters and Emergencies” for each participant from the Washington County office of OSU Extension Service at 503-821-1150 at least 2 weeks before needed. There is no charge for this handout if distributed as part of FCE lesson.
- Copy the participant handout.
- Copy the consent letter and evaluation form (on separate sheets).
- Optional: In most communities, there is a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), American Red Cross, Emergency Preparedness Task Force or Community Official that may be interested in providing a presentation on this topic or additional local resources and references for your group.

If a disaster were to occur right now...right this very second, would you and your family be prepared? Would you know where to go to get help and how to navigate the maze of resources available?

(Warm-up exercise. This will give participants a chance to think about how they would respond to an emergency. Give participants time to respond as time permits)

If you were told to leave your home right now, what is the first thing you would do?

Take a moment to answer the questions on page 1 of the participant handout.

(Draw participants attention to the handout and the questions in the table on page 1. Give them time to read through and answer the questions by themselves.)

If you answered no to any of the above questions, you've got some work to do.

More often than we think

When we think of natural disasters most people think of Hurricane Katrina, the wild fire evacuations in Eastern Oregon or earthquakes in Southern California. They happen infrequently, but they occur more times than you would think. In our area winter storms, forest fires and floods come to mind more than hurricanes and tornadoes. But emergencies occur and industrial accidents happen that release harmful substances and require many people to leave their homes with very little notice.

Many times, senior citizens are the forgotten victims in disasters because so many other emergency needs must be met first. According to an AARP commissioned survey, an estimated 13 million people ages 50 and older indicate they will need help evacuating in the event of a natural disaster. About half said they will need help from someone outside their households. (The Nation's Health, "Emergency preparedness a challenge for older Americans," April, 2007, pg 14.)

What about you and your family? Are you ready? Does your family know how to evacuate your home? Do you know how to evacuate the building you are in right now? Do you have a set communication plan to let others know you are alright? These are all questions you and your family can answer with a little preparation.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

If a natural disaster or community emergency occurs it will be the local government that issues evacuation orders when disaster threatens, not the Red Cross. The local radio and television stations will be the ones to report when disaster threatens. Follow the instructions provided by the local authorities. Pay close attention to emergency advisories. Know where to turn to in your community. Leave when told to do so. Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe conditions.

If you are asked to leave the area, do so immediately. Now is not the time to stick around for spectacular video footage to impress your friends. Your choice to stay may jeopardize the lives of rescue workers who try to save your life when disaster strikes.

For peace of mind, during times of inclement weather, keep a full tank of gas. Pay attention to traffic advisories and follow recommended evacuation routes. An imminent emergency is not the time to try a shortcut.

If you don't drive or have reliable transportation, make other arrangements. If you are an individual with mobility impairments, make arrangements ahead of time with others to assist you. If you live in a multi-floor apartment, purchase an escape chair and know how it is used. Be sure your apartment management is aware of your special needs. When staying in hotels/motels, identify yourself to registration desk staff as a person who will need assistance in an emergency, and state the type of assistance you may need.

You can help yourself and your family by being prepared. Keep a battery operated radio on hand with plenty of extra batteries. There are also hand crank radios and flashlights that can be used in place of battery operated equipment. If weather related, a NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration) Weather Radio is a good idea and can be found at sporting goods stores.

Learn how to shut off water, gas and electricity to your home at the main switches. Be sure that all family members know how to turn them off. Note: if you turn off natural gas service to your home, you will need to contact the gas service provider to have a professional restore service to your home.

Be sure to post all emergency numbers near all telephones within the home. Pre-program emergency numbers into phones with auto dial capabilities and identify them as ICE – **In Case of Emergency numbers. Be sure to program ICE into your cell phone as well.**

Learn what the emergency procedures are for your area. Find out if there are designated evacuation routes. Note what the community warning signals sound like and what to do when you hear them. The local phone book provides a great deal of information and contact agencies in the County Government section.

Evaluate your personal insurance coverage to ensure that you and your family will be adequately covered in the event of a disaster. Keep your basic first aid and CPR training up to date. Better yet, volunteer for your local chapter of the American Red Cross (www.redcross.org).

Special Medical Needs

If you require specialized medical devices, have a back-up plan in place. For example, extra wheelchair batteries, portable dialysis unit, extra insulin or catheter equipment. Make provisions for medication that may require refrigeration. Keep a list along with your important papers of type and model number of medical devices you require.

Wear a medical alert tag or bracelet to identify your disability. Know the location and availability of more than one facility if you are dependent upon dialysis or other life-sustaining treatments.

HAVE A FAMILY EMERGENCY PLAN

Family Communication Plan

Create an emergency contact list for your family. Identify someone outside the area to serve as a point of contact in case of emergency. Many times it's easier to make a long distance call than it is to make a local call after a disaster. All family members should know to contact the designated person to report their location and condition. Once contact is made, the contact person can then relay messages to other friends and relatives outside the disaster area.

Have a completed communication plan posted in the home, with each member of the family, on file at work and at school, and in your family disaster supply kit.

Meeting Place

Discuss ahead of time where your family will meet in the event that you are separated in time of a disaster. Designate a place outside your home, a location in your near community and a meeting spot outside of the area at a friend or relative's location.

Emergency Supply Kit

Develop an Emergency Supply Kit that can be stored in a safe place within the home. A location easily accessible, yet somewhat protected if something was to occur to your home. Check your supplies periodically throughout the year and replace items as needed.

- Tools and Equipment – these supplies will be needed if you must stay in your home for a period immediately after a disaster.
- Personal Items – including prescriptions, glasses and equipment for special needs such as medical equipment, baby items, and dietary needs.
- Food items – non-perishable food and water to supply your family for a minimum of three days and up to two weeks (some items may need to be replaced periodically).
- Family Documents – keep *copies* of important family documents and papers in a water-tight container.
- Pet Supplies – don't forget your family pet and their needs as well.

Grab 'n' Go Kit

Put together a "Grab 'n' Go Kit." This may be a wheeled back pack or small suitcase that you can easily grab in case of emergency or evacuation. Be sure you have your name identified on your bag. In most cases, your "Grab and Go Kit" will have your family documents and important papers along with a few other emergency supplies to tide you over in case you have to leave your home. In addition, be sure to label any special equipment you might use and need to take with you.

AFTER AN EMERGENCY HAPPENS

Remember your personal safety after a disaster has occurred. Take prudent caution to protect yourself and your family. Don't venture out until the immediate danger has passed. Check the area around you for hazards.

Unless you have to, avoid driving immediately after a disaster to leave the roads clear for emergency personnel. Likewise, avoid using the phone beyond initial contact with your family to leave the phone lines open for emergencies.

Listen to your radio or television station for instructions from local authorities. Information may change rapidly so listen for regular updates.

Remember to care for your personal emotional well being, as well as those of other family members. Many times healing involves more than just physical injuries. Disasters can stir up many different feelings and emotions, including fear, anger, paranoia, shock,

depression, grief, and guilt to name a few. Watch for behavioral change in young children and older adults in times of great stress.

The American Red Cross has an excellent publication; “Picking up the Pieces after a Disaster” that goes into much greater detail with helpful information and resources.

Be Prepared

If an emergency strikes, it will provide you peace of mind to know that you and your family have a plan in place. Creating and communicating an emergency contact list, having a written plan for your family and having an emergency supply kit on hand are key for being prepared and maintaining control in times of crisis. Remain calm and avoid panic. Take time to heal both physically and emotionally.

Lesson Evaluation

Distribute the “Informed Consent Statement” and evaluation form. Read aloud the “Informed Consent Statement” and give participants 5 minutes or so to complete the evaluation. Collect the evaluations and return them to your local county Extension Office.

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