

Emergency Preparedness



Is Your Family Ready?



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Dear neighbors,

It's impossible to predict where you or your family will be when a disaster strikes. You could be confined to your home or forced to evacuate. Local officials will be responding to the scene but they may not be able to reach everyone right away. You are the best person to determine what plans and supplies you need to keep your family safe. Take time today to assess your needs and develop an emergency preparedness plan with your family.

This guide is designed to help you identify the threats you may face in your community and offers information on things you can do before, during and after a disaster to protect your family.

Remember, knowing what to do in an emergency is your best protection, and your responsibility!

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Emergency events can occur quickly and without warning. Planning for any emergency requires considering all likely scenarios. You may be able to stay in your home or you may be required to evacuate to a safe location.

Services you rely on every day – electricity, water, heat, telephones, transportation – could be disrupted or lost for an extended period.

During a disaster, public safety responders may not be able to reach everyone right away. Emergency planners suggest having enough food, water, medications and other essential supplies on hand to last for at least three days.

Three simple steps can help you be prepared for the unexpected:

- Be Informed
- Make a Plan
- Get a Kit





Be Informed - Know the Threats

All-hazards planning means being prepared for any kind of disaster that might strike your community. Common threats include natural hazards like storms and severe weather, human-caused hazards like civil disorders or terrorism and technical hazards like an industrial or transportation incident.

While technical and human-caused hazards are fairly unpredictable, Prince William County experiences severe weather events every year. Winter storms, flash floods and summer thunderstorms are common occurrences.

Look around your community. Are you near an interstate or railroad crossing where a hazardous material spill could happen? Does your

home flood every time it rains? Take time to learn about the kinds of hazards you might face and take the necessary actions to protect yourself, your family and your property.

Notification

You may learn about a possible disaster from many different sources:

- NOAA Weather radios can be programmed to broadcast alerts about all types of hazards for your specific area.
- Prince William Community Alert Network (PWCAN) is an emergency notification system used by Prince William County government to send emergency alerts, notifications and updates to your cell phone, pager, PDA and/or e-mail account before, during and after a major crisis. For more information and to register go to www.pwcgov.org/pwcan.
- During a disaster, Prince William County government posts information on its website at www.pwcgov.org and on the Prince William Channel, Comcast Channel 23 and Verizon Channel 37.
- Local television and radio stations often provide information before, during and after disasters. WTOP (AM 1500) and WMAL (AM 630) are the designated Emergency Broadcast Stations for this area.





You should look for local, up-to-date information and follow instructions from local officials about:

- Weather watches and warnings
- How to safely stay where you are
- Evacuation orders
- Shelter openings and locations
- Where to get help
- Major road closures

Make an Emergency Plan

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to plan in advance how you will contact one another, how you

will get back together, and what you will do in different situations.

Consider special needs of family members and pets. If you have a special need, be prepared to speak up for yourself. Determine what you are able to do for yourself and what assistance you may need before, during and after a disaster. Consider your personal care, service animals, special equipment you depend on and transportation needs. Service animals are allowed in hotels, motels and emergency shelters. However, pets will only be allowed in pet-friendly facilities. Check with the facility before bringing your pet.

If you live alone or have a special medical need, consider developing a Personal Support Network of family, friends, neighbors, co-workers or care providers who will check on you in an emergency to ensure you are ok and give assistance if needed. Make sure everyone in your network knows:

- How they will check on you
- How you will communicate
- How to access your home
- Where you keep emergency equipment and supplies





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- Instructions about medication or equipment you depend on
- Where you keep copies of relevant documents

If you communicate using a laptop computer or any other assistive device, consider purchasing a power converter that will allow your computer/device to be plugged into an AC adaptor in a car. You can also develop low-tech alternatives like picture or word cards.

You should also learn about emergency plans for your worksite as well as those for your children's schools.

Identify an out-of-town contact. After a disaster it is often easier to place calls outside of the disaster area. Make sure everyone has the contact's home, work and cell phone numbers as well as e-mail addresses.

Post emergency numbers by the phone.

Identify the safest areas in your home if you are told to stay inside. For example, in a tornado you want to be on the lowest level, in an interior space and away from windows.

Identify and practice at least two escape routes from your home. Include a meeting place where the family will gather.

Install at least one smoke alarm outside of sleeping areas on each level of your home. If any family members are deaf or hard-of-hearing install a system that has flashing strobe lights to get their attention.

If you have a fire extinguisher, make sure that everyone knows where it is located and how to use it.

If you depend on a well for your water supply, be prepared to use alternate sources. These systems normally use electric pumps and will not work when the power is out.

Should You Stay or Go?

Depending on the situation, local officials may tell you to stay where you are and take steps to protect yourself, or you may be told to leave the area immediately.

If you are able to stay in your home:

- Gather your emergency supplies.
- Check for damage to your home.
- Look for fire or other electrical hazards. Spilled bleach, gasoline or other hazardous products can produce deadly fumes.



- Know how to shut off any damaged utilities.
- Check in with your emergency contact.
- Check on your neighbors.

If you lose electrical power

- Check to see if your neighbors have power.
- Use flashlights or battery-operated lanterns for lighting.
- Turn off all major appliances to reduce power load.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.

Use portable generators cautiously and make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions. Generators can provide limited power, but take care to ensure they do not pose a threat to you and your family. If you place a portable generator in a garage attached to your house you need to make sure that the area is adequately ventilated.

Evacuation

Officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk. If you have to evacuate your area:

- Listen carefully and follow directions.
- Shut off water and electricity but leave natural gas ON unless officials advise you to turn it off.
- Wear clothing that will protect you such as long-sleeve shirts, long pants and sturdy shoes.
- Take any special supplies you may need such as medications, special food or assistive equipment.
- Take a collar, harness, identification tags, vaccination records, medications, veterinarian contact and food for your service animal or pet.
- If you are driving, make sure you have local maps and a full fuel tank.
- Listen to local radio stations for traffic information.
- Lock your home when you leave.
- Notify your emergency contact of your plans.

Be prepared to evacuate if:

- Your area is without power for an extended time.
- Flood water is rising.
- Your home has been severely damaged.



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Emergency Shelters

Emergency shelters are facilities that provide basic accommodations and services for a short period of time. In Prince William County we have identified several facilities that can be used as shelters when the need exists. During a local disaster, information will be provided to the public about shelter locations. If you go to an emergency shelter, you should bring:

- Clothes you can layer because temperature may be too hot or cold for your comfort
- Personal items such as:
 - flashlight
 - books and toys
 - cell phone and charger
- Special supplies for infants
- Supplies for your service animal

If you have a special medical need you should bring whatever medical items or equipment YOU need:

- Oxygen
- Medications
- Cooler for medicine
- Personal care and hygiene items
- Battery pack for equipment
- Special food
- Medical records (bracelet/key chain with medical information)

Your Emergency Kit

In a disaster you may be on your own for some period of time. Think about your family and what they will need to be self-sufficient for at least three days. Basic supplies include:

- Non-perishable food and drinking water (one gallon per person per day)
- First aid kit and prescription medications
- Battery-powered radio and flashlight as well as extra batteries
- NOAA weather radio
- Whistle
- Toiletries and sanitation supplies including toilet paper, soap, plastic garbage bags and disinfectant
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Basic hand tools (wrench, pliers, utility knife etc.)
- Extra clothing and bedding



- Copies of important documents
- Cell phone and charger
- Spare car keys along with local maps

Consider your family's needs and include special items for infants, elderly, and family members with disabilities.

- Formula and diapers
- Games and toys for entertainment
- Medical equipment and assistive devices, along with chargers and extra batteries. Label equipment with your name and contact information.
- Spare pair of glasses, hearing aid, cane or other essential items
- Cooler and ice pack if you will need to keep medications chilled

If you have a pet include the following supplies in your emergency kit:

- Food
- Water
- Medicine/Medical records
- Collar with ID tag
- Harness or leash
- Crate or pet carrier
- Familiar items such as toys and bedding
- Picture of you and your pet for identification purposes



Medical Emergencies

During a disaster, accidental injuries occur more frequently and stress can make many medical conditions worse. People who rely on daily medications need to take special steps to be prepared during a disaster.

- Maintain at least a 7-day supply of prescription medications.
- Work with your doctor to make sure you have enough medicine.
- Ask for a 90-day prescription when possible.
- Check with your insurance company regarding refill policies.
- Prepare a written list of medications that includes when they are taken, special instructions and where they are stored.
- List allergies.
- Keep a list with all of your doctors' names and phone numbers.
- Make copies of medical insurance cards and Medicare cards to keep with your Emergency Kit.



- Make a list of every diagnosis and what supplies you will need to meet the needs that go along with that diagnosis/condition. Keep extra supplies and instructions for use with your Emergency Kit.
- If you use controlled medications such as narcotics, psychotropics or seizure medications, keep a copy of the physician's prescription.
- If you use medication that needs to be refrigerated consider using a synthetic form of that medication that does not require refrigeration during a disaster.
- Keep a pill crusher or other equipment needed for medication administration with your Emergency Kit.

Make multiple copies of your medical information and keep a copy:

- On you
- At home
- In your vehicle
- In your Emergency Kit

Household and Financial Plan

Whether you own your home or rent, there are many things you can do to protect your home and possessions. You can increase your safety and reduce your losses by:

- Installing safety equipment such as smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms to alert you to unsafe conditions
- Securing large or heavy items like bookcases and entertainment centers that could fall and cause injuries or damage during a storm
- Covering windows and moving possessions to a safer location if you have advance warning
- Conducting an inventory of your household possessions for insurance purposes. Include a written record, pictures and copies of professional appraisals
- Keeping originals and copies of important documents such as birth and marriage certificates, wills, deeds, insurance policies, tax returns and investment documents in a safe place
- Buying insurance — Regardless of whether you own your home or rent, make sure you buy the insurance you need to protect against the losses you may face. Flood damage may require special coverage.





After the Disaster

The days following a disaster can be confusing and frightening. Cleaning up the community after a disaster can take weeks or months. During this recovery period there are several things to keep in mind:

- Emergency resources may be taxed and response times delayed.
- There may be contaminated water and debris in your home or neighborhood.
- Utilities like water, electric, gas and telephones may not work.
- Your home may be in the dark and you may not be able to use equipment that depends on power.
- Debris may block travel routes.
- Public transportation may be disrupted.
- If you live alone or have a disability your independence may be challenged.
- Service animals may face unusual conditions.
- Usual ways of getting groceries, medications or medical supplies may be disrupted.

As you recover, it is a good idea to make sure that you have updated your family disaster plan and replenished essential disaster supplies just in case a disaster happens again. You will always feel better knowing that you are prepared and ready for anything.

Preparedness helps you protect your family. Take time today to get informed, make a plan and put together an emergency kit that will meet the needs of everyone in your family, including pets.

For more information on local disaster planning contact:
Prince William County
Office of Emergency Management
703-792-5627
pwcem@pwcgov.org





EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Police, Fire and Medical Emergency - 911

Police, Fire and Medical Non-emergency - 703-792-6500

Poison Control: _____

Gas Company: _____

Water Company: _____

Electrical Company: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

Additional information is available at:

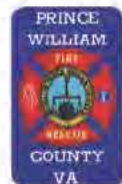
www.pwcgov.org/emergency

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