

A parent's New Year's resolution

Preparing your family for a disaster

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for TRIB TOTAL MEDIA

This is a time where we gather and celebrate with our loved ones, and when that is not possible, at the very least, we are thinking about them. It is ever so much more important to be able to reach our loved ones in times of disaster. Make creating a disaster plan your New Year's resolution.

Prepare for Disaster Ahead of Time

Imagine that something terrible has happened. Connecting with the people you love is likely to be your most important goal. Sadly, we need to add terrorist caused events to the list of natural disasters to consider in our planning. You need to have a plan for your family. Communication is difficult at best after a disaster. With terrorism and attacks on our technological infrastructure, our technology may be wiped out and leave us unable to use a cell phone to connect with each other.

One part of the plan is to have a local place to meet. That plan should also have a place out of the area for family members to call and "report in" so that you know that "all are safe" when everyone can't get to the meeting place.

Then there are the basic necessities of food, water and light. Finding clean and healthy supplies of these items can be a problem in times of disasters. Keep a bin of food and water stored in your home with a couple of flashlights and batteries. Throw an emergency radio into the bin. We have one that operates off of a hand crank avoiding dead battery problems. Make sure you include a couple of LED lights that shine a very long time with little battery drainage.

A container of gasoline stored in a shed outside of the home may be a good idea. This is important if you need to travel away



from the area, and there isn't any power to get gas at a gas station.

Another necessity is keeping some cash on hand just in case the ATM machines and credit card processing are disabled.

Have a portable fire safe for important documents that you may need. You should always have these items in that safe so that they are protected from a fire, and portable to take with you in other disasters. Swapping an extra copy of these papers with a trusted relative in another location is a great backup plan.

The documents that should be protected include:

- Loan Documents
- Tax Documents
- Vital Records
- Powers of Attorney
- Insurance Policies
- Financial Account Information
- Vehicle Loan Docs
- Credit Card Info
- User Names and Passwords
- Social Network Information
- Medical records
- Passport & license information

www.Ready.gov has a great downloadable resource for collecting and keeping important disaster information. It will guide you through collecting the most important information, and be a resource to copy and give everyone in your family. The website URL for their "Wallet Planning Card" is www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/108887



The Task of Planning for Terrorism

For much of our lives, Emergency or Disaster Planning referred to natural disasters. Those plans would include floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, fires and the like.

History has changed. As one example, up until 911, if a plane was hijacked, it meant that the passengers got a flight to see what Cuba looked like, not die in an inferno as a plane was driven into a building. Fights at schools were talked about all day, and two students duked it out with fists in an agreed meeting place just out of sight of the school. Guns and mass killings were not a reality we imagined in our wildest dreams.

“Shelter in Place” is the term used for “Stay in your home, do not go outside because it is dangerous.” One reason to Shelter in Place could be terrorists on the loose that are using conventional weapons such as guns and explosives. Blocking of doors and windows with barricades in an interior room is the best plan in that case.

When the reason to “shelter in place” is chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, there are other considerations to include in the plan. Sarin gas, disease agents and dirty nuclear bombs are examples of this type of attack. Most of these deadly toxins tend to move at ground level, not at a higher elevation. The best plan is to:

- Close and seal window and doors the best you can.
- Duct tape windows and doors to help seal the air.
- Stay in an interior area of the home without windows and in the upper level
- Do not operate heat and cooling systems that can pull outdoor air into the building
- Close and seal fireplace dampers



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Other Resources to Prepare for Disaster are a Click Away

Smart phone technology has many benefits, and one is “Apps” for just about everything. Google the subject of “Disaster Apps” and a list of quality apps are available. Select the ones most fitted for your area and circumstances.

Many of us have been touched by at least one and often several disasters. From our family’s experiences, we have had parents evacuated for hurricanes and nieces and nephews in the Columbine School system. When 911 hit, we had several children in office towers in Pittsburgh.

The lesson here is that each and every American should prepare for natural and terrorist disasters.

Go to www.EnviroSpect.info/DisasterPlan for a PDF download of the article and additional information and links to important disaster planning and response resources

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