



POLK COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

POLK COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
111 COURT AVENUE, DES MOINES, IA 50309
PH. (515) 286-2107 FAX (515) 323-5256
EMAIL: aj.mumm@polkcountyiowa.gov
WEB SITE: www.polkcountyiowa.gov

A.J. MUMM, DIRECTOR

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Contact: Jon Davis, Assistant Coordinator

National Preparedness Month September 2010 - Make A Plan

September is National Preparedness Month and Polk County Emergency Management is supporting this campaign to increase awareness and assist you in becoming as prepared as possible if an event occurs. Today's topic is: *what you need to make a plan.*

Family emergency planning can be the key to surviving an emergency. That is why it is so important to talk to your family to prepare them for various emergencies. Ensure the whole family is part of the planning process so that the plan addresses everyone's needs. **Recognize that in extreme situations emergency resources may be limited. Be prepared to care for yourself and your family for at least 3 days.**

1. Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the emergency, the first important decision is whether you stay where you are or evacuate. You should understand and plan for both possibilities. Use common sense and available information, including what you are learning here, to determine if there is an immediate danger. **In any emergency, local authorities may or may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do.** However, you should watch TV, listen to the radio (including NOAA Weather Radio) or check the Internet often for information or official instruction as it becomes available.
2. Designate a location to meet in case it is impossible to return home or if you have to evacuate. Choose two locations, one near your home and one outside your neighborhood. Make sure your family knows the address and phone number of both locations.
3. Designate an out-of-area contact person. This person should be far enough away that it is unlikely they would be affected by the same emergency. Family members should call this person to report their location if they cannot reach each other. Provide your contact person with important names and numbers so they can assist in keeping others posted on your situation. Be sure every member of your family **knows the phone number** and has a cell phone, **coins**, or a **prepaid phone card** to call the emergency contact. If you have a cell phone, program that person(s) as "ICE" (In Case of Emergency) in your phone. If you are in

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an accident, emergency personnel will often check your ICE listings in order to get a hold of someone you know. Make sure to tell your family and friends that you've listed them as emergency contacts. **Teach family members how to use text messaging (also known as SMS or Short Message Service). Text messages can often get around network disruptions when a phone call might not be able to get through.**

4. Create an emergency supply kit and go bag. Make sure that all members of your household know where these supplies are. Our next article will go in detail on what needs to be in your ready kit or you can go to <http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/EmergencyManagement/emergency-preparedness/get-a-kit/default.aspx>.
5. Keep a flashlight and pair of shoes by each bed.
6. Determine the best escape routes from your home. Identify at least two separate escape routes and practice using them.
7. Locate your gas main and other utilities. Make sure all adults and older children know where they are and how to operate them.
8. Familiarize yourself with emergency plans at places that are a part of your everyday life, such as school, work, church, daycare, etc.
9. While making your plan, consider the special needs of children, seniors, persons with special needs and pets in your household. We will go more in detail on this with an article later this week or for more in-depth information, or go to http://www.nod.org/research_publications/emergency_preparedness_materials/for_people_with_disabilities/
10. Create a communications card for each member of your household to keep with them at all times.
11. Make copies of all important documents and keep them off-site in a secure location. Documents to include passports, birth certificates, social security cards, wills, deeds, driver's licenses, financial documents, insurance information and prescriptions.
12. Catalog and photograph valuables. Keep these with your set of documents.

For more information please visit the following websites:

<http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/emergencymanagement/>

<http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/EmergencyManagement/emergency-preparedness/>

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