

## SAFETY TIPS

### Escape Routes

Draw a floor plan of your building. Use a blank sheet of paper for each floor. Mark two escape routes from each room. Make sure everyone understands the drawings. Post a copy of the drawings at eye level. Establish a place to meet in the event of an emergency, such as a fire.

### Utility Shut-off and Safety

In the event of a disaster, you may be instructed to shut off the utility.

#### Natural Gas

Natural gas leaks and explosions are responsible for a significant number of fires following disasters. It is vital that all responsible adults know how to shut off natural gas.

Because there are different gas shut-off procedures for different gas meter configurations, it is important to contact your gas company for guidance on preparation and response regarding gas appliances and gas service to your home.

When you learn the proper shut-off procedure for your meter, share the information with responsible adults. Be sure not to actually turn off the gas when practicing the proper gas shut-off procedure.

If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone out quickly. Turn off the gas, using the outside main valve if you can, and call the gas company from an alternate location.

CAUTION - If you turn off the gas for any reason, a qualified professional must turn it back on. NEVER attempt to turn the gas back on yourself.

#### Water

Water quickly becomes a precious resource following many disasters. It is vital that all learn how to shut off the water at the main valve.

- Cracked lines may pollute the water supply. It is wise to shut off your water until you hear from authorities that it is safe for drinking.
- The effects of gravity may drain the water in your hot water heater and toilet tanks unless you trap it by shutting off the main house valve (not the street valve in the cement box at the curb—this valve is extremely difficult to turn and requires a special tool).
- Locate the shut-off valve for the water line that enters your building.
- Make sure this valve can be completely shut off. Your valve may be rusted open, or it may only partially close. Replace it if necessary.
- Label this valve with a tag for easy identification, and make sure everyone know where it is located.

#### Electricity

Electrical sparks have the potential of igniting natural gas if it is leaking. It is wise to teach all responsible adults where and how to shut off the electricity.

- Locate your electricity circuit box.
- Teach all responsible adults how to shut off the electricity to the entire building.
- FOR YOUR SAFETY: Always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit breaker.

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### Insurance and Vital Records

Obtain property insurance if you do not have it. Review existing policies for the amount and extent of coverage to ensure what you have in place is what is required for you and your home or business for all possible hazards.

#### Flood Insurance

If you live in a flood-prone area, consider purchasing flood insurance to reduce your risk of flood loss. Buying flood insurance to cover the value of a building and its contents will not only provide greater peace of mind, but will speed the recovery if a flood occurs. You can call 1 (888) FLOOD29 to learn more about flood insurance.

#### Inventory Possessions

Make a record of your property, for insurance purposes. Take photos or a video of the interior and exterior of your property. Include personal belongings in your inventory.

#### Important Documents

Store important documents such as insurance policies, deeds, property records, and other important papers in a safe place, such as a safety deposit. Make copies of important documents for your disaster supplies kit.

#### Money

Consider saving money in an emergency savings account that could be used in any crisis. It is advisable to keep a small amount of cash on your person where you can quickly access in case of evacuation.

### Special Needs

If you or another has a disability or a special need, you may take additional steps for emergency protection.

- Hearing impaired may need to make special arrangements to receive warnings.
- Mobility impaired may need special assistance to get to a shelter.
- Non-English speaking persons may need assistance planning for and responding to emergencies. Community and cultural groups may be able to help keep people informed.
- People without vehicles may need to make arrangements for transportation.
- People with special dietary needs should take special precautions to have an adequate emergency food supply.

### Planning for Special Needs

If you have special needs, find out about special assistance that may be available in your community.

Register with the office of emergency services or the local fire department for assistance so needed help can be provided.

- Create a network friends and coworkers to aid you in an emergency.  
Discuss your needs and make sure everyone knows how to operate necessary equipment.
- Discuss your needs with your employer.
- If you are mobility impaired and work in a high-rise building, have an escape chair.
- Keep specialized items ready, including extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, food for service animals, and any other items you might need.
- Be sure to make provisions for medications that require refrigeration.
- Keep a list of the type and model numbers of the medical devices you require.