

# **Emergency**

## **Don't be scared, be prepared.**

A step by step guide to what you need to know and do

### **Everybody needs an emergency plan and survival kit**

What would you do if you had to face a major hazard at home or at work? Knowing what needs to be done makes it easier to stay calm if an emergency should occur. Preparation is the key to survival. By planning ahead, you can help reduce the risk of injury and damage to property. The steps outlined in this brochure are easy to follow and the time to act on them is now. Don't wait until it's too late.

### **Free additional information**

In addition to the general emergency measures outlined here, you will also need information from free pamphlets and action guides on cyclones, floods, storms, fires and other hazards. Ask for material on fire safety from your local fire services. Safety publications on most other major hazards are available free from your State or Territory Emergency Service.

### **How to develop an emergency plan**

#### **Take sensible precautions**

- Make sure your home and workplace are prepared for hazards and emergencies. Refer to appropriate pamphlets or action guides (available as detailed opposite).
- Check that you have adequate household and contents insurance and which hazards are not covered by it.
- Find out how and where to turn off power, gas and water supplies.
- Store important documents (eg wills, passports, photos, birth certificates) in a fire/water-proof container or safe deposit box.
- Prepare an emergency survival kit (checklist overleaf)-and keep it handy.
- Make a record of emergency telephone numbers. There's a space on the back of this brochure. Look-up your emergency telephone numbers, enter them now.

#### **Involve the family**

- Household members will need to agree on, and share essential tasks (eg contacting each other if not home, collecting school children and checking on elderly neighbours).
- Arrange an out-of-town friend or relative to be a single contact point (in case people are separated before or during a widespread emergency).

#### **Find out about existing plans**

- Schools and large buildings should have plans in place for emergency evacuations.
- Local authorities may also have plans affecting whole streets or areas.

#### **Be prepared for evacuation**

- In some emergencies the safest action is to stay inside. But in other emergencies it can be safer to leave a building or evacuate an entire area. The appropriate action depends on the particular hazard causing the emergency. Consult the relevant pamphlets and action guides, and follow advice from emergency authorities.
- When evacuating a building, it is important to agree in advance on a gathering place at a safe distance. Practise evacuation procedures, including a head count. Large buildings

should have evacuation plans in place and you should make sure you find out about them.

- If you decide or are advised to evacuate the area, leave as early as possible—even hours before, in the case of bushfires. Otherwise, it may be safer to stay inside, provided you are well prepared (refer to bushfire safety material).
- Allow for special needs of infants, the aged and people with disabilities.
- Don't forget your pets' needs.
- Have your car under cover, with a full fuel tank, and plan for alternative safe routes.

### **Three golden rules if you leave**

- Turn off power, gas, water; lock doors and windows.
- Take your emergency survival kit with you (instructions overleaf).
- Listen for emergency warnings and safety advice on radio or television.

### **Standard Emergency Warning Signal**

This is a wailing siren sound which may be broadcast on radio or television anywhere in Australia to draw attention to the fact that an urgent safety message is about to be made. You should stop and listen, then act on the advice given and put your emergency plan into action. Listen for further messages.

### **Coping emotionally**

- Fear and anxiety in an emergency are natural but controllable emotions. You need to remain calm so you can control your fear and actions. Remember that someone may need your help. If you are feeling particularly anxious or frightened, follow this advice.
- Stop what you are doing and take a few slow, deep breaths.
- Focus on your feelings and any irrational thoughts. Talk calmly about them with family
- Focus on what practical tasks you and your family can do.
- Explain to children what is happening and what they may be feeling. Reassure them and let them help.
- When the danger has passed, check if children or neighbours are still distressed. Talk to them about their experience.
- Take some satisfaction in having come through a very stressful and threatening situation.

Following the emergency, a range of physical and emotional reactions may occur. These are a normal response to the experience. However, should they continue for an extended period, consult your local health service.

### **A checklist for your Emergency Survival Kit**

Ideally, prepare your kit with all the following items, or at least make a list so you will know where to find them quickly in your home.

See EMA publication *'Preparing for the unexpected'* for details of the emergency kit – available at [www.ema.gov.au](http://www.ema.gov.au)