



CITY OF SAUSALITO

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS – EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PROGRAM

“Preparing and Protecting our Community”

FAMILY COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR DISASTERS

While disasters such as hurricanes are forewarned, most emergencies or disasters are unexpected. You and your family may be separated when a disaster strikes. During the week children may be at school while the adults are at work when the disaster suddenly strikes. Even on weekends, members of an active family tend to be doing several different activities in a variety of locations.

Your family needs ways to make sure you can communicate and find each other in the event of an unforeseen disaster or emergency.

Preparation

Make sure there is a complete list of each of your family member’s daily routines. This list should contain information about who where, with whom, when, and at what time.

Make a complete and detailed list of close friends and family members who live in your community but not with you. This list should contain not only the names but the phone numbers and address of your family and friends. Always remember to ask your friends and family’s permission to include them as part of your disaster communications plan and then explain to them the purpose of the plan.

Leadership

In order for any organized group of people to be successful there must be one amongst them that will serve as the leader and make sure things are done. However, when the disaster is occurring, is not the time to try to decide who the leader will be. Decide who in your household will be the leader during a disaster or emergency. Agree in advance regarding who the leader is so the leader can guide quickly, rationally, and without conflict from the start of the disaster. The person selected as leader should have the ability to remain level headed and calm during danger. The leader must be an individual who is optimistic yet still realistic about what can be done to remedy the issues your family will face in the disaster.

The leader will likely be an adult that has the most predictable schedule and the least out of town travel. In order to develop a chain of command, a back up leader should be selected. This person would serve as the leader for the family and provide the necessary direction and support in the event the leader is not available.

Where to Meet

Identify where you and your family will meet when a disaster or emergency strikes. When selecting a meeting place, keep in mind the locations your family frequents and the patterns of your family’s lives and select those locations that will best suit your family. Meeting places



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serve several purposes. Most often they serve as a temporary shelter for your family as you reunite or as you find a way to re-establish communications with your family.

Depending on the disaster, the leader may decide not to gather everyone together. Instead, they may prefer to keep everyone informed of each others plans. Although everyone’s first instinct is to head for home, this may not be the best choice, or even an option. Have back up rendezvous points for work and home.

Once a primary meeting place is chosen, choose a room within that structure to gather. If your home is the primary location, pick an interior room that is strong and provides minimum exposure to the elements. If you select your home as your primary meeting place make sure that it is viable location to withstand the disaster that is being dealt with. Motor homes or trailers are at extreme risk during tornados, low lying homes are subject to flooding, and homes in remote areas are problematic during wild land fires. If your primary meeting place is a location other than your home, make sure you are very familiar with the structure and that you have a way of seeking shelter within that structure.

Getting From Work to the Primary Meeting Place

You always want to consider how easy or difficult it will be to get to your primary meeting place from work. Do the disaster conditions prevent you from responding to your primary meeting place immediately? Are conditions such that it would be safer for you to stay at work? If this is the case, make sure everyone in your family knows that will be your plan.

Getting From School to the Primary Meeting Place

Coordinate your plans with the schools. Be sure your children understand both the schools plan and your own. Make sure you understand what the school will do to protect your children while they are on campus. Work the schools plans and preparedness steps into your own plan.

Examples of these are:

Will the children be kept in their classrooms, or will they be gathered in some central location in the school campus? If so, where?

Will the school attempt to get the children home or will they keep them on campus? At what point is that decision made and how is this communicated to parents or guardians?

If they’re kept at the school, should you pick them up immediately or leave them there until there is less chaos?

If you’re picking them up, exactly where do you go? How will you find each other?

If the school is forced to evacuate, to what location will they evacuate?



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What form of identification will be required to let you pick up your children?

What happens if you can’t pick up your children?

How do you make arrangements for someone else to pick them up?

If your children are teenagers and drive themselves to school, help them create plans for what they will do in various emergencies or disasters. Regardless of your child’s age, make sure each child knows your family’s and the schools plan and review it with them periodically.

Secondary Meeting Places

If a disaster forces you out of your primary meeting place, plan to meet up at another pre-arranged location. Often community center or schools themselves are designated evacuation centers. Your local Red Cross can direct you to those locations that have been activated. To determine the best secondary meeting place for you and your family, consider the following items for each member of your family such as:

- o Family’s pattern of movement
- o Family members routines
- o Schedules
- o Time of Year

Take into account what options your family member will have if the following happens:

She has no personal means of transportation?

How will she get there if public transportation stops running?

If the secondary meeting place is inaccessible, what is a third location at which to re-group?

Wife is out of town and she is the “leader” for the family?

Out of Town Meeting Places

The out of town meeting place is a location your family members will head to if your community is evacuated. The out of town meeting place will also be the location members of your family will call if they get separated. Keep in mind that this location could be different depending on the disaster that is occurring.

When choosing your out of town meeting place, you also need to seriously consider the distance and the routes. The distance your out of town meeting place is will vary depending of the emergency, but usually the rule of thumb is 100 or more miles away. Make sure all members of



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your family know how to get to your out of town meeting place through main and alternative routes.