

# Preparing to Shelter at Home

## Issues for Everyone in the Home to Consider

### ***Sheltering in place means:***

- Staying inside whatever building I am in at the time of an emergency
- If I'm outside, going into an undamaged building nearby for shelter
- Staying sheltered for a period that may last hours to days

### **I. Our Household's Need to Shelter in Place**

1. What kinds of emergencies could occur in our community that would make us need, or want, to protect ourselves by staying inside our home?
  - a. A toxic explosion (like a dirty bomb) or chemical spill?
  - b. A tornado?
  - c. A snowstorm?
  - d. Something else?
2. Considering the places we go on a regular basis, where might each of us need to shelter in this kind of emergency?

### **II. Communication**

1. How will we know about the emergency and communicate with others while home?
  - a. What media and communication devices do we have at home?
  - b. Do we have back-ups if some forms of communication are not operational during the emergency, such as cell or other phones?
2. How will we receive information and communicate with others if we are not at home at the time of the emergency?
  - a. What communication devices do we carry with us or have at work?
  - b. How will we communicate with household members who do not carry such devices?
3. If the members of our household can't communicate with each other during the emergency, is there another way we can find out how all of us are?
  - a. Do we have a list of other people that each of us should call or e-mail?
  - b. Does the community have social media sites that our family may currently utilize or other means to report our condition and check on the condition of other household members during the emergency?

### III. Basic and Medical Needs

1. Will we have enough supplies at home to meet our basic and medical needs? Do they need to include:
  - a. A several-day supply of all of my medications and medical supplies?
  - b. Water? Non-perishable food?
  - c. Hygiene? Eyeglasses or contact lens supplies?
  - d. Flashlight?
  - e. Communications?
  - f. Other items?
2. If we are some place else during the emergency (i.e. work, school, day care), do we know what that place will do to meet our needs during a shelter-in-place emergency?
3. Have we stored emergency supplies in the other places we tend to be on a regular basis (work, school, day care, car)? Do our personal emergency kits need to include:
  - a. A several-day supply of all of the medications and medical supplies
  - b. Food, special dietary needs, hygiene products, eyeglasses or contact lens supplies, clothes, sewing kit, towels, blanket and pillow, and entertainment
  - c. For our children, a comfort toy or blanket, and something to keep them occupied
  - d. Do we need to include anything else in our personal emergency kits?
4. If we have children at school, day care, or another youth program, have we provided:
  - a. A record of each child's medical problems, allergies, and medications?
  - b. Written permission to administer medications to our children in an emergency?

### IV. Care for Dependents

1. Have we arranged alternate providers of care for the children, adults, and animals that depend on us – with multiple back-ups so we can be sure that our own caretaker responsibilities will be fulfilled if we have to shelter in place?
  - a. Have we given our children's school, day care, or youth program a list of all of the people who are authorized to pick them up?
  - b. Does our neighborhood have a "safe house" where children who are home alone can go during an emergency?
  - c. Has our neighborhood organized a buddy system or teams to check on dependents that may be home alone during an emergency?
  - d. Do our children and other dependents know about these alternate care plans?
2. Have we talked to our children's school, day care, youth program, or sitter about how our children will be cared for if we need to shelter in place during the emergency?
  - a. If someone we authorize picks up our children, will the school or program keep a record of who picked them up, when, and where they were taken?

- b. If neither we nor any of our authorized back-ups can pick up our children or meet them at home during the emergency, what will the school, day care, bus driver, or sitter do to assure our children's supervision and safety?
    - c. Have we provided the people we employ to care for our children or other dependents with any incentives to continue caring for them in this kind of situation? If so, what will happen to their dependents?
  3. Do our children and dependents know what to do if they are alone in an emergency?
    - a. Do they know how to use the phone and whom to call for assistance?
    - b. If they are disabled, do they have a personal alarm system to call for help?
    - c. Until help arrives, do they know the safest place in the house to go? Does that room have all of the supplies they will need? Are they able to use those supplies?

#### **V. Protection from Toxic Substances Outside**

1. Have we discussed this type of emergency in advance to ensure everyone in our household will shelter wherever they happen to be (in other words, not endanger themselves trying to find each other or going to a pre-arranged meeting place)?
2. What actions will be taken to prevent toxic substances from coming inside?
  - a. Does everyone in our household know how to close or seal windows, doors, and vents; and to turn off air conditioners?
  - b. Which room in the house will give us the best protection from toxic substances?
  - c. If we stay in this room, will we have access to communications, toilet and washing facilities, and critical basic and medical supplies?

#### **VI. Emotional Distress**

1. Have we taken steps in advance to reduce the emotional stress we could experience in a shelter-in-place emergency?
  - a. Has everyone in our household had an opportunity to think about this kind of emergency in advance?
  - b. Have we figured out ways to communicate with each other or find out about each other during the emergency?
  - c. Have we included comfort and entertainment items in our personal emergency kits?
  - d. Have we made arrangements for all of our dependents to be cared for during the emergency?
  - e. Have we talked with our employers to be sure that we won't lose our job or income and that our critical job responsibilities will be fulfilled if we can't get to work because we are sheltering somewhere else during the emergency?

*Appreciation and credit for the issue set concepts go to the Redefining Readiness project ([www.redefiningreadiness.net](http://www.redefiningreadiness.net)).*