

What's Your Plan?

Developing Disaster Preparedness Family Plans



Kent Theurer, NDSU Agriculture Communication

Desired Outcomes

After this lesson participants will:


- Create a family disaster plan and understand its relationship to the disaster supplies kit.
- Choose and understand the importance of carefully selecting out-of-state contacts, safe rooms and neighborhood meeting places with their families.
- Understand the benefits of family training, including first aid and CPR, in times of disaster. Also, contact providers about additional information on these trainings.
- Understand how to use available tools to help create a unique family disaster plan.
- Create and execute drills, tests and exercises, understanding that they help ensure the functionality and fit of your family plan in a disaster.

Before the program:

- Read through the program and handouts. These should include the following: “What’s Your Plan?” lesson plan; “What’s Your Plan?” presentation; the “Family Communication Plan” developed by the Department of Homeland Security, provided by NDSU Extension Service; and the family pocket directory.
 - The best way to understand the subject matter is to compile information for your family’s plan while you prepare to present the material.
- Become familiar with handouts from other related programs and their basic information. Example: “Are You Ready? Preparing a disaster kit for your home.” The NDSU Extension Service is working on various programs for specific related areas. Contact the Ag Communication Distribution Center at (701) 231-7882 for an up-to-date list of available programs.
- Order or make adequate copies of handouts and materials, including the DHS “Family Communication Plan” provided by the NDSU Extension Service and pocket directories, for participants.
- If you plan on using the accompanying PowerPoint, make sure you have a projector and computer with PowerPoint loaded and the equipment functions properly.

What's Your Plan?

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Businesses require evacuation plans. Your children practice fire and tornado drills at school. Why shouldn't your family be prepared at home as well? This program provides some helpful tools to aid in the development of a family disaster plan, which includes suggestions for family communications in times of emergencies or disasters. Although these tools will help you develop your family plan, it is important to remember that every family plan will be different and that the environment in which you live always should be taken into consideration when planning for disasters. What's your plan?

Information and references from:

Federal Emergency Management Agency

American Red Cross

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Resources for this program are from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, an entity of the Department of Homeland Security, and the American Red Cross.

Desired Outcomes

- Creation of family disaster plans
- Choose an out-of-state contact, safe rooms and neighborhood meeting places
- Understand the benefits of training in times of disaster
- Understand available tools for family plans
- Understand the importance of drills, tests and exercises

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Today we'll talk about:

- Why it is important for your family to create a family disaster plan and how it's related to the disaster supplies kit.
- How to choose an out-of-state contact, safe room and neighborhood meeting places.
- The benefits of training, including first aid and CPR, in times of disaster.
- How to use available tools to create a unique family plan.
- The importance of drills, tests and exercises to ensure the functionality and fit of your family plan in a disaster.

Why Does My Family Need a Disaster Plan?

- Help ensure safety of family members
- Help family members make informed, rational decisions in times of high stress requiring rapid decision making and action



Provided by American Red Cross

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Why does my family need a disaster plan?

- Disaster plans ensure that family members will take appropriate steps to ensure their safety regardless of the time of day or family members at home.
- Disaster plans also ensure that your family can make informed decisions about situations occurring around them.

(Ask participants if they have had to make a difficult decision during or immediately following a disaster, and whether additional preparation or more information made that decision easier to make.)

I have a disaster supply kit so I must have a Family Preparedness Plan.

- Actually, you need both a kit and a plan to protect your family from effects of disasters.
- A disaster supplies kit is a collection of items that will help you implement your family disaster plan.
- Link to the Red Cross Disaster Supply Kit PDF: <http://www.redcross.org/disaster/safety/fds-all.pdf>
- More information on preparedness for farm and family at: <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/prepare/>

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What about the disaster supplies kit? Is this the same thing?

No, although they are equally important to protecting our families from the effects of disasters, both natural and man-made. A disaster supplies kit is a collection of items including food, water, clothing, blankets, personal items, battery-powered radio, flashlight and other special family needs that will aid in the successful implementation of a family disaster plan.

Anyone Home?

- Where are your family members at:



10:00 a.m.
2:00 p.m.
7:30 p.m.
2:00 a.m.

- Could you contact your family members?
- What if cellular phones do not work?

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Anyone home?

In today's fast-paced society, it is likely events will not occur when all family members are home or even in the same location. Although it is common

for family members to have cellular phones, these are often the first communication to be interrupted in times of disasters because of the heavy use. Could you find your family members at any of these times? Where are they? How can you contact them? Obviously you cannot possibly know where every member of your family is at every second of the day, but we should attempt to have some idea of regular schedules.

(Ask audience members where one of their family members is at any of these times. Concentrate on kids. Do they know the phone number of their child's school or spouse's work? What if their cellular phone is dead or towers are busy? Do they have any other way to contact family members?)

Suggest that people put a sign on the door and/or leave a message on their answering machines in an evacuation situation to let authorities know whether the family has left the home.

Steps to Develop a Family Disaster Plan

1. Research hazards for your community
2. Create communication portion
3. Complete family disaster plan
4. Practice and update your family plan



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What are the steps to developing and maintaining a family disaster plan?

1. Research hazards for your community or neighborhood.
2. Create a family communication section.
3. Complete family disaster plans.
4. Practice and update your family plan.

Each of these steps toward increased preparedness will be addressed specifically in this presentation.

Information on Local Hazards

- Neighbors
- Local, state and federal governments
- Volunteer organizations




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Who can I contact to get information on local hazards?

This is perhaps the easiest of the four steps. Start by talking to neighbors, neighborhood groups and friends. Other resources available are local, state and federal government agencies, including emergency management, law enforcement and fire departments. Volunteer agencies, such as the American Red Cross, also could be helpful in answering these questions. Also remember to ask for any recommended actions for your home and family.

Meeting places

- What type of emergency
- Inside or outside your neighborhood
- Duration
- Special precautions



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What are the best meeting places?

Like every family, every meeting place is unique. It is important to identify family meeting places that meet your family's needs. One should be close to your home in the case of an isolated emergency, such as a fire. Another location should be chosen outside of your neighborhood in case you cannot return to your home after an evacuation. It also is important to examine how long the disaster typically lasts. Can your family stay at the designated meeting place for the duration of the incident?

Choosing Meeting Places

- Find a location with facilities that meet needs in various disasters
- Watch out for places prone to flying debris
- Consider locations that are accessible to emergency services



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How do I decide where our family meeting places will be?

This is a difficult question. Different disasters will require different needs, so look for a place that meets many of those requirements. It is important to be safe, but be flexible. If your meeting area is a park, designate an area that has safety features, such as some sort of shelter or a place that is out of inclement weather and out of the path of falling trees and has few loose objects nearby that could become projectiles in a disaster. Neighbors' houses outside the disaster path tend to fulfill any of these although this may be problematic if the homeowner is not home for some reason or has evacuated to another location. Churches also may be a good choice, although stay away from areas with windows and unusually high ceilings. Rural residents should attempt to seek meeting places that are located so they can receive emergency services, such as food, water, and medical care, if needed.

Family Communication

- Determine a single out-of-state contact number
- Complete copies of provided Department of Homeland Security information sheets
- Complete family pocket directories for all members of your family
 - Have all family members help

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Why is family communication important?

Family communication establishes contacts for families to make if they become separated or disoriented in a disaster situation. The family communication portion of the family disaster plan should include three basic steps:

Determine a single out-of-state contact; include phone number, e-mail, fax or cellular numbers if available. This person will provide information to other family members if you cannot be contacted in times of disasters.

Complete the Department of Homeland Security “Family Communication Plan” provided. (*Hold up a copy of the “Family Communication Plan.”*)

This form allows you to organize important valuable information, including family data such as name, birth date, Social Security number and important medical information. Address and contact information also are included for work, school and home-designated shelters. Copies of this completed tool should be laminated with one copy in your disaster supplies kit, another in a safe or deposit box, and another near your main phone in your home, perhaps fastened to the bottom of a phonebook.

Complete *family pocket directories* for all members of your family and have everyone help with this project. Let children ask questions if they are unsure about something in the directory. The more they are involved in the creation of the directory, the more likely they will remember to use it in high stress times of disaster.

(Hold up a copy of the directory so participants can follow along as you move from one topic to the next. Ask participants if they have ideas about why this type of information might be helpful in a disaster.)

Evacuation or Shelter in Place

- Evacuation plans for disasters limited to your home and neighbors
- Shelter plans including precautions for summer and winter storms, chemical and biological releases



Photo provided by FEMA

■ Slide 12

Evacuation or shelter in place

It is very important for your family to create evacuation plans for disasters limited to your home, such as fires, and those that affect the entire community, such as floods.

These plans should include the following actions in the event of evacuation:

- Wear protective clothing.
- Take your disaster supplies kit.
- Lock your home.
- Use travel routes specified by local authorities.
- Take pets to a pre-designated animal shelter.
- Turn off all lights and appliances.
- Put away or dispose of perishable foods.

It also is important for your family to contemplate the possibility of sheltering in place, including identifying precautions that should be made in the event of summer and winter storms, as well as possible chemical or biological releases.

- Different disasters require different shelter locations.
 - In tornado/summer storms, shelters should be below ground.
 - In chemical releases, shelters should be above ground.
- Store plastic sheeting and duct tape to cover ducts and large windows if advised by local authorities.
 - Caution: The longer you and your family spend in this sealed environment, the less oxygen and more carbon dioxide will be produced. A filtering device or some other type of purifier may extend this time. Extended exposure to a

lack of oxygen and a carbon dioxide buildup could cause illness or possibly death.

- Use your battery-operated radio to remain tuned to a local radio station for further information or instructions.
 - Listen for evacuation instructions. If instructions are issued, listen and watch for first responders to assist you in the transportation if necessary.

It also is important to plan for any special precautions that need to be made. Planning for pets, special medicines or other specific concerns should be done before a disaster occurs as well.

Additional information on sheltering in place is available from FEMA’s “Are You Ready? A Citizens Guide to Preparedness” or www.fema.gov/pdf/areyouready/shelter.pdf

Safe Rooms

- Small interior room
- Bathrooms and large closets
- Avoid rooms with windows
- Quick access to the safe room
- Special accessibility needs



Photo provided by FEMA

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Where do I find a safe room or storm shelter in my house?

Because every house is different, it may be best to request assistance from the city engineer or similar agencies to help you find the safest structural location based on normal problems associated with your area. If you cannot have an engineer inspect your home, FEMA provides the following basic guidelines:

- A small interior room above grade is the best location for a safe room.
- Safe rooms often are used for other nonemergency purposes. Bathrooms and large closets are a frequent choice.

- Avoid rooms with windows or large mirrors.
- Because warning times for tornadoes can be very short, quick access to the safe room is important in choosing the location.
- If the owners have any special accessibility needs, these should be considered in the location and design of the safer room.

Additional information is available on FEMA’s Web site at www.fema.gov/mit/saferoom/

Special Precautions/ Considerations

- Pets take special care in disasters
- Prescription medicine
- Family comfort needs
 - Foods, blankets, favorite teddy bear
- Certified copies of important family records

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Special precautions

Some examples might be:

- Pets take special care in disasters. Pets are not allowed into American Red Cross shelters.
- Prescription medicine
- Other special needs
 - Family comfort needs
 - Snack foods and blankets
- Certified copies of important family records.

(Ask if participants have any other ideas of special needs they may have for their families.)

Training

- Extended response times
- Calls evaluated based on severity
- Trained family members have skills to organize individuals or groups to perform tasks

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Why is it important that members of my family are specially trained?

Hours or even days may pass before trained first responders can arrive to assist in a disaster. Cases are evaluated based on a number of issues to decide how serious the injury and how immediate the care must be administered to be effective. CPR- and first aid-certified individuals could assist family members as well as neighbors and others in their vicinity, as well as organizing less trained individuals into appropriate tasks.

Additional Available Training

- Adult CPR/AED
- Infant & Child CPR
- First Aid
- Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)
- Red Cross Disaster Action Teams
- Other Volunteer Opportunities



Photo provided by American Red Cross

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What kind of training is available?

This training generally is available through the local American Red Cross and other agencies for a small charge, usually about \$20. Your certification for CPR is good usually for one year, and first aid usually three years. There also are many other volunteer opportunities through service groups, religious groups and even government-sponsored volunteer organizations, such as community emergency response teams.

More information on...

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
<http://www.ready.gov>

FEMA
<http://www.fema.org/>

Red Cross
<http://www.redcross.org/>

NDSU Extension Service
<http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/disaster.htm>

Farm and Family Disaster Education
<http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/prepare/>

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More information on the tools:

The Department of Homeland Security (<http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/index.jsp>), Federal Emergency Management Agency (<http://www.fema.gov/>) and American Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org/>) provide additional information on these topics, usually online, free of charge. The NDSU Extension Service has modules about related subjects at (<http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/prepare/>) Also, local emergency management may have tools that are useful in family planning, as well as the material provided in this program. (Ask if participants have questions about tools provided.)

Are We Finally Done?

- Yes, with the planning part.
- It is essential to maintain your plan, as family needs change.
- Test/drill the processes established in your plan.
- Unfortunately we are never done!

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After I have created my family disaster plan am I done?

Yes and no. It is important to update your plans at least twice a year. Our busy lifestyles are a source of constant change, which can rob our family plans of their effectiveness if a key element has changed in our lives and not in our plan.

(Ask for some examples. Suggest a family member moving or graduating, a change in jobs or a change in regulations in your community.)

This fast-paced lifestyle makes it essential to run drills and exercises to ensure that your family knows what to do in the event of a disaster. This is essential to the success of a family plan during a disaster.

This is only the beginning!

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Conclusion

Communities are, at their smallest unit, made up of families. The best way we can protect our communities is to help every family prepare for disasters, no matter what the disaster may be. Family disaster plans are not the end of the preparation. Quite contrary, they are only the beginning. Disaster supplies kits, neighborhood watches, basic medical training, community emergency response teams and volunteer service to our neighbors and communities are some additional steps that must be taken to make our communities safer places to live.

Community preparedness is a big job, much too big for any one person, but together, using the tools provided by the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Red Cross, local emergency management and NDSU Extension Service, we can make a difference.