

Emergencies come in all sizes – are you ready?

By Mandy Kendall

Be prepared.

I was involved in a small accident the other day, nothing serious, just a fender bender. No one was hurt, but what struck me most (other than a rather large truck) was that life is unpredictable and things can go wrong just when you least expect it.

Both drivers were properly insured and, for once, I had all the right documents to hand. In no time at all my car was being towed to the body shop and I had a rental car. I had been as prepared as possible and things went as well as possible.



Mandy
Kendall

However, the unexpected could end up being far more serious and, if you are not properly prepared, a lack of emergency preparedness could prove life threatening.

So this week's focus is on tips for emergency preparedness – or 'How to get ready for the unexpected'.

Plan routes – Imagine you have to evacuate your house quickly. Find two ways to get out of each room. If an exit is dangerous in its current state, try and work out how to make it safe (a

rope ladder maybe needed for a second floor window or obstacles need to be cleared out of the way). You can make a game of it if there are kids in the house. Get the kids to draw pictures of the escape route from the house and show where they would meet you if you can't leave together. Pick a place near your house and another outside your neighborhood in case it's not safe to return.

Check other emergency plans – Check on your kids' school website and with your workplace to find out about their emergency plan. If they don't have one, maybe offer to help organize one.

Neighborhood – Check with your neighbors, share emergency plans and decide how you might all work together in a crisis. Decide who will check on elderly or disabled neighbors in the event of a local disaster. Find out who has expertise (like medical experience) or specialized equipment that might be helpful during an emergency.

Emergency kit – Other than the usual supplies found in an emergency kit (you can go here for a suggested list) it is also a good idea to have a list of prescription medications needed regularly, a spare pair of eye glasses, photo copies of important documents (driver's license, insurance, etc.) or anything else you might need urgently for a few days after leaving your house without a chance to take anything with you. Also include at least one pair of shoes per person in the household as well as a change of clothes. Have all these items ready to carry out at short notice in strong packs or bags.

Contacts – Decide on an emergency contact outside your area for family to call to check on each other (with a mobile and a landline preferably), as it may be easier to call long distance following a local disaster. Share this contact with all family members.

Emergency numbers – Make a list of local and state emergency

numbers and have a copy for the house and one for the emergency kit.

Pets – Find out in advance who would be prepared to take your pets should there be a household emergency. During a local disaster neighbors may be in the same predicament as you so make sure you know where the local animal shelters are. Visit Humane Society website or the Animal Safety segment on the Red Cross site.

Calendar – Set a date every six months to review emergency packs and stores to replace spoiled or expired supplies. You can use this time to revisit evacuation plans (to make sure someone hasn't blocked that exit again) and check numbers and contacts are still correct.

Shut off valves – Make sure that all the adults in the house know where the electricity, gas and water shut off valves are. Just remember if you turn off the gas, you must get a professional to turn it back on.

First aid kit – One for the house and one of the car preferably.

First aid training – At least one member of the regular household should be trained in first aid. However, it's a good idea to get everyone trained and local emergency services or service associations will often offer courses in your area. If you sign up to volunteer at an association like the Red Cross, you will often get training for free.

I know this can seem like a lot of planning and preparation, but that is precisely the point – when an emergency happens we don't have the time.

Until next time. Stay safe.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness

provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.