

# How to be prepared for an emergency

By Tia Rancourt

Knowing that you are prepared for an emergency can help you and your family stay calm and act effectively. Working together, learning about risks, making an emergency kit, staying informed, knowing your evacuation plan are just some of the things you can do to prepare ahead of time.

The three key steps are: make a plan, assemble a kit, and stay informed. The Washoe County Emergency Management Program has compiled some general information listed below to help you prepare for an emergency.

## Emergency plan

Prior to a disaster, each family must have a plan. You can begin this process by gathering family members and making sure each person is well informed on potential hazards and community plans. Discuss with them what you would do if family members are not home when a warning is issued. Meet with household members. Discuss with children the dangers of fire, severe weather, earthquakes, and other emergencies.

- Draw a floor plan of your home. Mark two escape routes from each room.
- Learn how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at main switches.
- Post emergency telephone numbers near telephones.
- Instruct household members to turn on the radio for emergency information.
- Pick one out-of-state and one local friend or relative for family members to call if separated by disaster (it is often easier to call out-of-state than within the affected area).

- Pick two meeting places – one near your home and one outside your neighborhood.

### **Assemble a kit**

You may need to survive on your own after a disaster. This means having your own food, water, and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least three days. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it might take days. There are six key items you should have: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing/bedding, tools and any special items. Keep the items that you would most likely need during an evacuation in an easy-to-carry container.

### **Stay informed**

Learn what disasters or emergencies may occur in your neighborhood. Local emergency management officials will continually be updating the local media during the events of an emergency. Citizens should monitor *Lake Tahoe News*, and other media. It is a good idea to have a battery-operated radio included in your evacuation kit. Sign up for Code Red to receive emergency alerts by going **online**. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) local primary stations are: KKOH 780AM, KUNR 88.9 FM, KOWL 1490AM, KRLT 93.9 FM, KTKE 101.50 FM.

### **Evacuation preparedness**

Should you need to evacuate, a key component is knowing how to safely and effectively evacuate. Successful community evacuation requires preparation. Elements of family emergency planning and preparation:

Complete an inventory of home contents and photograph/videotape the house and landscape. Store completed documents in a separate location and/or on a storage thumb drive.

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