

Topic: Disaster Preparedness

Let's get started...

There have been severe weather events in our area and around the world during the past few years – Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in August, 2005; the Seattle area Nisqually Earthquake of 2001; the December, 2006 severe windstorm and power outage in the Seattle area; heavy rains and flooding in Washington State in December, 2007; tornados in the Midwest of the United States, and blizzards (heavy snow) in the Midwest and Eastern United States in 2007. Do you know how best to prepare in advance to help yourself and your family deal with severe weather events or natural disasters? Do you know what to do? Do you know what not to do?

Background:

Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, snowstorms, windstorms, heavy rains and flooding, wildfires, severe drought, hurricanes and tornadoes, can affect us all. Man-made disasters, such as terrorist attacks, are also a potential threat at this time in our history. When people know what to do, and take steps to prepare in advance, the chance of successfully surviving such situations is greatly increased. When people do not know what to do, or when they do the wrong things, tragedy can result. Last year, several immigrant families died while trying to cope with the power outages last year. These deaths were avoidable, had the families known what to do, and what not to do.



In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:

- What kinds of natural disasters occur in your native country? Do you have earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, avalanches, droughts, blizzards, avalanches, landslides, wildfires or other severe weather events?
- What are some things your family does to prepare for severe weather? Does your native country's government make recommendations for preparing before disasters?
- Have you or any family members or close friends ever been in an earthquake, hurricane, tornado, flood, or other disaster? If so, what did you, the friend or family member do to survive? Did you have any kind of a "disaster kit"?

Share your partner's answers with the group.

Discussion Questions:

The American Red Cross recommends that every family prepare two "disaster kits" – one to keep in the house, and one to keep in the car. The Red Cross recommends that you have the following supplies in each kit:

3 gallons of clean drinking water for each person in your family;
An emergency blanket for each person;
Extra clothes;
3 days of canned and packaged food that does not need to be cooked;
A can opener;
Disposable eating utensils;
Matches;
Flashlight and extra batteries;
A battery powered radio and extra batteries;
A first aid kit with bandages, medical tape, gauze, and small scissors;
Tennis shoes;
Aspirin or Tylenol, and any prescription medicines your family needs.

Do you have a disaster kit? If not, what do you have in your home that you can use to start a kit? What can you buy now? What can you buy next week, and the next week, until you have a complete kit?

Have you ever had to call 911 for an emergency situation? What happened? What information did you need to give to the emergency dispatch operator?

The Red Cross recommends that you plan 2 evacuation routes for each room in your house or apartment. Do you know 2 different ways to get out of your house or apartment?

The Red Cross also recommends that your family agree on one special meeting place outside your home, in case of a sudden emergency, such as a fire, AND another special meeting place that is outside your neighborhood, in case you cannot return home, or in case the government advises you to evacuate your neighborhood. Have you talked with your family members to agree on these special meeting places? When can you decide? Where can you go?

To prepare for a disaster, practice is important. What can you do with your family to practice the steps to help you be prepared for a disaster? When can you practice?

In the United States, it is dangerous to cook inside with charcoal, wood, or propane gas. When the power goes out, it is important to have food to eat that does not require cooking. If you want to cook with charcoal or wood, you should only cook outside the house or apartment, away from any windows that could carry the smoke inside. Smoke from cooking fires contains dangerous chemicals (such as carbon monoxide) that can kill you in a closed area. In your native country, can you cook inside with charcoal or wood? How can you prepare food for your family safely in the event of a power outage in the U.S.? How can you keep warm? How can you see at night? Are candles safe? Is it safe to heat your home or apartment with your stove?

New words and Idioms: Disaster, preparedness, natural, severe, power outage, man-made, terrorist, threat, potential, cope, avoidable, survive, tragedy, recommend, evacuate, evacuation, route, chemicals, carbon monoxide, smoke, emergency, affect, special, kit, dangerous, safe, Midwest, earthquake, closed area, successful result.