

FREE 7-DAY COURSE

The 7-Day Home Emergency Preparedness Course

One task a day for a week, ending with a household that can handle a storm, an outage, or an evacuation without a panicked trip to the store.

Preparedness fails as a project because it is framed as one enormous weekend nobody ever schedules. Broken into seven ordinary tasks, it is finished by next Sunday. Each day here takes between twenty minutes and an hour, and each one leaves your household better off even if you never get to the next day.

Work the days in order. Days one and two cost nothing and matter the most, which is exactly why most households skip them and go straight to buying flashlights.

LOCAL GUIDANCE COMES FIRST

Your local emergency management agency and public health department publish guidance for the specific hazards where you live, including evacuation routes, shelter locations, and alert systems. Where their instructions differ from anything general in this guide, follow theirs. Sign up for your area's emergency alerts today if you have not already.

Day 1: Know what you are preparing for

A household in a hurricane zone, a household in wildfire country, and a household on a rural well need different plans. Twenty minutes of thinking beats a generic kit.

1 List the three most likely hazards where you live

Severe storm, extended power outage, flooding, wildfire, extreme heat or cold, earthquake, winter storm, water contamination, or a household emergency such as a fire or a medical event.

2 Decide, for each one, whether you shelter in place or leave

Some hazards mean stay put. Some mean go early. Write the answer down now so nobody is deciding it under stress.

3 Sign up for local alerts

Search for your county or city emergency alert system, and enable emergency alerts on every phone in the household.

4 Find your evacuation route and one alternate

Assume the obvious road is closed. Print a paper map, since navigation apps depend on service you may not have.

5 Identify who in your household needs extra planning

Infants, older adults, anyone with a medical condition, anyone using power-dependent equipment, anyone with mobility, vision, hearing, or cognitive needs, and pets.

6 Note the utility shutoffs

Water main, gas, and electrical panel. Learn where they are and what tool, if any, is needed. If shutting off gas requires a wrench, tape one beside the valve. Only shut off gas if instructed, and never turn it back on yourself.

Day 2: The communication plan

In most real emergencies, the first thing that breaks is the assumption that everyone is together and everyone's phone works. Today you fix that on paper.

Build and distribute the plan

- ☐ Pick one out-of-area contact everyone will check in with
Local lines and networks get congested. A distant contact can relay between household members.
 - ☐ Agree on two meeting points: one just outside the home, one outside the neighborhood
 - ☐ Write a wallet card for every household member
Names, phone numbers, out-of-area contact, meeting points, allergies, and key medical information.
 - ☐ Give the school, day care, or care facility your updated contacts and know their emergency procedure
 - ☐ Agree who picks up whom, and a backup for each
 - ☐ Teach children how to call for help and how to state their address
 - ☐ Save emergency numbers in every phone and write them on paper too
 - ☐ Agree that text messages often get through when calls do not
 - ☐ Plan for a household member who cannot self-evacuate
Name who is responsible, and register with any local support program if one exists in your area.
 - ☐ Note your pets' plan, including which shelters accept animals
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Day 3: Water and food

This is the day people over-buy the wrong things. Aim for what your household will actually eat and drink, stored in a way you rotate rather than forget.

- 1 Store water using the standard planning guideline**
Public preparedness guidance commonly uses one gallon per person per day, covering drinking and basic sanitation, with at least a three-day supply and more where you can store it. Check what your local agency recommends for your area.
- 2 Do not forget pets, infants, and anyone with higher needs**
Formula, pet water, and extra for anyone who is ill, pregnant, or in a hot climate.
- 3 Choose shelf-stable food that needs no cooking**
Canned goods, nut butters, crackers, dried fruit, shelf-stable milk, and anything your household will actually open.

4 Include a manual can opener

The single most reliably forgotten item in the entire category.

5 Account for special diets and allergies

A kit that nobody in the household can safely eat is not a kit.

6 Add comfort items

Coffee, tea, hard candy, and something children like. Morale is a real variable during a long outage.

7 Date everything and set a rotation reminder

Twice a year, eat down the oldest and replace it. Storage that is never rotated becomes storage that is never usable.

8 Know how to keep refrigerated food safe during an outage

Keep doors closed, use a fridge thermometer, and when in doubt about a food after a long outage, throw it out.

Day 4: Medical readiness

This is the day that separates a prepared household from a well-stocked one. Everything here should be discussed with your pharmacist or clinician rather than improvised.

Medical and medication preparedness

☐ Ask your pharmacist how to build a small reserve of essential prescriptions
Rules vary by medication and by insurance. Ask; do not stockpile by skipping doses, which is unsafe.

☐ Know which medications need refrigeration and what your plan is if power fails
Ask the pharmacist in advance what to do, rather than guessing during an outage.

☐ Keep a current printed medication list for every household member

☐ Keep in-date emergency medications where everyone can find them
Rescue inhalers, epinephrine auto-injectors, glucose gel, or anything else prescribed for urgent use.

☐ Complete a home first aid kit, and a second one for the car

☐ Register power-dependent equipment with your utility company
Many utilities maintain a medical needs list. Ask what their program requires and what it actually provides.

☐ Arrange a backup power plan for essential devices
Discuss options with the equipment supplier before you need them, including battery backups and where to go if power is out for days.

☐ Keep spare batteries for hearing aids, glucose meters, and other devices

- ☐ Store a spare pair of glasses and any mobility aids you would need
- ☐ Write down each person's conditions, allergies, and clinicians on the emergency card
- ☐ Take a hands-on first aid and CPR course
Through a recognized training organization near you, and repeat it on their recommended schedule.
- ☐ Add a battery or hand-crank radio to hear official instructions when networks fail

CARBON MONOXIDE

Most outage-related poisonings come from equipment used indoors that should never be. Never run a generator, grill, camp stove, or gasoline engine inside a home, basement, garage, or near a window or vent. Keep working carbon monoxide alarms on every level of the house, and get everyone outside into fresh air and call emergency services if an alarm sounds or if people develop headache, nausea, dizziness, or confusion together.

Day 5: Power, light, heat, and cold

Utilities and comfort

- ☐ Flashlights or headlamps for every household member, with batteries stored separately
- ☐ Battery-powered or hand-crank lanterns rather than candles where possible
Open flame during an emergency adds a second emergency.
- ☐ Power banks for phones, charged and re-charged on a schedule
- ☐ Car charger for each phone type
- ☐ Battery or hand-crank emergency radio
- ☐ Extra batteries in every size your devices use, dated
- ☐ Warm layers, blankets, hats, and sleeping bags accessible without power or light
- ☐ A plan for extreme heat
Know where the nearest cooling center is, and who checks on older neighbors.
- ☐ A plan for extreme cold
Know how to prevent frozen pipes and where the nearest warming center is.
- ☐ Fire extinguisher, checked, and everyone shown how to use it
- ☐ Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms tested, with fresh batteries

- ☐ Some cash in small bills
Card readers and ATMs depend on power and networks.
- ☐ Full tank or charge kept in vehicles when severe weather is forecast

Day 6: The go-bag and the shelter-in-place kit

Two kits, two purposes. The go-bag is what leaves the house in ten minutes. The shelter kit is what lets you stay put comfortably. Build the go-bag first, because that is the one that has to be grabbed rather than assembled.

Go-bag, one per person where practical

- ☐ Water and a day of food that needs no preparation
- ☐ Medications with a printed list, and any emergency medication
- ☐ Copies of identification, insurance, and key documents in a waterproof bag
- ☐ Emergency contact card and printed map
- ☐ Phone charger and power bank
- ☐ Flashlight or headlamp, and a whistle
- ☐ Small first aid kit
- ☐ Change of clothes, sturdy shoes, and a rain layer
- ☐ Toiletries, hand sanitizer, wipes, and any incontinence supplies needed
- ☐ Emergency blanket
- ☐ Cash in small bills
- ☐ Spare keys, and a spare pair of glasses
- ☐ For infants: formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, and a change of clothes
- ☐ For pets: food, water, bowl, leash, carrier, vaccination records
- ☐ One comfort item per child

Shelter-in-place kit, stored together

- ☐ Water and food supply as planned on day three, with a manual can opener
 - ☐ Lighting, radio, and batteries as gathered on day five
 - ☐ Full home first aid kit
 - ☐ Sanitation supplies: heavy trash bags, ties, toilet paper, disinfectant, and buckets in case water service is disrupted
 - ☐ Soap, hand sanitizer, and disposable gloves
 - ☐ Plastic sheeting and duct tape, if local guidance recommends it for your hazards
 - ☐ Basic tools, work gloves, and a wrench for utility shutoffs if yours requires one
 - ☐ Paper, pens, and printed copies of your plan and contacts
 - ☐ Games, books, or cards, because a three-day outage is mostly boredom
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Day 7: Documents, practice, and the maintenance schedule

Documents

- ☐ Identification, birth certificates, passports, and immigration documents
 - ☐ Insurance policies, including home, auto, and health, with policy numbers
 - ☐ Medical records summary, medication list, allergy list, and immunization records
 - ☐ Advance directives, power of attorney, and health care proxy documents
 - ☐ Deeds, leases, mortgage, and vehicle titles
 - ☐ Bank and financial account information
 - ☐ Recent photographs of every household member and pet
 - ☐ Photos or video of the home's contents for insurance purposes
 - ☐ One copy stored securely offsite or encrypted in the cloud, and one paper copy in the go-bag
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1 Walk the plan out loud with everyone in the household

Fifteen minutes at a meal. Who calls whom, where we meet, who grabs what, who is responsible for the pets and for anyone who needs help.

2 Practice a fire escape from two exits

Including from bedrooms at night. Time it.

3 Do a one-hour lights-out drill

Turn the breakers off deliberately on a Saturday afternoon. You will discover more gaps in an hour than in a month of shopping.

4 Test every flashlight, radio, and power bank

Then recharge and put them back where they belong.

5 Photograph your kit and your document folder

So you can rebuild it, and so you know what was in it.

6 Write the date on the kit and set two calendar reminders

Six months apart, tied to something you already do, like changing the clocks.

Maintenance schedule

A KIT IS A LIVING THING. THIS IS THE MINIMUM TO KEEP IT REAL.

How often	What to do
Monthly	Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, recharge power banks, check that flashlights work
Every 6 months	Rotate water and food, check every expiry date in the first aid kit and the medication reserve, re-test radios, swap seasonal clothing in the go-bags
Every 6 months	Update the emergency contact cards, the medication lists, and children's sizes and weights
Annually	Review your hazards and your plan, re-drill the fire escape and the evacuation route, re-photograph the home for insurance, review insurance coverage
After any change	New baby, new diagnosis, new medication, new pet, new vehicle, a move, or a household member leaving or arriving: update the plan the same week
After any real event	Debrief. What was missing, what was useless, what you would do differently. Fix it while it is fresh

Your household plan, on one page

Our three most likely hazards

For each: do we stay or do we go

Out-of-area contact: name and number

Meeting point near the home

Meeting point outside the neighborhood

Evacuation route, and the alternate

Who is responsible for children, older adults, or anyone needing assistance

Who is responsible for pets

Power-dependent equipment and its backup plan

Utility shutoff locations, and the tool needed

Where the go-bags live

Where the documents live, and who else has access

Local emergency alert system we are signed up for

Date this plan was last reviewed

IN THE MOMENT

Follow the instructions of local officials over any plan you made in advance. Call emergency services for any life-threatening situation, including severe bleeding, difficulty breathing, chest pain, loss of consciousness, serious burns, suspected stroke, or a carbon monoxide alarm. If you are told to evacuate, go early rather than late; most of the danger in an evacuation comes from leaving too close to the event.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Finish the kit in one order

Work down whatever is still unchecked on days four, five, and six. SafeHouse Medical stocks the first aid, wound care, medical, and home safety supplies this course calls for, so the gaps you found this week can be closed before the next storm forecast.

Shop the collection at safehousemedical.com

Important. This course is general preparedness information and is not medical advice or professional emergency management guidance. It does not diagnose or treat any condition. Always follow the instructions of local officials and your local emergency management agency, and follow your clinician's and pharmacist's directions regarding medications, medical equipment, and any medication reserve. Never operate generators, grills, or fuel-burning equipment indoors. Call emergency services immediately for any life-threatening situation.