

The Importance of Being Prepared

Dear Staff:

Almost every week there's a story in the news about a huge hurricane, earthquake, fire, or flood. While there's no way to tell ahead of time when a disaster will strike or how bad it will be, we can still prepare.

One of the best things we can do now to help protect ourselves and our families is to make an emergency plan and get ready. The more we are prepared now, the better chances we will have for living through and recovering from a future disaster.

You can prepare now by beginning to store enough food, medical supplies, and other supplies to last at least one or two weeks. Every time you go grocery shopping, pick up a few extra items on sale. You don't have to do it all at once!

Food should be nonperishable (will keep for a long time) and not need refrigeration. Food should also be easy to prepare, in case you are unable to cook.

Examples of foods to store include:

- ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, and soups
- protein or fruit bars
- dry cereal or granola
- peanut butter or nuts
- dried fruit
- crackers
- canned juices
- bottled water (one gallon of water per person per day—two quarts for drinking and two quarts for preparing food and staying clean)
- cans or jars of baby food and formula
- pet food

As you stock food, think about the needs and tastes of the members in your household. Try to include foods they will enjoy and that are high in nutrition.

Give special attention to food for household members with special diets and allergies, and for babies, toddlers, and the elderly. Nursing mothers may need liquid formula, in case they are unable to breastfeed.

Include favorite and “comfort” foods. Be sure to have a manual can opener. And check your supplies regularly to be sure nothing has expired or spoiled.

The Importance of Being Prepared, continued

Examples of medical supplies include:

- prescribed medications and medical supplies (such as asthma inhalers, heart medication, and glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment)
- medicines for fever and pain relief, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol™) and ibuprofen (Advil™ or Motrin™) (Do not give aspirin to infants, children, or teenagers.)
- cleansing agents
- thermometer
- anti-diarrhea medication
- fluids with electrolytes
- sanitizing solution, to clean and sanitize toys, frequently used objects, and surfaces:
 - plain bleach and 1/4 cup measuring cup
 - add 1/4 cup of bleach to one gallon water
 - label container, “sanitizer.” Do not use this water for drinking.



Examples of other emergency supplies include:

- soap
- flashlight, extra batteries
- personal hygiene supplies
- tissue, toilet paper, disposable diapers
- alcohol-based hand cleaner
- portable radio
- plastic garbage bags with ties
- bottled water

Be sure to talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, and what will be needed to care for them in the home.

In case of an emergency, make sure the center has your contact information and keep it updated.

Finally, stay informed. Pay attention to and seek information from public health officials on prevention and control. For more information on emergency planning and preparedness, go to:

- www.publichealth.lacounty.gov
- www.bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov/epo/
- www.pandemicflu.gov

Sincerely,