

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

Please read the following for instruction on how to react to the following emergency situations.

Blackouts

Before the blackout...

- Put flashlights and batteries in locations that are easy to find in the dark
- If you have an electric garage door opener, locate the manual release lever and learn how to operate it.
- Keep your cars gas tank at least half full because gas stations rely on electricity to power their pumps.
- Have an extra battery on hand for battery-operated wheelchairs.

During the blackout...

- Only use a flashlight for emergency lighting--never use candles because they increase your risk of a house fire dramatically.
- Most cordless phones won't work if the power goes out, so be sure to have a standard telephone in your home. Cellular phones may not operate properly during a blackout because cellular networks may lose power to the towers that transmit your call.
- Turn off electrical equipment you were using when the power went out. Leave one light on so you'll know when power returns.
- Avoid opening the refrigerator and freezer. Most medication that requires refrigeration can be kept in a closed refrigerator for several hours.
- Don't run a generator inside a home or garage or connect it to a homes electrical system. If you use a generator, connect the equipment you want to power directly to outlets on the generator.

Listen to a radio for the latest information.

Building an emergency kit

Disasters can occur quickly and without warning. Prepare for the unexpected now by assembling a kit designed to help you cope with a variety of emergencies.

Items for your kit:

- First aid kit, essential medications and a backup power source for any required medical equipment such as an oxygen tank
- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, extra batteries
- Canned food, manual can opener
- Bottled water (1 gallon of water per person per day for 3 days)
- Extra warm clothing including boots, mittens and a hat
- Red or brightly-colored cloth
- NOAA weather radio
- Medication and health information for all family members

A NOAA weather radio provides direct warnings to the public of severe weather and natural and manmade hazards from floods to forest fires to chemical spills. NOAA weather radios can be purchased at discount department stores, electronic retailers and Web sites.

Consider preparing a kit for your car, boat and RV or camper. In addition to the items listed above,

a vehicle kit should also include these items:

- fire extinguisher
- booster cables and tow rope
- compass and road maps
- shovel
- tire repair kit and pump
- extra clothing to keep dry
- road flare
- small tool kit
- kitty litter or sand for tire traction

Chemical emergencies

Under certain conditions, chemicals which are normally safe can be poisonous or harmful to your health. A major chemical emergency is an accident that releases a hazardous amount of a chemical into the environment. Accidents can happen underground, on railways or highways, and at manufacturing plants. They may involve fire or explosion, or you may be unable to see or smell anything.

You may be exposed to a chemical in three ways:

- Breathing the chemical
- Swallowing contaminated food, water or medication
- Touching the chemical, or coming into contact with clothing or things that have touched the chemical

If you are outdoors during a large-scale hazardous material release, stay upwind or upstream of the release and find shelter immediately.

Many people think of chemicals as only those substances used in manufacturing processes. But chemicals are found everywhere in our kitchens, medicine cabinets, basements and garages. **The most common home chemical emergencies involve small children eating medicines or drinking household chemicals.**

Keep all medicines, cosmetics, cleaning products and other household chemicals out of sight and reach of children. If your child eats or drinks a non-food substance, find any containers immediately and take them to the phone. Call the poison control center at: 277-2222 or (1-800- 352-2222 in Iowa) or 911 and follow their instructions carefully.

Home product precautions

- Avoid mixing household chemicals.
- Always read the directions before using a new product.
- Never smoke while using household chemicals.
- If you should spill a chemical, clean it up immediately, being careful to protect your eyes and skin.

Dispose of products properly to preserve our environment and protect wildlife. If you have questions on disposal call the Siouxland Household Hazardous Materials Center at 279-6292

Downed Power Lines

If you come across a downed power line, leave the area immediately and seek help by calling 911.

If you are in a vehicle when a power line falls onto it, wait inside the vehicle until help arrives. If you must leave the vehicle because of fire or life-threatening injury:

- Leap from the vehicle landing on both feet.
- Do not hold onto the door while leaping.
- Once on the ground, hop away, do not run.

Evacuation plan

Local government officials issue evacuation orders when disaster threatens. Listen to local radio and TV reports when an emergency arises. If local officials ask you to leave, do so immediately!

If you only have moments to evacuate, grab the following:

- Medical supplies: prescription medications, diabetes test strips, etc.
- Eyeglasses or contact lenses and cleaning solution
- Emergency preparedness kit
- Clothing and bedding
- Car keys

If local officials haven't advised an immediate evacuation, take these steps to protect your home before you leave:

- Bring things indoors: lawn furniture, garbage cans, etc.
- Turn off electricity and water at the main fuse or breaker and turn off water at the main valve.
- Leave natural gas on unless local officials advise otherwise.
- If high winds are expected, cover the exterior of all windows.
- If flooding is expected, consider using sand bags to keep water away.
- Make a visual and/or written record of all your household possessions; record model and serial numbers.
- Take important papers with you: driver's license, social security card, insurance policies, birth and marriage certificates, stocks, wills, etc.

Floods and flash floods

Most of Sioux City is not susceptible to flash floods, but there are some neighborhoods that may be at risk. Now is the time to determine your area's flood risk. If you are not sure whether you live in a floodplain, contact your local government to find out. If you are in a floodplain, consider buying flood insurance.

When a **flood watch** is issued, move your furniture and valuables to higher floors in your home. Prepare for possible evacuation.

When a **flood warning** is issued, listen to the radio or watch local TV stations for information and instructions.

When a **flash flood warning** is issued, move to higher ground away from rivers, streams, creeks and storm drains.

Do not drive around barricades. If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground.

Public Health Emergencies

Siouxland District Health has plans to distribute medications and give vaccinations to the general public during a public health emergency. Clinic sites and schedules will be announced publicly at the time of the emergency.

Heat waves

Dangers we face during periods of very high temperatures include:

Heat cramps: These are muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion. They are an early signal that the body is having trouble with the heat.

Heat exhaustion: This typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a hot, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Blood flow to the skin increases, causing blood flow to decrease to the vital organs. This results in a form of mild shock. If not treated, the victim may suffer heat stroke.

Heat stroke (sunstroke): Heat stroke is life-threatening. The victims temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly.

If a heat wave is predicted or happening:

- **Slow down.** Avoid strenuous activity.
- **Stay indoors** as much as possible. W
- **Wear** lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- **Drink** plenty of water regularly and often.
- **Eat** small meals and eat more often.
- **Avoid** using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.

Lightning and thunderstorms

If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to the storm to be struck by lightning. Go to safe shelter immediately, and listen to local radio and TV stations for information and instructions. Make sure your NOAA weather radio is turned on. Lightning can strike more than 6 miles ahead of a thunderstorm.

When a storm approaches, unplug appliances and turn off the air conditioner. Avoid using the telephone, computer or any electrical appliances, and do not take a bath or shower.

If you are in the woods, take shelter under the shorter trees. Stay away from tall, isolated objects. Lightning typically strikes the tallest object. That may be you in an open field or clearing. If you are **boating or swimming,** get to land and find shelter immediately!

If you can't find shelter, go to a low-lying, open place away from trees, poles or metal objects. Squat low to the ground, and place your hands on your knees with your head between them. **Do not lie flat on the ground!**

After the storm passes, stay away from storm-damaged areas. Listen to the radio or watch local TV stations for information and instructions.

If someone is struck by lightning, he or she does not carry an electrical charge and can be handled safely. Call 911 and give first aid.

Basic first aid skills can be invaluable, so learn them now. See your local yellow pages for a list of providers who teach first aid classes or contact the American Red Cross.

<http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/overview.htm>

Natural gas emergencies

You can help prevent natural gas emergencies by calling the locator service (Iowa: 1-800-292-8989) before you dig on your property. This will help you avoid hitting gas lines.

If you smell gas outdoors, move away from the area until you no longer smell the gas and call 911. Do not return to the area until authorities tell you it is safe to do so.

If you smell gas indoors, get outside immediately, leaving doors open to help ventilate the building. Do not use light switches, electrical appliances or phones (cell or land line) in the affected home or building. Extinguish cigarettes and do not light matches.

Get to a safe distance from the home and call 911. Do not return to the area until appropriate authorities tell you it is safe to do so.

Pets and disaster

If you evacuate, the best way to protect your pets is to evacuate them, too. Leaving pets behind, even if you try to create a safe place for them, is likely to result in them being injured, lost or worse.

Have a safe place to take your pets

Red Cross disaster shelters cannot accept pets because of state regulations and other considerations. Service animals that assist people with disabilities are the only animals allowed in Red Cross shelters.

- Keep a list of pet friendly places, including phone numbers. Ask if no pet policies could be waived in an emergency at hotels or motels or a friends apartment complex.
- Ask relatives, friends or others outside the affected area whether they could shelter your animals in their homes.
- Bring all pets into the house when an emergency begins so that you won't have to search for them if you have to leave in a hurry.
- Make sure all dogs and cats are wearing collars and securely fastened, up-to-date identification.

Birds should be transported in a secure travel carrier. Provide a few slices of fresh fruits and vegetables with high water content. Have a photo for identification and leg bands. Bring plenty of paper towels to collect waste in the bottom of the birds cage.

Snakes can be transported in a pillowcase but they must be transferred to more secure housing when they reach the evacuation site. Take a water bowl large enough for soaking as well as a heating pad.

When transporting **house lizards**, follow the same directions given above for birds.

Small mammals (hamsters, gerbils, etc.) should be transported in secure carriers. Take bedding materials, food bowls and water bottles.

Sheltering in place

One of the instructions you may be given when hazardous materials may have been released into the atmosphere is to shelter-in-place. This is a precaution aimed to keep you safe while remaining indoors. (This is not the same thing as going to a public shelter at a school or other location.) **Shelter-in-place means selecting a small interior room with no or few windows and taking refuge there.** It does not mean sealing off your entire home or office building.

You might need to shelter-in-place if chemical, biological or radiological contaminants are released into the environment. If this happens, local authorities will provide information on TV and radio stations to help you protect yourself and your family. Keep a radio or TV on at work and at home so you can be alerted to hazardous conditions quickly.

Know how to shelter-in-place

- Close and lock all windows and exterior doors.
- If you're told there is danger of explosion, close window shades, blinds and curtains.
- Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.
- Close the fireplace damper.
- Get your emergency preparedness kit and radio.
- Go to an interior room without windows that is above ground level.
Bring your pets with you.
- Use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around the door and any vents into the room.
- Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe.

Know why the sirens sound

Outdoor warning sirens alert us to **chemical spills, severe weather and other outdoor emergencies**. When sirens sound, go indoors and turn on a local TV or radio station to find out what the threat is and how to protect yourself.

Do not assume there is no emergency because skies are clear.

Testing of sirens occurs on the first Monday of the month at 12:00 noon

Tornadoes

Pick a place where family members could gather if a tornado is headed your way. Basements are best; if you don't have one, choose a center hallway, bathroom or closet on the lowest floor. Be sure to take your weather radio into your temporary shelter.

If you are outside, hurry to the basement or a nearby sturdy building or lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area.

If you are in a car or mobile home, get out immediately and head for safety.

After the tornado, watch out for fallen power lines and stay out of the damaged area. Listen to the radio or watch local TV stations for information and instructions.

Warnings and watches

A storm **watch** means a storm is possible in your area. When a watch is issued, listen to local radio and TV stations for additional information. Be alert to changing weather conditions and avoid unnecessary travel.

A storm **warning** means a storm is headed for or is already in your area. When a storm warning is issued:

- Safety experts recommend that you stay indoors; its the best place to protect yourself.
- If you must go outside, wear several layers of lightweight clothing this will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat.
- Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from cold air or debris in the air.

Winter storms: have a plan

Before a storm comes, have extra blankets on hand and ensure that each member of your household has a warm coat, gloves or mittens, a warm hat and warm, water-resistant boots.

During a storm, avoid going outside. If you must, wear several layers of lightweight clothing this will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from cold air and debris.

You should **avoid traveling by car** in a storm, **but if you must:**

- Carry an emergency preparedness kit in your car.
- Keep your cars gas tank full.
- Let someone know your destination, route and estimated time of arrival.

If you become stranded in a vehicle...

- Stay with your car. Do not try to walk to safety.
- Tie a brightly colored cloth (preferably red) to the antenna for rescuers to see.
- Start the car and run the heater for about 10 minutes every hour.
- Make sure that snow is not covering the exhaust pipe which could cause carbon monoxide to build up in the car or cause an engine malfunction.
- Keep one window (away from the wind) slightly open to let air in and prevent the buildup of deadly carbon monoxide gas.
- Leave the overhead light on when the engine is running so that you can be seen.
- As you sit, move your arms and legs to keep blood circulating and to stay warm.

If you shovel snow after the storm, be careful not to overexert yourself. Strenuous activity in cold weather can put a strain on your heart.

Information resources

If you need assistance in an emergency, dial 911.

The resources below are provided to assist you in your emergency planning:

Sioux City Fire Department (non emergency): 712-279-6314

Sioux City Police Department (non emergency): 712-279-6960

Woodbury County Disaster and Emergency Services: 712-876-2212

Siouxland Chapter, American Red Cross: 712-252-4081

Hospitals:

St. Luke's 712-279-3500

Mercy 712-279-2010

My Nurse Health Info: 877-242-8899

Poison Center: Local Number: 277-2222 or 1-800-352-2222. The national 800 number is 1-800-222-1222

Information and Referral: 211

Siouxland District Health: 712-279-6119

Department of Homeland Security: www.dhs.gov/dhspublic