

## 1 BE INFORMED about what might happen

Important information such as updates about evacuation orders, school closings and impacted areas is disseminated during a disaster situation. The key is knowing what information sources are reliable. Emergency managers in Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe counties want to ensure that you know where to turn to for trustworthy news and updates about an ongoing emergency in the region.

Local government officials often rely on the news media to issue important updates. Stay tuned to television and radio stations and media websites to keep up with what is going on in the region. Be sure to have a battery-powered radio in case of a power outage, and remember that older analog TVs will not pick up digital signals that stations now use. A NOAA weather radio can also provide important information about weather-related and other types of emergencies.

Readysouthflorida.org can provide you with a list of official sources of emergency information, including your respective county's emergency management website, as well as links to local, state and federal government agencies and call centers. Some counties offer wireless emergency notification systems that send disaster information to your e-mail account and/or cellular phone. Visit [www.readysouthflorida.org](http://www.readysouthflorida.org) to learn how you register for such services.

## 2 MAKE A PLAN for what you will do in an emergency

Plan in advance what you will do in an emergency. This means having critical information such as how to contact relatives or friends, knowing different routes to a safe area if you need to evacuate, and having the right materials on hand if you need to prepare your home or business for a disaster.

Develop a Family Communications Plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another and review what you will do in different situations. Consider a plan where each family member calls, or e-mails, the same friend or relative in the event of an emergency. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members. Be sure each person knows the phone number and has a

cellular phone or a prepaid phone card to call the emergency contact. You may have trouble getting through, or the phone system may be down altogether, but be patient.

Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the disaster, the first important decision is whether you stay put or get away. You should understand and plan for both possibilities.

Create a Plan to Shelter-in-Place. There are circumstances when staying where you are, such as a home or business, may be necessary. This process is called sheltering-in-place. If local authorities say conditions outside are too dangerous, you may want to shelter-in-place and take precautions to protect your family, such as putting up shutters. You also should bring family members and pets inside, lock all doors, and close the windows. Have your disaster kit ready and with you.

Create a Plan to Evacuate. Plan in advance how you will assemble your family, anticipate where you will go and identify more than one evacuation route. You can access your local emergency management agency's website from [www.readysouthflorida.org](http://www.readysouthflorida.org) to obtain important evacuation information, such as whether you live in a hurricane evacuation zone, shelter locations, and bus pick-up points.

If you have a loved one with special needs, [readysouthflorida.org](http://readysouthflorida.org) can help you learn how to register them for special needs assistance at a shelter or medical management facility. Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe counties also offer registration for pet-friendly shelters in case you need a place for your pet during a disaster. Shelter space and services are limited, so act now.

Choose several destinations in different directions so you have options during an emergency. If you have a car, keep at least a half tank of gas in it at all times. If you do not have a car, plan how you will leave if you have to.

Know Emergency Plans at School and Work. Business owners should develop an emergency plan for their company. Companies should identify key personnel and equipment that may be needed during an emergency, a list of vendors that should be notified, and alternate locations from where to conduct operations. Have extra cash on hand to cover unexpected costs or assist employees in need. Companies should also encourage their employees to develop their own emergency plans and disaster kits, as well as conduct regular drills at work so everyone knows what to do in the event of an emergency. Talk to your employer and your children's school about emergency plans. Also consider talking to your neighbors about how you can work together.

[www.ReadySouthFlorida.org](http://www.ReadySouthFlorida.org)

## 3 GET A KIT of emergency supplies

When a disaster strikes, it may be days before government officials arrive in your area to assist you. That is why it is important to be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to make it on your own for at least three days, maybe longer.

While there are many things that might make you more comfortable, think first about the necessities - water and food. You'll need a gallon of water per person per day for drinking and sanitation. Include in the kits a three-day supply of non-perishable foods that are easy to store and prepare such as protein bars, dried fruit or canned foods. Don't forget about a manual can opener - it will be necessary should the power go out and you need to open canned goods.

Extra clothing and sleeping items such as a blanket, pillow and sleeping bag will make the situation more comfortable for you and your family. Be sure to have extra diapers, powder and wipes for infants. Children can get bored quickly if they are stuck indoors with nothing to do for an extended period of time, so make sure you have games and other activities available for them.

Your pets are also members of your family. Make sure they have their own food and water supply to last them at least three days.

Other important items to consider for your kit include a waterproof container for important documents such as insurance papers and birth certificates; sunscreen and insect repellent; and tools such as a hammer, pliers and a wrench.

## 4 GET INVOLVED Learn more about community preparedness

Become a safety and emergency preparedness educator in your community or become a volunteer member with your local Citizen Corps group, local Chapter of the American Red Cross or some other Community Based Organization. Through Citizen Corps, individuals can learn about opportunities to get involved in free disaster training and public outreach events. Get involved today! Whether it's your home, your neighborhood, your place of business, or your school, you can take a few simple steps to prepare your community here in South Florida.