

Your 12-Month Plan



Part of the Public Safety Office's "Be Ready" series

Disaster preparedness doesn't happen overnight. It takes careful thought and planning to be ready for an incident.

To make it easier, break it down into small chunks that can be spread out over a year. Mark it on your calendar to spend one hour each month with your family and discuss/practice one of the topics below.

Month 1: Disaster Kit

- Begin putting together your disaster kit. Plan out the items you will need (using our list disaster kit guide as a minimal guideline), and make a list.
- Determine where your kit will be kept. Your disaster kit should be in a readily accessible place where it's not likely to be blocked by other items that fall in front or on top of it (garages are a bad idea unless you have no other options). Consider keeping it under your bed or by the front door, for example.

Month 2: First Aid/CPR

- Review or learn first aid and CPR skills, and have all responsible members of your household do the same.

Month 3: Utilities

- Learn where your utility shut-offs are, and learn how to shut them off properly. Test your gas shut-off by turning it an eighth-turn (just so it's diagonal to the pipe, NOT all the way perpendicular), and call the gas company if it's rusted open or otherwise won't turn. If you use propane, identify where the tank shut-off valves are and turn them a half-turn to ensure that they work properly. (This includes barbeque propane tanks!)

Month 4: Family Plan

- Create your family plan. Determine where your meeting place will be, and establish an out-of-state contact. Plan for all possibilities, such as the kids being at school, you being at work, your whole family being out shopping, etc.

Month 5: Fire Safety

- Review or learn basic fire suppression skills. Practice using your fire extinguisher (without pulling the pin) to familiarize yourself with its weight. Remember PASS – Pull, Aim, Squeeze, Sweep.

Month 6: Drop, Cover, & Hold

- Review "drop, cover, and hold" procedures with your family, and identify places in your home where you can do just that. Practice "drop, cover, and hold" with your family.

Month 7: Hazard Hunt

- Identify hazards in your home. Secure your water heater, install safety latches on your cabinets and drawers, and brace your furniture to the wall with brackets or earthquake straps. Secure fragile items to shelves using earthquake putty. Don't forget to secure your televisions and other heavy electronics and appliances too!

Month 8: Insurance

- Review your homeowner's or renter's insurance coverage, if you have it. If you don't have insurance, consider purchasing some. Make sure all your information is up-to-date, including inventories. Even if you choose not to purchase coverage, walk through your home and make a list of all your family's possessions, including makes & models, serial numbers, purchase dates (if known), approximate current values, etc. (Inventories should be updated at least once every six months to ensure all your possessions will be covered in the event of a claim.) If you have one available, use a video recording device to make a visual documentation of your inventory, and keep a copy in a safe place outside the home (such as a safe deposit box or a relative out of the area).

Month 9: Documents

- Collect all your family's important documents, such as birth certificates, Social Security cards, immunization records, immigration documents, etc., and place them in a safe place, such as a

safe deposit box or a portable fire safe. Keep a copy in a safe area outside the home, such as an out-of-state relative (we suggest wherever you keep a copy of your home inventory for ease of remembering).

Month 10: Immediate Response Kit

Create an “Immediate Response Kit” for each member of your family. These kits are simple but contain critical items in the first moments after a disaster event. Include at a minimum: sturdy shoes or boots, work gloves (for protection from broken glass and other hazards), a flashlight with fresh batteries or glow sticks, and an “OK/HELP” card and tape to attach to your front door (to let response workers know if you need help or if they can go to the next home). Consider hard hats or helmets as well (good, strong bike helmets will work for kids) to protect from falling debris. Keep one of these kits next to or under each bed in the home, one per person, and teach your kids to use their kit right away if a disaster strikes.

Month 11: Plan for the Aftermath

Make a plan for extended events, such as the weeks or even months after a severe earthquake. Decide what your family will do for shelter, food, and other basic supplies, and have a contingency plan in place in case those options aren’t available.

If you haven’t already, begin assembling disaster kits for each of your vehicles, as well as a personal kit for your workplace. These kits may not have all the same items (or may have different items) as your home kit, but should include at least one gallon of water per person per day, enough non-perishable food for 3-5 days, blankets, flashlights, and sturdy shoes. By having multiple kits, not only will you be prepared no matter where you are when disaster strikes, but the kits can be combined to create an extended survival kit that will last a week or more.

Month 12: Shelter-In-Place

Learn how to “shelter-in-place.” Terrorism, radiological accidents, chemical spills, and even severe smoke blown in from fires can create hazardous environments. Designate a room in your home that has minimal doors and windows and will fit everyone comfortably (a master bedroom with an attached bathroom is ideal). For

instructions on sheltering-in-place, see our Shelter-In-Place handout.

More Ideas

There are other ways you can prepare as well. Local training classes are available in first aid, CPR, disaster preparedness & response, and more. Most organizations offer classes at varying times to help accommodate everyone’s schedules, and many are free. More advanced classes are also available for interested individuals in emergency management, medical response, fire technology, and more. Check with non-profit organizations such as the American Red Cross, as well as with colleges and trade schools, to see what is available.

Also consider taking a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) class. CERT training is offered several times each year, free of charge, by the Los Angeles County Fire Department, and teaches triage, basic first aid, light search-and-rescue, basic fire suppression, and incident management.

Remember: just doing a little bit each month is a little bit more than doing nothing at all!

For more information, visit the following websites:

Ready America: <http://www.ready.gov>

American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org>

Are You Prepared?: <http://72hours.org/>

CERT: <http://www.cert-la.com>

Emergency Survival Plan: <http://www.espfocus.org>