

BEFORE AN EMERGENCY

A severe snow storm, an ice storm or a lengthy power outage are examples of emergencies that can happen unexpectedly. Your community has an emergency plan to respond to these situations, but do you? Take the first steps by talking with your family and making a plan together. Expecting the unexpected and being prepared for anything are good beginnings to a plan of action.

Make a survival kit

To get started, plan the contents of your survival kit. Keep in mind the special needs anyone in your family may have, including medications. Pack the kit and store it in an easy-to-find spot. Here is a list of items to include:

- cash (remember that ATM's may not be working)
- important papers (copies of identification for everyone, health cards, personal documents)
- flashlights
- a battery-operated or portable/wind-up radio
- spare batteries
- first-aid supplies
- candles and waterproof matches or lighter
- personal hygiene supplies
- blankets and sleeping bags
- one change of clothes per person
- three day supply of non-perishable food (e.g. canned vegetables, fruit, meat and fish, crackers, peanut butter, jam, instant coffee) Replace the food in your kit once a year to ensure it is safe to eat.
- a three-day supply of unopened bottled water (at least 4 litres, per person/per day); most manufacturers indicate a two-year shelf life
- cutlery, including can opener
- pet food and supplies
- phone numbers (i.e. designated family members out of your immediate area).

Listen to weather warnings

Environment Canada monitors weather conditions 24 hours a day. It issues weather watches, advisories and warnings through national, regional and local radio and television stations so make sure you listen or watch local or regional stations for weather conditions.

- A **Weather Watch** alerts you that conditions are favourable for the development of severe weather. Watch the skies and listen for updated watches and possibly weather warnings.
- A **Weather Advisory** means actual or expected weather conditions may cause general inconvenience or concern, but do not pose a serious enough threat to warrant a weather warning. An advisory may also be used when conditions show signs of becoming favourable for severe weather when the situation is not definite enough or too far in the future to justify a warning.
- A **Weather Warning** alerts you that severe weather is occurring or that hazardous weather is highly probable. Severe thunderstorm or tornado warnings may be issued less than one hour in advance. Other weather warnings may be issued six to twelve hours in advance.

Keep key numbers handy

Post emergency telephone numbers and addresses near the phone. In the event of an emergency, use the phone only if it's critical. Lines should be kept for emergency officials and those who need help.

You can find out ahead of time from your municipality the location of emergency shelters and if there are any designated emergency routes. In case you or other family members get separated, make arrangements with someone who lives outside your immediate area who will act as a central point of contact for your family members.

Ensure all family members have the phone number and know to call. You should also have a pre-determined meeting place away from your home in case your home is affected by an emergency situation and family members get separated.

When you're told to evacuate

During an evacuation, residents may be asked to go to a community centre or to the next town. Listen to the radio for evacuation orders and trust the authorities. If an order is given, follow all directions and go quickly to the specified location. Remember to bring your survival kit with you. Don't forget to include arrangements for pets, since they are not permitted in shelters and many hotels.

For more information

Expecting the unexpected will give you and your family peace of mind and the ability to remain calm if a disaster does occur. More information is available by calling *Your Health Connection* 721-7520 (1-877-721-7520) or by visiting the following websites:

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

Emergency Management Ontario
www.mps.gov.on.ca

Canadian Centre for Emergency Preparedness
www.ccep.ca