Be Prepared for Natural Disasters

No one can ever be totally prepared for a natural disaster, but knowing what to do before, during, and after can make a crucial difference. Critical steps to take include creating an emergency plan for your family, conducting emergency drills, being aware of the location of emergency exits and fire extinguishers in your home, and maintaining an emergency preparedness kit to sustain your family for up 72 hours.

Two of the most common natural disasters in California are earthquakes and fires. Below are some tips to help your family prepare a disaster plan, so that you can prepare for these events as much as possible.

Creating a Disaster Plan

Here are some recommended steps to take when creating your family’s disaster plan.

- First, meet with your family to discuss what you need to prepare for earthquakes and fires; explain the dangers of earthquakes and fires to your children, and plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.
- Locate two “safe spots” inside each room for each type of disaster.
- Pick two places to meet. One should be outside of your home in case of fire; the other should be outside of your neighborhood, in case you can’t return home. Every family member should know the address and phone numbers of your meeting places.
- Designate an out-of-state friend to be a “family contact”. After a disaster, long distance phone service is usually restored before local service, so family members should call the “family contact” to check in with their location.
- Talk with your family about what to do in an evacuation. Locate two exit routes out of each room; practice evaluating, and plan on how to take care of your pets.
- Show each family member how to shut off the gas, water, and electricity valves in your house—keep tools near the gas and water shutoff valves. Remember: only turn your utilities off if you suspect lines have been damaged or you have been instructed to by your utility company.
- Install fire extinguishers (approved for use in both regular and electrical fires) in your home and teach every family how to use them.
- Inspect your home for potential hazards; secure items that may break, fall, or obstruct an exit during an emergency.