

BE PREPARED

Hurricane Katrina has opened our eyes to the importance of emergency preparedness. As you may have heard, prior to Katrina and 9/11, FEMA discussed three scenarios that could occur and should be prepared for: a terrorist attack in New York, a catastrophic hurricane in the east, and an earthquake in California. Unfortunately, two out of the three have occurred, and it's only a matter of time before the third event occurs.

Recently there was a roundtable discussion on the radio discussing not only Hurricane Katrina, but also emergency preparedness. A few important points were brought out. Most Californians spend a lot of time in their cars and/or are in the vicinity of their cars. How many of us are prepared for a disaster if we were in our cars when it occurred? It would make sense for us to have an emergency preparedness kit in our vehicle. What would you need in order to survive in your car for at least a day? Think about this and you will be able to pull together an emergency preparedness that addresses your personal needs.

If you are stuck somewhere away from home, how many of you have a good pair of walking shoes in your car? Most men would be able to hike several miles in their shoes, but many women wear shoes that aren't conducive for walking several miles. Take note, ladies, and throw a pair of walking shoes in your car. Most of us are at work during the day, away from our families. How would you maintain contact with your family? The pictures of parents searching for kids in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina come to mind. Make sure your family, especially your children, have an out-of-state contact number handy so they can make that call.

We need to remind ourselves to be prepared at home as well. It's never too late to pull together your emergency preparedness plan for home. Many of us are busy, can't do it all in one day, know that the flashlight is in the hall closet, and figure this will suffice until you have time to gather other items. All poor excuses. A good suggestion from the radio discussion was to do something each weekend at home to prepare your emergency kit. Perhaps this weekend, make sure you have fresh batteries, and next weekend, containers of water, etc. The American Red Cross suggests the following:

- First aid kit and essential medications.
- Canned food and can opener.
- At least three gallons of water per person.
- Protective clothing, rainwear, and bedding or sleeping bags.
- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members.
- Written instructions for how to turn off gas, electricity, and water if authorities advise you to do so. (Remember, you'll need a professional to turn natural gas service back on.)
- Keeping essentials, such as a flashlight and sturdy shoes, by your bedside.

For more comprehensive information on emergency preparedness, please go to <http://www.redcross.org/services/prepare/0.1082.0239.00.html> where you will find details on how to be prepared at home, at school, at work, and in the community.

Take the time to prepare and protect yourself and your family against a disaster. Some disasters come with warnings and some do not. Be prepared.