

# Your Family Plan



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

You have your disaster kits, you know where your utilities are, and you know what to do with your pets. What are you going to do with your family, though, and more importantly, do they know what to do?

Having a family plan is just one facet of an overall disaster plan. Since your family members may very well be in different places when a disaster strikes, it is important that everyone knows what to do and where to go.

## Know Your Schedules

Most of us run on a fairly standard schedule. We go to work at regular times, and our kids are in school during certain hours. Create a written schedule, listing the regular times and locations that each family member will be. For most families, a week-long schedule will be sufficient, while for others with alternating days off or appointment-based work schedules a two-week or even a month-long schedule may be more appropriate. (See our attached example of a family schedule.)

Make sure to include addresses (or cross-streets if located at an intersection). If a disaster is localized to your area, resources such as fire and other emergency personnel may be brought in from surrounding communities, and likely will not be familiar with the area to know where "Lincoln Elementary" or "Hull Park" is.

Also include travel times and usual routes taken if possible. If you are on your way to work when a disaster strikes, knowing how long it takes to get there will give your family a good idea if you made it safely to work or not, and the route you take may be important if it turns out you haven't.

Don't forget to update your schedule with any special events that you or your family is planning to attend, such as soccer games, business trips, or weddings, so that your family members always know where everyone is when a disaster strikes.

Naturally, not every errand or event can be scheduled, such as traffic delays, unplanned doctor's visits, stops at the gas station, etc. The idea is to let all family members know where the other family members are likely to be when that information is known in advance.

## Designate a Meeting Place

Your family should have two pre-designated meeting places in case a disaster strikes. One should be in the neighborhood, such as "at the cul-de-sac on our street." The other should be out of the immediate area, so that if you need to leave town for any reason, those family members who aren't with you when you leave will know where to meet you.

If you need to leave a pre-designated meeting place, or if the meeting place is unusable (such as if blocked by fire or debris), leave a note if possible alerting family members where you have gone, either at the original meeting place or on the front door of your home.

When it comes to your out-of-area meeting place, consider sharing the information with relatives and close friends that live in the same area as you, so that they can have a way to check on you to see if you and your family are okay. Also give this information to your out-of-state contact.

## Out-of-State Contact

When disasters strike, phone transmission lines may be damaged. Even if they're not and other utilities are still operational, local lines are often jammed due to the vast number of people trying to check on family members and neighbors at the same time.

Long-distance phone calls, however, are sent on a different set of lines, and therefore are less likely to be affected. Having an out-of-state contact is a good way to be able to share information about your family's status with those who may otherwise not be able to contact you.

Choose a relative who lives out of state, and contact them as soon as you can after a disaster strikes to let them know how you're doing. Let other family members in your area know who they can contact for that information. Especially for large, extended families, the out-of-state contact can be a good way for an entire family to share their individual status, even when they can't directly contact each other.

If you don't have a relative you can designate, choose a trusted friend. You should get their permission before sharing their information with others, but at least there will be someone that knows you're okay.

Make sure that everyone in your immediate family knows who the out-of-state contact is as well as their phone number. This way, if family members are in different locations when an incident occurs and can't get to each other (for example, parents at work in different cities, kids at different schools), you can at least have a way to check up on each other.

Also remember that while cellular phones and local phone lines may be unusable, text messages are sent over a different system, which may be less likely to be jammed.

### **Everything in Triplicate**

This may sound like a joke, but it really isn't. Having multiple backup copies of certain essential items can save you a lot of heartache after a disaster should the originals get destroyed.

Important documents, such as birth certificates, social security cards, immigration paperwork, immunization records, passports, marriage licenses, stock certificates, marriage licenses, etc., should be kept either in a portable, lockable fire safe in your home or in a bank safe deposit box, along with copies of insurance policies, drivers licenses or identification cards, and credit/debit cards, as well as some spare cash, spare keys to your home and vehicles, and any expensive jewelry you own. However, at least two copies of any documents and keys should also be kept elsewhere.

The first "backup" should be local, since a disaster

may be as small-scale as your house burning down. Choose a local relative or trusted friend or neighbor, and ask them if they can hold onto one of your sets. Make sure to keep it in a portable, lockable fire safe so that it's equally protected with them. An alternative would be to use a bank safe deposit box (at a different branch location or bank from your originals, if your originals are also kept in one).

Your second "backup" should be located out of the area in case of a major, area-wide disaster such as an earthquake. Your out-of-state contact is a good choice, or use a bank safe deposit box at a branch out-of-state.

### **Prepare, Prepare, Prepare**

Drills may seem cliché and trite, but they are essential to remembering what to do. Practice "drop, cover, and hold" with your family on a regular basis. Have regular evacuation drills (much like a fire drill in school) so that your family knows where the exits are and where to go once they're out.

Consider contacting your children's schools to learn what their specific disaster plans are, and how your child will be cared for until you can get to them. Ask your employer as well. Share this information with your family members, and update it once a year to make sure nothing has changed.

Also consider taking disaster preparedness classes as a family, such as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) or even first aid/CPR. The more information you have and planning you do, the better prepared you'll be in the event of the real thing.

For more information, visit the following websites:

Emergency Survival Program:

<http://www.espfocus.org>

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

Community Emergency Response Team:

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

# Our Family Schedule

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Family: leave for church 9:30 am, return home 12:00 pm Mom: leave for book club meeting at 4:15 pm, return home at 6:45 pm	Mom: leave for work 7:30 am, leave work 5:00 pm to pick up Jacob from sitter's at 5:30 pm, return home 5:45 pm Dad: leave for work 5:00 am, return home 7:00 pm	Mom: leave for work 7:30 am, leave work 5:00 pm to pick up Jacob from sitter's at 5:30 pm, return home 5:45 pm Dad: leave for work 5:00 am, return home 7:00 pm	Mom: leave for work 7:30 am, leave work 5:00 pm to pick up Jacob from sitter's at 5:30 pm Dad: leave for work 5:00 am, return home 7:00 pm	Mom: leave for work 7:30 am, leave work 5:00 pm to pick up Jacob from sitter's, return home 5:45 pm Dad: leave for work 5:00 am, return home 7:00 pm	Mom: leave for work 7:30 am, leave work 5:00 pm to pick up Jacob from sitter's, return home 5:45 pm Dad: leave for work 5:00 am, return home 7:00 pm	Mom, Dad, Jacob: leave for soccer game at 9:00 am, return home at 1:30 pm Sheila: leave for study group at 10:30 am, return home at 2:30 pm
	Jacob: leave for school at 7:00 am, go to sitter's at 2:45 pm, return home 5:45 pm Sheila: leave for school 8:30 am, return home 6:30 pm	Jacob: leave for school at 7:00 am, go to sitter's at 2:45 pm, return home 5:45 pm Sheila: leave for school 8:30 am, return home 6:30 pm	Jacob: leave for school at 7:00 am, go to sitter's at 2:45 pm Sheila: leave for school 8:30 am, return home 6:30 pm	Jacob: leave for school at 7:00 am, go to sitter's at 2:45 pm, return home 5:45 pm Sheila: leave for school 7:30 am, return home 9:00 pm	Jacob: leave for school at 7:00 am, go to sitter's at 2:45 pm, return home 5:45 pm Sheila: leave for school 8:30 am, return home 6:30 pm	Dad: leave for fraternity meeting at 6:45 pm, return home 9:15 pm

Mom's work: 1234 Golden Cir, Mainsville, US/drive time: 30 mins/usual route: Copperton Rd to Hwy 6, exit Golden Cir  
 Dad's work: 987 Silverdown Pl, Freetown, US/travel time: 2 hrs/usual route: RailCommute Train from Gold Crossing station  
 Jacob's school: Junior Elementary, corner of Blanket Rd and Main St, Mainsville, US/travel time: 30 mins via school bus from home  
 Sheila's school: Major College, corner of Alma Mater Dr and Valedictorian St, Mainsville, US/travel time: 30 mins via City bus route 7 from bus stop across street from home  
 Sitter's: Norma Baker, 5555 Supervision St, Mainsville, US/drive time: 15 minutes from home/usual route: Supervision St to Commuter Wy, south to Changeover Pl, east to Copperton Rd  
 Soccer practice: Sportsman's Park, corner of Copperton Rd and Minerstown Cir, Mainsville, US/drive time: 15 mins/usual route: Copperton Rd  
 Soccer games: Competition Park, corner of Bella Ln and Fauna Dr, Mainsville, US/drive time: 20 mins/usual route: Copperton Rd to Hwy 6, north to exit Bella Ln, west to Fauna Dr  
 Mom's book club: Jean Meyer's house, 579 Campton Dr, Mainsville, US/drive time: 15 mins/usual route: Copperton Rd west to Peony Ln, north to Campton Dr  
 Dad's fraternity meeting: The Meeting Hall, 2468 Main St, Mainsville, US/drive time: 15 mins/usual route: Copperton Rd west to Begonia St, north to Main St  
 Sheila's study group: The Coffee House, 1357 Copperton Rd, Mainsville, US/walk time: 5 mins/usual route: west on Copperton Rd