

Getting Informed

Hazards That May Strike Your Community and Their Risks

You can obtain hazard information for where you live by:

- [Contacting your local emergency management office](#)
 - <http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/statedr.shtm>
- [Contacting your local chapter of the American Red Cross](#)
 - <http://www.redcross.org/where/where.html>
- [Visiting Hazardsmaps.gov](#)
 - <http://www.hazardmaps.gov/atlas.php>

Use the worksheet that follows to record your findings and suggestions for reducing your family's risk.

- Possible Hazards and Emergencies worksheet

Community, School and Workforce Plans for Warning and Evacuation

- [Warning systems and signals](#)
 - FEMA is partnered with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to make "realtime" warnings to the public a 21st century reality.
 - The [Integrated Public Alert and Warning System \(IPAWS\)](#) will use modern technologies to alert the public about a potential or ongoing disaster, enhancing the ability to make decisions that could save lives and property. Emergency messages will flow through multiple devices, such as cell phones, pagers, satellite television/radio, landline phones, desktop computers, personal digital assistants, and road signs. These live or pre-recorded messages may be sent via audio, video or text in multiple languages, including American Sign Language and Braille.
- [Evacuation plans](#)
 - When community evacuations become necessary, local officials provide information to the public through the media. In some circumstances, other warning methods, such as sirens or telephone calls, also are used. Additionally, there may be circumstances under which you and your family feel threatened or endangered and you need to leave your home, school, or workplace to avoid these situations.
The amount of time you have to leave will depend on the hazard. If the event is a weather condition, such as a hurricane that can be monitored, you might have a day or two to get ready. However, many disasters allow no time for people to gather even the most basic necessities, which is why planning ahead, is essential.
 - **Evacuation: More Common than You Realize**
Evacuations are more common than many people realize. Hundreds of times each year, transportation and industrial accidents release harmful substances, forcing thousands of people to leave their homes. Fires and floods cause

evacuations even more frequently. Almost every year, people along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts evacuate in the face of approaching hurricanes.

Ask local authorities about emergency evacuation routes and see if maps may be available with evacuation routes marked.

Evacuation Guidelines

Always:	If time permits:
Keep a full tank of gas in your car if an evacuation seems likely. Gas stations may be closed during emergencies and unable to pump gas during power outages. Plan to take one car per family to reduce congestion and delay.	Gather your disaster supplies kit.
Make transportation arrangements with friends or your local government if you do not own a car.	Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and a cap.
Listen to a battery-powered radio and follow local evacuation instructions.	Secure your home: Close and lock doors and windows. Unplug electrical equipment, such as radios and televisions, and small appliances, such as toasters and microwaves. Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding.
Gather your family and go if you are instructed to evacuate immediately.	Let others know where you are going.
Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather.	
Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts; they may be blocked.	
Be alert for washed-out roads and bridges. Do not drive into flooded areas.	
Stay away from downed power lines.	

- [Community and Other Plans](#)
 - Ask local officials the following questions about your community's disaster/emergency plans.
 1. Does my community have a plan?
 2. Can I obtain a copy?
 3. What does the plan contain?
 4. How often is it updated?
 5. What should I know about the plan?
 6. What hazards does it cover?
 7. In addition to finding out about your community's plan, it is important that you know what plans are in place for your workplace and your children's school or day care center.

8. Ask your employer about workplace policies regarding disasters and emergencies, including understanding how you will be provided emergency and warning information.
9. Contact your children's school or day care center to discuss their disaster procedures.

- [School Emergency Plans](#)

Know your children's school emergency plan:

- Ask how the school will communicate with families during a crisis.
- Ask if the school stores adequate food, water, and other basic supplies.
- Find out if the school is prepared to shelter-in-place if need be, and where they plan to go if they must get away.

In cases where schools institute procedures to shelter-in-place, you may not be permitted to drive to the school to pick up your children. Even if you go to the school, the doors will likely be locked to keep your children safe. Monitor local media outlets for announcements about changes in school openings and closings, and follow the directions of local emergency officials.

For more information on developing emergency preparedness plans for schools, please log on to the U.S. Department of Education at www.ed.gov/emergencyplan.

- [Workplace Plans](#)

If you are an employer, make sure your workplace has a building evacuation plan that is regularly practiced.

- Take a critical look at your heating, ventilation and air conditioning system to determine if it is secure or if it could feasibly be upgraded to better filter potential contaminants, and be sure you know how to turn it off if you need to.
- Think about what to do if your employees can't go home.
- Make sure you have appropriate supplies on hand.