



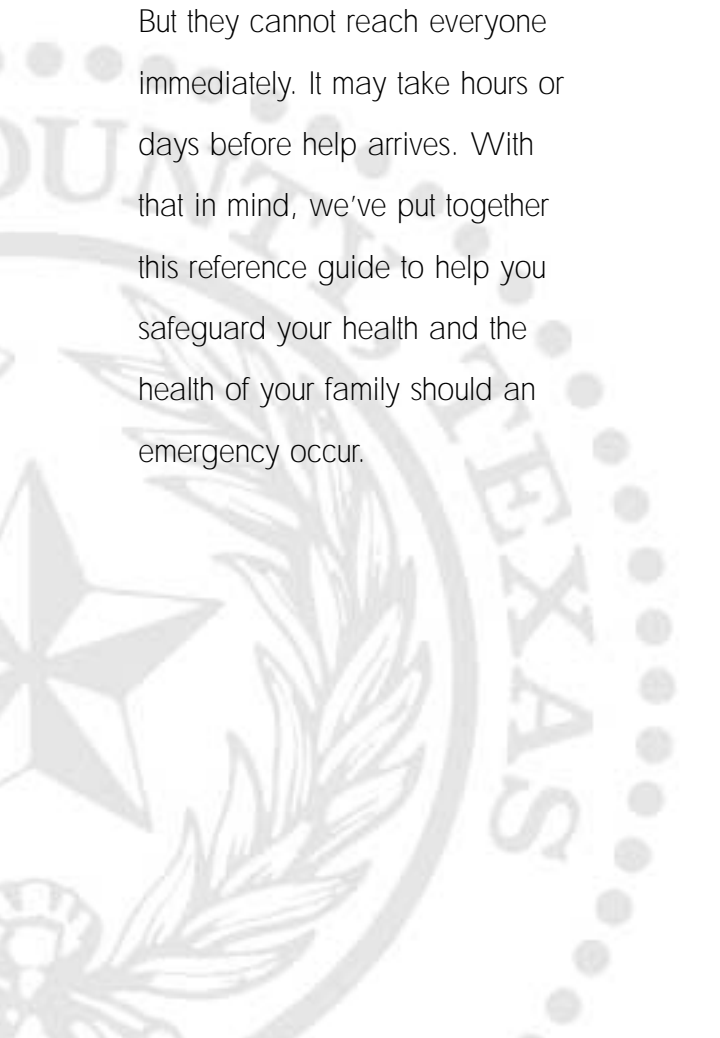
25 WAYS

TO SAFEGUARD YOUR HEALTH
IN AN EMERGENCY

Tarrant County Public Health
SAFEGUARDING
OUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH
Public Health Threats & Bioterrorism

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natural or man-made disaster can strike at almost anytime, sometimes without warning. After most disasters, emergency response teams, local officials and relief workers usually rush to the scene. But they cannot reach everyone immediately. It may take hours or days before help arrives. With that in mind, we've put together this reference guide to help you safeguard your health and the health of your family should an emergency occur.



1**Become more aware of the kinds of natural disasters that may happen where you live or work.**

Communities that have previous experience with natural disasters may have plans, warning systems or services in place that could be extremely helpful in your planning and preparation. These systems can provide you with information, alert you when danger threatens and offer assistance and shelter should a natural disaster occur.

2**Keep alert to man-made hazards that may affect your safety.**

From local accidents involving chemical spills to potential terrorist attacks, there are a variety of situations that may become dangerous to you and the community where you live or work. Find sources of information such as newspapers, magazines and radio and television stations that you can monitor to help you stay informed of events in your area.

3**Familiarize yourself with emergency plans at home and at work.**

Most businesses, government offices, schools, churches and other community organizations have building evacuation plans, areas that can be used for shelters, fire extinguishers, first aid supplies, etc. Take time to familiarize yourself with these things. Many communities have plans that include fire and police response units, emergency shelters and emergency medical and rescue teams. Know how to contact these groups to get information about emergency shelters should the need arise. If you have school-age children, familiarize yourself with their school's emergency procedures. The more you know, the better you can plan and the more effective you can be in an emergency.

4**Acquire and maintain battery - operated radios and lights.**

In most disasters, electricity is the first thing to go. A battery-operated radio will help you stay informed. Should a disaster occur at night, flashlights or other battery-operated lighting will be critical should you need to evacuate, examine your home for damage or examine yourself or family members for injuries.

5**Have a first aid kit ready and available at all times.**

If possible have one for your home and in each vehicle you own. Learn basic first aid. Show your family how to use the first aid kit in case of an emergency. Suggestions for a basic first aid kit can be found on the American Red Cross Web site.

6**Create a portable 72-hour survival kit.**

Create one for yourself and each family member. The kit should include a gallon of water per person, per day, non-perishable foods for each person for at least three days, and a change of clothing and sturdy shoes. Protective clothing and a blanket are good additions. Keep these kits in accessible places in case you need to evacuate your home. For more 72-hour survival kit suggestions, visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Web site.

7**Make an emergency plan.**

Having a plan of any kind and knowing what to do in the event of most emergencies may help give you more confidence to act. Put your plan in writing, keep it with your important documents and review it on a regular basis. Visit the American Red Cross Web site for tips on creating your plan.

8**Include a plan to communicate.**

Telephone and cell phone lines may become unusable during an emergency. Have a friend or a relative outside the area where you live serve as a central contact should you or any of your family become separated and unable to communicate with each other. Also, know how to contact local authorities in your area for help and guidance.

9**Plan for special needs.**

If you or a family member have special medical or physical needs, plan to have these needs covered should an emergency occur. Include the confining and securing of your pets in your planning.

10**Work with your family on your plan.**

Each family member should become very familiar with your emergency plans. Conduct fire and evacuation drills regularly, and quiz children every six months to help them remember what to do should an emergency arise. Show children what to do in case you aren't there when an emergency occurs. If they must act on their own, knowing what to do will boost their confidence and lessen their fear.

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Stay as calm as possible.

The best plans won't do you any good if you panic or are too emotionally distraught to follow your plan.

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Be prepared to evacuate.

Depending on the nature of the disaster, you may be advised to evacuate your home or may need to find a safer shelter. Determine ahead of time the best escape routes from your home. Knowing where to find a safe shelter elsewhere and having portable survival kits ready to go will allow you to act quicker in the face of disaster.

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Establish a meeting place.

Ideally two are preferred. Choose one close to your home in case of sudden emergencies like a fire; and chose another location outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Make sure everyone in your family knows the address and phone number of the two locations.

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Be prepared to hunker down.

Should time or other factors not allow you to evacuate, designate a safe place within your home or apartment that you and your family can take shelter in for at least 72 hours. Should food and water be scarce, use them prudently, but do not impose severe rationing, especially for children, the ill or the elderly.

15**Fortify your home.**

There is almost always something you can do to make your home more secure and better equipped should an emergency arise. Inspect your home for potential hazards (such as items like a bookcase that could fall) on a regular basis. Smoke alarms and fire extinguishers can save lives and property. Also consider emergency supplies like duct tape, plastic sheeting and batteries. Find the safest spots in your home for each disaster. Prepare a room in your home or apartment to use in the event of a tornado, and equip it with battery-operated lighting, a radio and a survival kit.

16**Have an adequate water supply in case service is cut off.**

Having a supply of bottled water may be crucial during emergencies. Bathtubs, water heaters and toilet flush tanks can be used for emergency water needs should your local water supply become contaminated or be unavailable.

17**Manage waste properly.**

If you and your family are forced to stay in your home for an extended period of time, set aside areas in your home to place trash and other waste. Waste handled improperly can cause sickness and disease. Although it may be difficult, make every effort to maintain sanitary conditions in your shelter space.

18**Where possible, stockpile a supply of fuel.**

Should power go off or stay off during extreme cold weather, having a supply of wood for a fireplace or portable gas stoves and heaters will, decrease discomfort and improve your chances of survival. Never leave a fire unattended, and be sure you have proper ventilation if you have to use these extreme measures.

19**Check on neighbors, especially the elderly and disabled.**

Working with neighbors can save lives and property. Neighbors may have special skills that could prove important in disasters, and you may need to rely on them should you be away from home when an emergency occurs. Your neighbors also may have been caught off guard or may be unaware of impending danger. Where possible, provide them information, guidance, refer them to assistance and include them in your emergency planning and activities.

20**If you own a business, develop a plan that protects your employees, customers and business, and reduces potential damage.**

A thorough plan that is easy to understand and communicate to employees and customers may help boost their confidence during an emergency. A good plan may help minimize loss of life and property damage.

21**Cars are not safe shelters.**

In most natural disasters, cars can become death traps. If you are traveling in a car when a natural disaster occurs, seek safe shelter in a sturdy building as quickly as possible.

22**Be prepared to act alone and quickly.**

Sometimes emergencies happen when we are not at home or with family. Know what you can do to protect yourself from any immediate danger should you be cut off from communication with authorities or family members.

23**Stay alert following any disaster.**

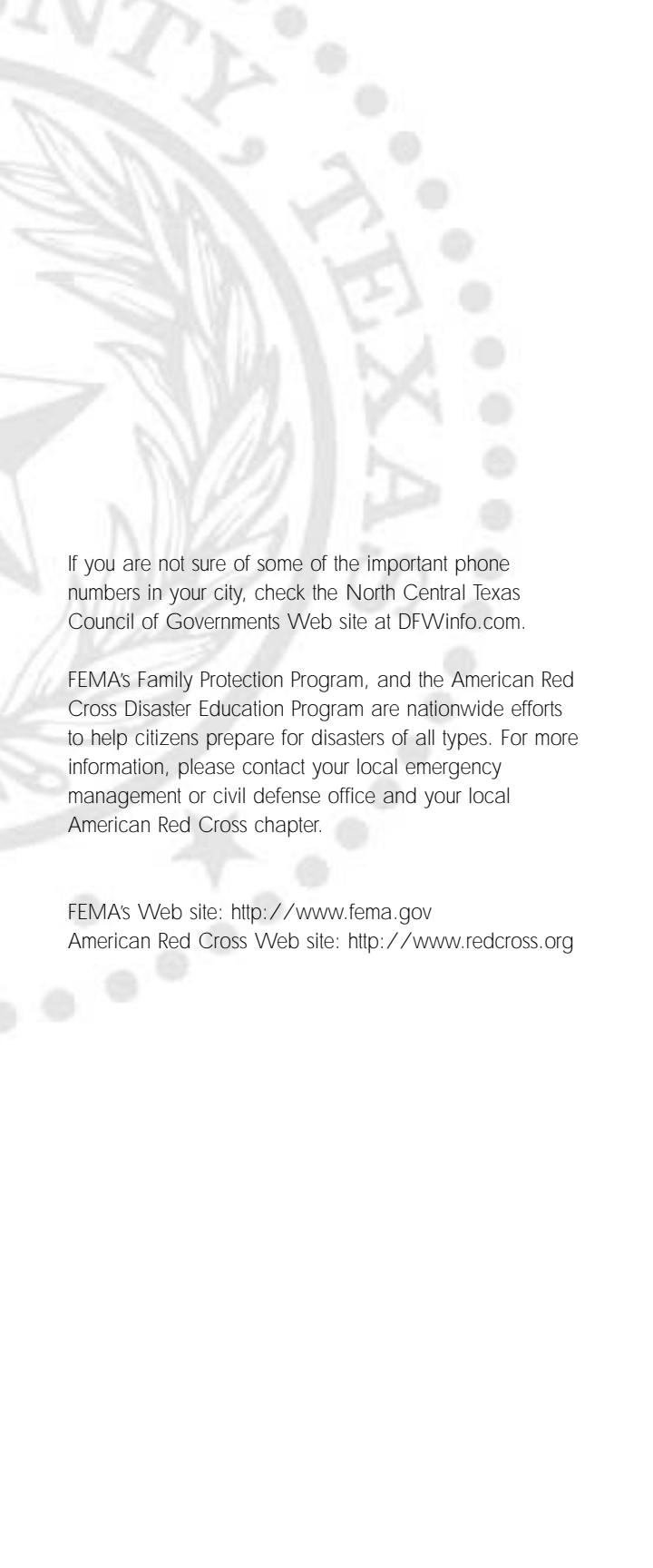
Natural and man-made disasters will disrupt a community and displace items, animals and people. Ruptured gas lines, broken water mains, weakened structures, exposed sharp objects, downed power lines or other situations may pose a danger. Listen to news alerts for details. Seek shelter as safely and as quickly as possible where you and your family can recover and get needed assistance.

24**Make sure you have adequate insurance coverage.**

The financial effect of a disaster can be significant. Be as prepared as possible for this eventuality. A copy of your insurance and other papers should be kept in a safe place.

25**Keep yourself as clean and healthy as possible.**

The chance of developing a sickness or injury and contracting infections is always greater during emergencies. Keep your immunizations (child and adult) current. Keep your immunization records in a safe place.



If you are not sure of some of the important phone numbers in your city, check the North Central Texas Council of Governments Web site at DFWinfo.com.

FEMA's Family Protection Program, and the American Red Cross Disaster Education Program are nationwide efforts to help citizens prepare for disasters of all types. For more information, please contact your local emergency management or civil defense office and your local American Red Cross chapter.

FEMA's Web site: <http://www.fema.gov>

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



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