

## Preparedness Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why do New Hampshire residents need to be prepared for emergencies?**

New Hampshire has many highly trained public safety professionals, such as police officers, firefighters and emergency medical personnel. But they can't be everywhere and during a major disaster they are likely to be very busy. In the few moments it takes until help arrives, **you** are the first responder. If you and your family, business or other organization are prepared for an emergency you are more likely to survive and minimize injuries and damage. It is best to have a written plan which includes how you will communicate in a disaster, where you and your family will meet up, and how much food and water you will have on hand.

### **Does New Hampshire face any special types of disasters?**

New Hampshire can experience any type of disaster that occurs anywhere in the world, with the exception of a volcanic eruption, but some disasters are more likely than others. Since 2005, the state has experienced a series of floods, multiple tornadoes, an ice storm, a tropical storm, severe snow storms, and a flu pandemic. Floods, hurricanes, and severe winter storms are the most likely disasters to strike the state.

### **What home emergency supplies should I have on hand?**

Under most circumstances, a power outage will last only a few hours and not put your family in serious danger. Keeping emergency supplies on hand will make the time pass more comfortably and allow you to respond or call for help in the event something more serious occurs. Here are emergency supplies that a typical homeowner should stock:

- Flashlight and spare batteries. These are safer than candles. Camping-style lanterns can light a whole room and make it easier to read or play games to keep children entertained.
- A battery-powered radio. Emergency instructions will come from officials via Emergency Alert System broadcasts or newscasts. You will need to know what is going on and radio broadcasts will provide this information.
- A wired telephone plugged directly into the telephone jack in the wall is recommended. The telephone system generally works when the power is out because the telephone company has its own power system and battery back-ups. A portable, or cordless phone requires an external power source and won't work if the power is out. Cell phones may be overwhelmed with large numbers of calls, restricting your ability to get through and they need charging to work.
- Store several gallons of bottled water in a cool part of the house for drinking, cooking, or hand washing if necessary.
- Keep some stored food on hand that can be easily prepared. Most people shop once a week, by definition they will have at least a week's worth of food available. Families should choose the type of "emergency food" that suits their needs and taste. Make sure to cycle the food around so it doesn't go bad. Be sure to have appropriate tools to prepare emergency food. Your electric can opener won't do much good if the power is out, so you'll need at least one manual opener.

In addition, everyone in the family should know how and when to call 9-1-1 for emergency assistance. Even young children can learn this. Another good idea is to have a contact out of state, such as family members or close friends. A long-distance point of contact is valuable if family members are scattered or are forced to go to a shelter.

### **What should be done during an evacuation?**

If a neighborhood becomes too dangerous to remain in, authorities may order an evacuation. When that happens, the American Red Cross, in cooperation with local or state officials, will open shelters in schools or other public buildings. You are not required to go to a shelter if you can make your own arrangements. Regardless of where you go when evacuated, take personal supplies and other essential items with you:

- Personal hygiene products
- Eyeglasses or contact lenses
- Prescription medications and prescriptions
- At least one change of seasonally appropriate clothing
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Cash and credit cards
- Books and games for children
- Copies of important papers
- Food and medications for your pet
- Baby formula and diapers if you have a baby

Evacuations are not common in New Hampshire. When they occur, it is more likely to be a neighborhood being evacuated because of localized flooding than the kind of mass evacuation of wide areas required because of a hurricane that occurs so frequently in southern states.

Nevertheless, everyone should be familiar with evacuation procedures in case of need. Some of the shelters are pet friendly and arrangements can be made for their care. Be sure to bring a pet carrier, leash, food, and any medications for your pet.

### **Should I keep supplies in my car too?**

It is a good idea to keep some emergency equipment in your car at all times, but especially if you evacuate or before a disaster strikes. Keep the gas tank full above halfway because in an emergency you may not be able to get to a station or the pumps may not be working if there is no power. Other items to have in your car include:

- Bottled water
- Food (such as granola bars)
- First aid kit
- White distress flag
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Flares/light sticks
- Blanket or sleeping bag
- Emergency reflective blanket
- Jumper cables
- Spare tire and tire jack
- A liquid tire inflator
- Shovel
- Maps or GPS

If you have questions about emergency planning for individuals and families, contact the New Hampshire Homeland Security and Emergency Management at 800-852-3792 or [info@dos.nh.gov](mailto:info@dos.nh.gov). For more information, you can also visit [www.nh.gov/ReadyNH](http://www.nh.gov/ReadyNH), [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), or [www.cdc.gov/phpr](http://www.cdc.gov/phpr).