

Emergency Family Communication Plan

Introduction

When an emergency or catastrophic disaster strikes, usually an immediate response is required, with little or no time to think with clarity, and to act in an orderly way. It is necessary to have a well thought out communication plan that will ensure the safety of all, no matter what type of emergency occurs. Family members may be together in one place, or scattered in many locations. Every emergency plan should be able to answer the following questions:

1. How can other members of the family, (aka: group), be contacted? (phone, cell phone, or radio)
2. What information is needed about each person in the group,(phone numbers, addresses, routine activities, frequently visited places, health and dietary needs, and medications requirements).
3. If members of the group are in different places, where would be the best place to meet?
4. What supplies (food, water, clothing, medical, transportation, and other items), are required for survival?
5. Where are the supplies located? Are they readily accessible? Is there sufficient amount for the size of the group?
6. Who has overall responsibility for the safety of the group?

“ICE”

This web-page will address the first three questions regarding communication. We are a very mobile society, and the probability of the family or group being in one location, when a disaster occurs, is very low. Having basic information about each member, would be advantageous in contacting and gathering the group together. Have each member of the group fill out an “ICE”, (In Case of Emergency), card with their personal information. You may find the following format helpful.

Name:	DOB:	Phone Number:	Address:
Name of emergency contact:	Contacts relationship:	Phone of contact:	Address of contact:
Healthcare doctor:	Type of doctor:	Doctors phone:	Preferred Hospital
Health Insurance:	Insurance information: #	Medical Conditions: Allergies:	List of Medications: Name & Dosage
*Legal Guardian:	Relationship	Phone	Address

**In cases of young children, elderly adults or others with compromised memory or are challenged in basic communications, this section is essential.*

This card should be neon colored, (bright pink, blue, orange, green....) so as to stand out and draw attention. Each member should be encouraged to carry an “ICE” card on their person, in a backpack, briefcase, lunchbox, or in the car’s glove box. A plastic or water prof covering would ensure durability and readability in most situations. The reverse side may be used for additional names and phone numbers of other in the group.

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Most First Responders, (Rescuers, Firefighters and Law Enforcement Officers) advise that each group should have a predetermined location to meet at during an emergency situation. The biggest benefit for doing this is that a quick attendance can be taken and all persons can be accounted for.

“HELLO! CAN ANYBODY HEAR ME?”

During a disaster, communications can be severely affected. If the power grid is down, the telephone network and transmission towers will not be working, which leaves radios as the only reliable form of communication available. The first thing that comes to mind is the range or the distance at which the radio is effective. Generally the range of any radio is in direct relationship to the wattage or power which it generates to send out the signal, the more power, the farther the distance. The second factor in radio communication has to do with what is in the way between the transmitter and the receiver. If the terrain is flat, then the radio communication is better. However in a mountainous terrain, where there are many valleys and hills, radio communication is very poor at best. Unless you are broadcasting from the top of a mountain and have a clear unobstructed path to the receiver, or have a repeater on top of a mountain, again with no obstructions from the transmitter to the repeater, and from the repeater to the receiver, the communication is nil. One way to get around these obstacles is to bounce the radio signal off the ionosphere or a satellite orbiting around the earth. Let us compare some common types of radios.

Radio Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Walkie-Talkie	Light weight and portable Inexpensive No license required	Limited battery life and power Limited range (max 20 miles) Not good for mountainous terrain
CB (Citizen Band)	40 channels Runs on a 12 volt car battery Inexpensive No license required	Limited range Antennas are large (4' to 8')
Amateur Radio (Ham)	More powerful Range is world wide	Not very mobile License required Can be expensive Requires more power to run

During a disaster, the ability to communicate and obtain current up-to-date information is a high priority for long term survival. The Amateur Radio seems to be one of the best available means of communication. Most areas of the country have local Ham radio clubs that sponsor amateur radio classes, and will help you obtain your FCC License.