



# **Personal Safety & Security**

**A Comprehensive Handbook & Guide  
for Government & Corporate Managers and Leaders**



**Addresses All Hazards – Natural and Manmade**

**Written by  
Don Philpott**



**Government Training Inc.™**



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# Preparing for a Disaster

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## Introduction

### Preparing for and Coping with a Disaster

Every year, millions of people around the world lose their lives or have them seriously disrupted because of floods, tsunamis, wildfires, earthquakes, blizzards, hurricanes and so on. In today's troubled world, we face even greater threats from terrorism, civil unrest, explosions and the possibility of chemical, biological or even nuclear attack.

In the United States, the terrorist threat is not only from overseas groups; domestic terrorism has been with us for decades, and violence in the workplace and schools is a serious area of concern. In the last 25 years, according to the FBI, there have been 327 domestic terrorist incidents and suspected incidents – that averages out at more than one every month during this period. In the last eight years more than 40 students, teachers and custodians have been shot dead at incidents in schools. The threat is real and growing.

More than half the businesses in the United States do not have a crisis management plan – what to do in the event of an emergency – and many of those that do have one do not keep it up to date. Even fewer businesses and organizations have a physical security plan to protect their property and people who work in it.

In the United States there are more than 1,800 government-owned buildings and more than 6,200 leased locations throughout the 50 continental states and Washington D.C. They employ almost a million federal workers and host tens of millions of visitors.

There are 327,000 education buildings in the 50 states and D.C. There are 87,630 schools with 47-million children enrolled and employing around 3-million teachers.

There are 7,569 hospitals nationwide employing 2.4 million registered nurses, 1.8 million nursing aides, 819,000 physicians and surgeons and 350,000 therapists. On any given day there are 539,000 hospital inpatients plus visitors. There are 127,000 additional health care facilities nationwide offering inpatient/outpatient treatment.

There are 133,000 malls and strip malls, 534,000 large stores, 349,000 food-service facilities and 153,000 hotels and motels nationwide.

Throughout the U.S., there are more than one million office buildings, and 603,000 warehouses and storage facilities. There are more than 307,000 churches nationwide and more than 305,000 public assembly buildings. And, there are more than 110 million households.

Terrorism is not a new challenge, and it is not going to go away any time soon so we have a duty to our families, friends and loved ones to ensure that the places where we live, work, learn and play are secure and that the people using them are safe.

### **At Work, at School and at Play, how Safe are Your Family and You?**

The aim of this handbook is not to alarm you but to prepare and protect you. In the event of a disaster or terrorist incident, first responders may not be able to get to you for some time. Our goal is to give you the information you need so that you are aware of the various threats we face and how to recognize and respond to them. The handbook then spells out what you need to do to mitigate the effects and, in so doing, protect your family, friends and loved ones. This handbook is a tool that will help protect lives and ensure the continuation of our way of life, businesses, institutions and critical infrastructures in the event of a terrorist attack or other major emergency. As a result, it is a handbook that you cannot afford to be without.

STEP

1

2

3

4

5

STEP 1:

## Why Prepare for a Disaster?



Being prepared and understanding what to do can reduce fear, anxiety and losses that accompany disasters. Communities, families and individuals should know what to do in a fire and where to seek shelter from a tornado. They should be ready to evacuate their homes, take refuge in public shelters and know how to care for their basic medical needs.

People can also reduce the impact of disasters (flood proofing, elevating a home – or moving a home out of harm's way, securing items that could shake loose in an earthquake) and sometimes avoid the danger altogether.

You should know how to respond to severe weather or any disaster that could occur in your area – hurricanes, earthquakes, extreme cold or flooding. You should also be ready to be self-sufficient for at least three days. This may mean providing for your own shelter, first aid, food, water and sanitation.

While this guide focuses on the physical hazards of disasters, there are also the emotional effects of losing a loved one, a home, or treasured possessions. When under stress, people can become irritable, fatigued, hyperactive, angry and withdrawn. Children and older adults are especially vulnerable to post-disaster psychological effects.

Share this reference with your household. Include everyone in the planning process. Teach children how to respond to emergencies. Give them a sense of what to expect. Being prepared, understanding your risks and taking steps to reduce those risks can reduce the damages caused by hazards.

### Some Basics

Immediately after an emergency, essential services may be cut-off and local disaster relief and government responders may not be able to reach you right away. Even if they can reach you, knowing what to



do to protect yourself and your household is essential. One of the most important steps you can take in preparing for emergencies is to develop a household disaster plan.

- ▶ Learn about the natural disasters that could occur in your community from your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter. Learn whether hazardous materials are produced, stored or transported near your area. Learn about possible consequences of deliberate acts of terror. Ask how to prepare for each potential emergency and how to respond.
- ▶ Talk with employers and school officials about their emergency response plans.
- ▶ Talk with your household about potential emergencies and how to respond to each. Talk about what you would need to do in an evacuation.
- ▶ Plan how your household would stay in contact if you were separated. Identify two meeting places: the first should be near your home – in case of fire, perhaps a tree or a telephone pole; the second should be away from your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.
- ▶ Pick a friend or relative, who lives out of the area, for household members to call to say they are OK.
- ▶ Draw a floor plan of your home. Mark two escape routes from each room.
- ▶ Post emergency telephone numbers by telephones. Teach children how and when to call 911.
- ▶ Make sure everyone in your household knows how and when to shut off water, gas, and electricity at the main switches. Consult with your local utilities if you have questions.
- ▶ Take a first-aid and CPR class. Local American Red Cross chapters can provide information. Official certification by the American Red Cross provides “good Samaritan” law protection for those giving first aid.
- ▶ Reduce the economic impact of disaster on your property and your household’s health and financial well-being.
- ▶ Review property insurance policies before disaster strikes – make sure policies are current and be certain they meet your needs (type of coverage, amount of coverage, and hazards covered – flood, earthquake).
- ▶ Protect your household’s financial well-being before a disaster strikes – review life-insurance policies and consider saving money in an “emergency” savings account that could be used in any crisis. It is advisable to keep a small amount of cash or traveler’s checks at home in a safe place where you can quickly gain access in case of an evacuation.
- ▶ Be certain that health insurance policies are current and meet the needs of your household.
- ▶ Consider ways to help neighbors who may need special assistance, such as the elderly or the disabled.
- ▶ Make arrangements for pets. Pets are not usually allowed in public shelters. Service animals, for those who depend on them, are allowed.

## **Emergency Planning for People with Special Needs**

If you have a disability or special need, you may have to take additional steps to protect yourself and your household in an emergency. If you know of friends or neighbors with special needs, help them with these extra precautions. Examples include:

Hearing impaired may need to make special arrangements to receive a warning.

Mobility impaired may need assistance in getting to a shelter.

Households with a single, working parent may need help from others both in planning for disasters and during an emergency.

Non-English speaking people may need assistance planning for and responding to emergencies. Community and cultural groups may be able to help keep these populations informed.

People without vehicles may need to make arrangements for transportation.

People with special dietary needs should have an adequate emergency food supply.

### **Acquiring Special Assistance**

Find out about special assistance that may be available in your community. Register with the office of emergency services or fire department for assistance, so needed help can be provided quickly in an emergency.

Create a network of neighbors, relatives, friends and co-workers to aid you in an emergency. Discuss your needs and make sure they know how to operate necessary equipment.

Discuss your needs with your employer.

If you are mobility impaired and live or work in a high-rise building, have an escape chair.

If you live in an apartment building, ask the management to mark accessible exits clearly and to make arrangements to help you evacuate the building.

Keep extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, food for seeing-eye or hearing-ear dogs, or other items you might need. Also, keep a list of the type and serial numbers of medical devices you need.

Those who are not disabled should learn who in their neighborhood or building is disabled, so that they may assist them during emergencies.

If you are a caregiver for a person with special needs, make sure you have a plan to communicate if an emergency occurs.

## Disaster Supply Kits

You may need to survive on your own for three days or more. This means having your own water, food and emergency supplies. Try using backpacks or duffel bags to keep the supplies together.

Assembling the supplies you might need following a disaster is an important part of your disaster plan. You should prepare the following emergency supplies:

- ▶ Keep a disaster supply kit with essential food, water, and supplies for at least three days – this kit should be kept in a designated place and be ready to “grab and go” in case you have to leave your home quickly because of a disaster, such as a flash flood or major chemical emergency. Make sure all household members know where the kit is kept.
- ▶ Consider having additional supplies for use in shelters or home confinement for up to two weeks.
- ▶ You should also have a disaster supply kit at work. This should be in one container, ready to “grab and go” in case you have to evacuate the building.
- ▶ Keep a car kit of emergency supplies, including food and water, stored in your vehicle at all times. This kit would also include flares, jumper cables, and seasonal supplies.

The following checklists will help you assemble disaster supply kits that meet the needs of your household. The basic items that should be in a disaster supply kit are water, food, first-aid supplies, tools and emergency supplies, clothing and bedding, and specialty items. You will need to change the stored water and food supplies every six months, so be sure to write the date you store it on all containers. You should also re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your household changes. Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supply kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers such as an unused trashcan, camping backpack or duffel bag.

### Water: The Absolute Necessity

- ▶ Stocking water reserves should be a top priority. Drinking water in emergency situations should not be rationed. Therefore, it is critical to store adequate amounts of water for your household.
- ▶ Individual needs vary, depending on age, physical condition, activity, diet, and climate. A normally active person needs at least two quarts of water daily just for drinking. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people need more. Very hot temperatures can double the amount of water needed.
- ▶ Because you will also need water for sanitary purposes and, possibly, for cooking, you should store at least one gallon of water per person per day.
- ▶ Store water in thoroughly washed plastic, fiberglass or enamel-lined metal containers. Don't use containers that can break, such as glass bottles. Never use a container that has held toxic substances. Sound plastic containers, such as soft drinks bottles, are best. You can also purchase food-grade plastic buckets or drums.
- ▶ Containers for water should be rinsed with a diluted bleach solution (one part bleach to 10 parts water) before use. Previously used bottles or other containers may be contaminated with microbes or chemicals. Do not rely on untested devices for decontaminating water.

- ▶ If your water is treated commercially by a water utility, you do not need to treat water before storing it. Additional treatments of treated public water will not increase storage life.
- ▶ If you have a well or public water that has not been treated, follow the treatment instructions provided by your public health service or water provider.
- ▶ If you suspect that your well may be contaminated, contact your local or state health department or agriculture extension agent for specific advice.
- ▶ Seal your water containers tightly, label them and store them in a cool, dark place.
- ▶ It is important to change stored water every six months.

### Food: Preparing an Emergency Supply

- ▶ If activity is reduced, healthy people can survive on half their usual food intake for an extended period or without any food for many days. Food, unlike water, may be rationed safely, except for children and pregnant women.
- ▶ You don't need to go out and buy unfamiliar foods to prepare an emergency food supply. You can use the canned goods, dry mixes and other staples on your cupboard shelves. Canned goods do not require cooking, water or special preparation. Be sure to include a manual can opener.
- ▶ Keep canned goods in a dry place where the temperature is fairly cool. To protect boxed foods from pests and to extend their shelf life, store the food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers. Replace items in your food supply every six months. Throw out any canned good that becomes swollen, dented, or corroded. Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies. Date each food item with a marker. Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in front.
- ▶ Food items that you might consider including in your disaster supply kit include: ready-to-eat meats, fruits and vegetables; canned or boxed juices, milk and soup; high-energy foods like peanut butter, jelly, low-sodium crackers, granola bars and trail mix; vitamins; foods for infants or people on special diets; cookies and hard candy; instant coffee, cereals and powdered milk.

You may need to survive on your own after a disaster. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it may take days. Basic services, such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment and telephones, may be cut off for days, even a week or longer. Or you may have to evacuate at a moment's notice and take essentials with you. You probably won't have the opportunity to shop or search for the supplies you'll need. Your household will cope best by preparing for disaster before it strikes.

### First-Aid Supplies

Assemble a first-aid kit for your home and for each vehicle. The basics for your first aid kit should include:

- First-aid manual
- Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes

- Assorted sizes of safety pins
- Cleansing agents (isopropyl alcohol, hydrogen peroxide)/soap/germicide
- Antibiotic ointment
- Latex gloves (2 pairs)
- Petroleum jelly
- 2-inch and 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6 each size)
- Triangular bandages (3)
- 2-inch and 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls each)
- Cotton balls
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Needle
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Thermometer
- Tongue depressor blades (2)
- Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant
- Sunscreen

It may be difficult to obtain prescription medications during a disaster because stores may be closed or supplies may be limited. Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications. Be sure they are stored to meet instructions on the label and be mindful of expiration dates – be sure to keep your stored medication up to date. Have an extra pair of prescription glasses or contact lens.

Have the following nonprescription drugs in your disaster supply kit:

- Aspirin and non-aspirin pain reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid (for stomach upset)
- Syrup of ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the poison control center)
- Laxatives
- Vitamins