



# Disaster readiness - response - recovery

---

*For immediate release*

## Planning before a disaster can help family members cope

Thought and planning before a disaster usually help family members react wisely to the emergency, according to North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

Families that work together to prepare for an emergency will cope better than those who don't take precautions. Parents should consider how they may react in a disaster, how their children may react and how the crisis could affect each family member's emotional and physical well-being.

Plan in advance for how to deal with a crisis situation. Don't be reluctant to talk with your family about the possibility of a hurricane, fire, tornado or flood.

Families should prepare an emergency plan and discuss and practice it before a disaster strikes. Parents should work to help children or other dependents understand the plan. This will allow each family member to think through a potential crisis situation without the tension of a real emergency.

Children should be given exact steps to follow during an emergency. Talking, practicing and actively preparing with other family members will help children understand strange occurrences like a hurricane. Parents should take the following steps to prepare children:

- Help children practice dialing the telephone operator, fire station and ambulance. (Don't actually make the call; keep the phone on the hook.)
- Read children news stories about disasters and emergencies, then talk about how your family would handle a similar situation. This gives children time to think through and plan actions for real life crises.
- Play "Let's Pretend" with preschoolers. Discuss a situation that might arise in your area and then ask, "What would you do?"
- Involve children in preparing for and carrying out emergency plans. All children need and want to carry out important roles. This helps them feel a part of the family and prepares them to cope with later situations.
- Provide basic supplies for a variety of possible situations. Stock a box with games, books, and hobby materials for sitting out emergencies. Make sure emergency supplies of food, diapers, and drinks are available.

Emergency procedures should also be reviewed with older or disabled relatives. If special transportation or assistance is necessary in an emergency, it should be arranged in advance. If a relative lives in a nursing home, discuss evacuation procedures with the staff and make needed plans.

For more information, contact your county Cooperative Extension center or visit the Web site <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/disaster>.

-30-