



DISASTER SAFETY GUIDES

The following are some tips to help you prepare your home and family for natural disasters.

Tornado

What to do if you are in your home during a Tornado:

Go to the lowest level of the home, an inner hallway, or smaller inner room without windows, such as a closet or bathroom.

Get away from windows and go to the center of the room. Avoid corners, because they tend to attract debris.

Get under a sturdy piece of furniture, such as a workbench or heavy table.

If you are in a mobile home:

Evacuate the mobile home, even if it is equipped with tie-downs. Take shelter in a building with a strong foundation, or if one is not available, lie in a ditch or low-lying area a safe distance away from the mobile home. Tornadoes cannot change elevation quickly enough to pick someone up out of a ditch, especially a deep ditch or culvert.

If you are at work or school:

Go to the basement or to an inside hallway at the lowest level of the building.

Avoid places with wide-span roofs, such as auditoriums, cafeterias, large hallways or shopping malls.

Use your arms to protect your head and neck.

If outdoors:

If possible, get inside a sturdy building with a concrete foundation.

If shelter is not available, or there is no time to get indoors, lie in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a strong building.

Be aware of the potential for flooding.

If you are in a vehicle:

Never try to out drive a tornado in your vehicle. Tornadoes can change direction very quickly and can lift a vehicle and toss it in the air.

Get out of the vehicle and take shelter in a nearby building.

If there is no time to get indoors, get out of the vehicle and lie in a ditch or low-lying area away from the vehicle.

Thunderstorms and Lightning

Use your battery-operated NOAA Weather Radio for updates from local officials.

Avoid contact with corded phones and devices including those plugged into electric for recharging. Cordless and wireless phones not connected to wall outlets are OK to use.

Avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords. Unplug appliances and other electrical items such as computers and turn off air conditioners. Power surges from lightning can cause serious damage.

Avoid contact with plumbing. Do not wash your hands, do not take a shower, do not wash dishes, and do not do laundry. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity.

Stay away from windows and doors, and stay off porches.

Do not lie on concrete floors and do not lean against concrete walls.

Avoid natural lightning rods such as a tall, isolated tree in an open area.

Avoid hilltops, open fields, the beach or a boat on the water.

Take shelter in a sturdy building. Avoid isolated sheds or other small structures in open areas.

Avoid contact with anything metal—tractors, farm equipment, motorcycles, golf carts, golf clubs, and bicycles.

If you are driving, try to safely exit the roadway and park. Stay in the vehicle and turn on the emergency flashers until the heavy rain ends. Avoid touching metal or other surfaces that conduct electricity in and outside the vehicle

Winter Weather

Winter Storm Watch:

A winter storm is possible in your area. Tune in to your NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or television for more information.

Winter Storm Warning:

A winter storm is occurring or will soon occur in your area.

Freezing Rain:

Rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees and power lines.

Sleet:

Rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes moisture on roads to freeze and become slippery.

Frost/Freeze Warning:

Below freezing temperatures are expected.

Dress for the Weather:

Wear several layers of loose fitting, lightweight and warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent.

Wear mittens, which are warmer than gloves.

Wear a hat.

Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.

Prepare your home and family:

Prepare for possible isolation in your home by having sufficient heating fuel; regular fuel sources may be cut off. For example, store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.

Winterize your home to extend the life of your fuel supply by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic.

Winterize your house, barn, shed or any other structure that may provide shelter for your family, neighbors, livestock or equipment. Clear rain gutters, repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.

Insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip slightly during cold weather to avoid freezing.

Keep fire extinguishers on hand, and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. House fires pose an additional risk, as more people turn to alternate heating sources without taking the necessary safety precautions.

Learn how to shut off water valves, in the case of a pipe bursting.

Know ahead of time what you should do to help elderly or disabled friends, neighbors or employees.

Prepare your car:

Antifreeze levels: ensure they are sufficient to avoid freezing.

Battery and ignition system: should be in top condition and battery terminals should be clean.

Brakes: check for wear and fluid levels.

Heater and defroster: ensure they are working properly.

Lights and flashing hazard lights: ensure they are working properly.

Gas tank: Maintain at least a half tank of gas during the winter season.

Extreme Summer Weather

Protect Yourself:

Stay indoors as much as possible and limit exposure to the sun.

Stay on the lowest floor out of the sunshine if air conditioning is not available.

Consider spending the warmest part of the day in public buildings such as libraries, schools, movie theaters, shopping malls and other community facilities.

Drink plenty of water. Persons who have epilepsy or heart, kidney or liver disease; are on fluid-restricted diets; or have a problem with fluid retention should consult a doctor before increasing liquid intake.

Limit intake of alcoholic beverages.

Dress in loose-fitting, lightweight and light-colored clothes that cover as much skin as possible.

Protect face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat.

Check on family, friends and neighbors who do not have air conditioning and who spend much of their time alone.

Never leave children or pets alone in closed vehicles.

Avoid strenuous work during the warmest part of the day. Use a buddy system when working in extreme heat and take frequent breaks.

SIGNS OF HEAT EXHAUSTION; IF SOMEONE HAS SYMPTOMS:

Heavy sweating but skin may be cool, pale or flushed.

Weak pulse.

Normal body temperature is possible, but temperature will likely rise.

Fainting or dizziness, nausea, vomiting, exhaustion and headaches are possible.

IF SOMEONE HAS SYMPTOMS OF HEAT EXHAUSTION:

Move the victim to a cool area.

Increase cool water intake.

Place cool, wet towel on neck and under arms.

Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen.

SIGNS OF HEAT STROKE; CALL 9-1-1 IF SOMEONE HAS THESE SYMPTOMS:

High body temperature (105+).

Hot, red, dry skin.

Rapid, weak pulse and rapid, shallow breathing.

Victim will probably not sweat unless victim was sweating from recent strenuous activity.

Possible unconsciousness

Flooding

Flooding can happen anywhere, anytime. Mississippi ranks eighth in the nation for the number of repetitive loss-structures. The state also has more than 5 million acres classified as floodplain, which is the fifth largest in the nation.

Floods can be slow or fast-rising but generally develop during a period of days. Taking precautions now, such as engaging in floodplain management activities, constructing barriers and purchasing flood insurance will help reduce the amount of structural damage to your home and property should a flood occur.

Take these steps now before a flood occurs:

Purchase flood insurance. You can obtain flood insurance through your insurance company.

Flood insurance is guaranteed through the National Flood Insurance Program.

Take photographs and/or videos of all your important possessions. If a flood damages your home, these items will help you file your flood insurance claim. Take these photos or videos with you if you evacuate.

Store important documents and irreplaceable personal objects where they won't be damaged. If a major flood is expected, consider putting these items in a storage facility.

Plan and practice a flood evacuation route with your family.

Have an out-of-state relative or friend serve as your family contact person, and make sure everyone in your family knows the contact person's name, address, and phone number.

Buy and install a sump pump with backup power.

Have an electrician raise electric components such as sockets, switches and circuit breakers at least 12 inches above your home's projected flood elevation

Install backflow valves or plug for your drains, toilets and sewer connections.

Anchor fuel tanks so they will not be torn free by floodwaters.

Take these steps if floodwaters are rising:

Fill sinks, bathtubs, and jugs with clean water in case water becomes contaminated.

Listen to a battery-operated radio for the latest storm information.

If local authorities instruct you to turn off all utilities and close your main gas valve, do so immediately.

If told to evacuate your home, do so immediately.

If water starts to rise inside your house before you evacuate, retreat to the second floor, attic or your roof if necessary.

If you come in contact with floodwater, wash your hands with soap and disinfected water.

Floodwater may carry raw sewage, chemical waste, and other infectious substances.

Avoid walking through floodwater. As little as six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet.

Never drive through a flood area or rising water.

Avoid downed power lines because electric currents pass easily through water.

Look out for animals, especially snakes. Animals lose their homes in floods too.

Earthquake

The number of earthquakes known to have occurred within Mississippi's boundaries is small, but the state has been affected by numerous shocks in neighboring states. The New Madrid Seismic Zone Earthquake of 1811 and 1812 was felt in Mississippi as far south as the Gulf Coast and caused the banks of the Mississippi River to cave in as far south as Vicksburg.

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency continues to focus on programs essential to earthquake hazard reduction. The program is broad in scope and includes public awareness and education, training, preparedness, response and recovery planning and mitigation initiatives. Federal, state and local partnerships play important roles in accomplishing objectives of the program.

One of the main goals of MEMA's Earthquake Program is to build the best possible working relationship with the emergency management directors of the 18 counties that may be affected by a NMSZ event.

Stay as safe as possible during an earthquake. Be aware that some earthquakes are actually foreshocks and a larger earthquake might occur. Minimize your movements to a few steps to a nearby safe place and stay indoors until the shaking has stopped and you are sure exiting is safe.

The following are some tips for what to do during an earthquake:

If indoors:

DROP to the ground; take COVER under a sturdy table or other piece of furniture; and HOLD ON until the shaking stops. If there isn't a table or desk near you, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch in an inside corner of the building.

Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls and anything that could fall, such as lighting fixtures or furniture.

Stay in bed if you are there when the earthquake strikes. Hold on and protect your head with a pillow, unless you are under a heavy light fixture that could fall. In that case, move to the nearest safe place.

Use a doorway for shelter only if it is in close proximity to you and if you know it is a strongly supported doorway.

Stay inside until shaking stops and it is safe to go outside. Research has shown that most injuries occur when people inside buildings attempt to move to a different location inside the building or try to leave.

Be aware that the electricity may go out or the sprinkler systems or fire alarms may turn on. DO NOT use the elevators.

If outdoors:

Stay outdoors.

Move away from buildings, streetlights and utility wires.

Once in the open, stay there until the shaking stops. The greatest danger exists directly outside buildings, at exits and alongside exterior walls. Many of the fatalities from the 1933 Long Beach earthquake occurred when people ran outside of buildings only to be killed by falling debris from collapsing walls. Ground movement during an earthquake is seldom the direct cause of death or injury. Most earthquake-related injuries and deaths result from collapsing walls, flying glass and falling objects.

If in a vehicle:

Stop as quickly as safety permits and stay inside the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses and utility wires.

Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges or ramps that might have been damaged by the earthquake.

If trapped under debris:

Do not light a match or lighter.

Do not move around or kick up dust.

Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or clothing.

Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can locate you. Use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

Terrorist Attack

Remain calm and be patient.

Follow the advice of local emergency officials.

Listen to your radio or television for news and instructions.

If the event occurs near you, check for injuries. Give first aid and get help for seriously injured people.

If the event occurs near your home while you are there, check for damage using a flashlight. Do not light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches. Check for fires, fire hazards and other household hazards. Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly.

Shut off any other damaged utilities.

Confine or secure your pets.

Call your family contact—do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.

Check on your neighbors, especially those who are elderly or disabled.

Evacuation During a Terror Attack

If local authorities ask you to leave your home, they have a good reason to make this request, and you should heed the advice immediately. Listen to your radio or television and follow the instructions of local emergency officials and keep these simple tips in mind:

Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and sturdy shoes so you can be protected as much as possible.

Take your disaster supplies kit.

Take your pets with you; do not leave them behind. Because pets are not permitted in public shelters, follow your plan to go to a relative's or friend's home, or find a "pet-friendly" hotel.

Lock your home.

Use travel routes specified by local authorities—don't use shortcuts because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous.

Stay away from downed power lines.

Listen to Your Local Authorities

Your local authorities will provide you with the most accurate information specific to an event in your area. Staying tuned to local radio and television, and following their instructions is your safest choice.

If you're sure you have time:

Call your family contact to tell them where you are going and when you expect to arrive.

Shut off water and electricity before leaving, if instructed to do so. Leave natural gas service ON unless local officials advise you otherwise. You may need gas for heating and cooking, and only a professional can restore gas service in your home once it's been turned off. In a disaster situation it could take weeks for a professional to respond.

If you are advised by local officials to "shelter in place," what they mean is for you to remain inside your home or office and protect yourself there. Close and lock all windows and exterior

doors. Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Close the fireplace damper. Get your disaster supplies kit, and make sure the radio is working. Go to an interior room without windows that's above ground level. In the case of a chemical threat, an above-ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air, and may seep into basements even if the windows are closed. Using duct tape, seal all cracks around the door and any vents into the room. Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

Additional Positive Steps You Can Take

Raw, unedited footage of terrorism events and people's reaction to those events can be very upsetting, especially to children. We do not recommend that children watch television news reports about such events, especially if the news reports show images over and over again about the same incident. Young children do not realize that it is repeated video footage, and think the event is happening again and again. Adults may also need to give themselves a break from watching disturbing footage. However, listening to local radio and television reports will provide you with the most accurate information from responsible governmental authorities on what's happening and what actions you will need to take. So you may want to make some arrangements to take turns listening to the news with other adult members of your household