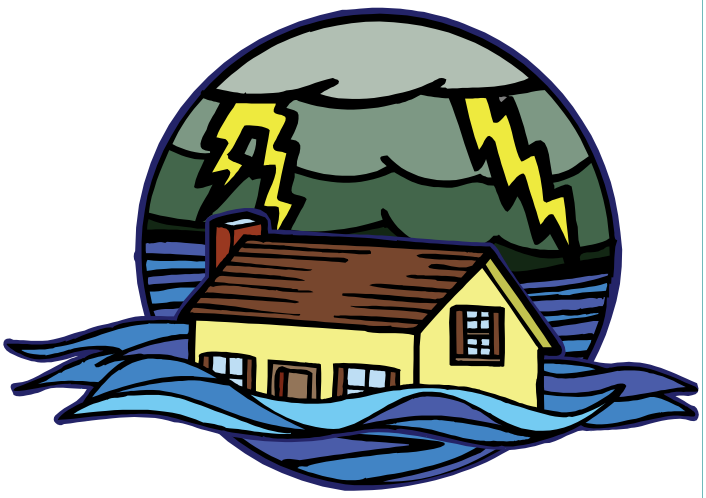
South Dakota Office of Emergency Management

Severe Weather Preparedness Guide

Are You Prepared for a Disaster?

Disasters can strike quickly and without warning. You could be anywhere - at work, at school, or in a car. What would you do if basic services - water, gas, electricity or telephones were cut off? Families can cope with disasters by preparing in advance and working together as a team. Knowing what to do is your best defense against the burden of a disaster. Being prepared and understanding what to do can reduce fear, anxiety, and losses that accompany disasters. You should know how to respond to severe weather or any disaster that could occur in your area. Each disaster has lasting effects - people are seriously injured, some are killed, and property damage runs into the billions of dollars.



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Internet Resources:

www.oem.sd.gov

www.bReady.sd.gov

www.redcross.org

www.disasterassistance.gov

www.ready.gov

www.sddot.com/travelers

www.ed.gov/emergencyplan

www.weather.gov

Watch - A National Weather Service (NWS) product indicating that conditions are favorable for the development of a particular severe weather event. A watch is normally issued for several hours and indicates a need for planning, preparation and an increased awareness of changing weather conditions.

Warning - A product issued by NWS local offices indicating that a particular weather hazard is either imminent or occurring. A warning indicates the need to take action to protect life.

For an extensive list of terms, visit http://www.erh.noaa.gov/er/box/glossary.htm

Be Prepared: What you should do

1. Get a kit of emergency supplies
2. Be informed about what might happen
3. Make a plan

www.bReady.sd.gov

bReady for Anything

bReady Anywhere

bReady Kids

bReady Kit

bReady Plan

Emergency Supply Kit

Emergency supply kits should be individually tailored to meet the basic survival needs of your family for three days to a week. Most families prefer to store their emergency supplies in one location that is relatively safe, yet easily accessible if evacuation is required. Items may be stored in a 32-gallon trash can, suitcase, duffle bag, footlocker or individual pack.

Emergency Needs

- Battery powered radio
- Water (1 gallon per person/per day)
- First aid kit and manual
- Sleeping bags and blankets
- Utility knife
- Emergency candles
- Manual can opener
- "Special needs" items for family members (infant formula, eye glasses, medications, etc.)
- Waterproof/windproof matches
- Non-perishable foods*
- Flashlight
- Extra clothing
- Whistle

Sanitation Kit

- Plastic bucket with tightly fitted lid
- Plastic trash bags and ties
- Disinfectant
- Improvised toilet seat
- Paper cups and plates
- Plastic utensils
- Personal toiletries
- Baby supplies
- Toilet paper
- Aluminum foil
- Paper towels
- Personal hygienic needs
- Soap

Other Emergency Needs

- Pen and paper
- Money
- Work gloves
- Basic tools
- Toys, books, puzzles, games
- Extra house keys and car keys
- List of contact names and phone numbers
- Hardwired phone (not cordless)

Copies of All Legal Papers

- Marriage license
- House mortgage
- Property ownership
- Automotive ownership
- Wills
- Jewelry appraisals
- Drivers licenses
- Insurance policies
- Bank accounts

**Suggested non-perishable food items: ready-to-eat goods in unbreakable containers, canned meats, juice, fruits & vegetables, powdered milk, infant care foods, crackers, peanut butter, freeze -dried, and dehydrated goods.*

Floods

Before a Flood

- Avoid building in a floodplain unless you elevate and reinforce your home. (Local floodplain permit needed)
- Elevate the furnace, water heater, and electric panel if susceptible to flooding.
- Install "check valves" in sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Construct barriers (levees, beams, floodwalls) to stop floodwater from entering the building.
- Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage.
- Have drain plugs available for basement shower drains and toilets.

During a flood

- Listen to the radio or television for information
- Be aware that flash floods can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons, and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without such typical warnings as rain clouds or heavy rain.

If you must prepare to evacuate, you should do the following:

- Secure your home. If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture. Move essential items to an upper floor.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so by emergency officials. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

If you have to leave your home, remember these evacuations tips:

- Do not walk through moving water. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be quickly washed away.

After a Flood

- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage. Water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Avoid moving water.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- Stay away from and report downed power lines to the power company.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it's safe.
- Clean and disinfect everything that became wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and chemicals.
- Call a professional to do a proper cleaning and drying of your home to prevent harmful mold growth.

Thunderstorms/Lightning

Before Thunderstorms

- Remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage.
- Remember the 30/30 lightning safety rule: Go indoors if after seeing lightning you cannot count to 30 seconds before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

During a Thunderstorm

- If you are in a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees.
- If you are in an open area, go to a low place such as a ravine or valley. Be alert for flash floods.
- If you are in open water, get to land and find shelter immediately.
- If you are anywhere you feel your hair stand on its end (which indicates lightning is about to strike), squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Place your hands over your ears and your head between your knees. Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact.

Tornadoes

Provided by National Geographic Photographer Carsten Peter

- Outdoors: Seek shelter in a sturdy building. If none are nearby, lie flat face-down on low ground. Try to be as far away from trees and cars as possible, protecting the back of your head with your arms.
- Mobile Home: Get out! Most tornadoes can destroy even tied-down mobile homes. You should try to find an underground shelter or permanent sturdy building.
- Permanent Building: Avoid windows and being beneath areas under heavy objects like pianos and refigerators. Try to get in a basement or under sturdy protection like a table or bench.

Tornado Myth vs. Fact

Myth: The low pressure with a tornado causes buildings to "explode" as the tornado passes overhead.
Fact: Violent winds and debris slamming into buildings cause most structural damage.

Myth: Windows should be opened before a tornado approaches to equalize pressure and minimize damage.
Fact: Opening windows allows damaging winds to enter the structure. Leave the windows alone; instead, immediately go to a safe area.

Tornado safety information found at: http://www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/safety.html

Extreme Heat

People suffer heat-related illness when their bodies are unable to compensate and properly cool themselves.

The body normally cools by sweating, but under some conditions, sweating isn't enough. In such cases, a person's body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs. Several factors affect the body's ability to cool itself during extremely hot weather. When the humidity is high, sweat will not evaporate as quickly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly.

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Replace salt and minerals: sweating removes salt and minerals from the body.
- Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen. Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose fitting clothing.
- Pace yourself and don't over-exert
- Stay cool indoors.
- Do not leave children or pets in vehicles.

Wildfires

Wildfires often begin unnoticed. They spread quickly, igniting brush, trees, and homes. Reduce your risk by preparing now - before a wildfire strikes. Meet with your family to decide what to do and where to go if wildfires threaten your area. People unintentionally start most wildfires...find out how you can promote and practice wildfire safety.

- Contact your local fire department or forestry office for information on fire laws.
- Make sure that fire vehicles can get to your home. Clearly mark all driveway entrances and display your name and address.
- Report hazardous conditions that could cause a wildfire.
- Post fire emergency telephone numbers.
- Plan several escape routes away from your home - both by car and by foot.
- Talk to your neighbors about wildfire safety. Plan how the neighborhood could work together after a wildfire.
- Consider how you could help those with special needs such as an elderly or disabled neighbor.
- Make plans to take care of children who may be on their own if parents can't get home.
- If you are warned that a wildfire is threatening your area, listen to your battery-operated radio for reports and evacuation information. Follow the instructions of local officials.
- Confine pets to one room. Make plans to care for your pets in case you must evacuate.
- Arrange temporary housing with a friend or relative.

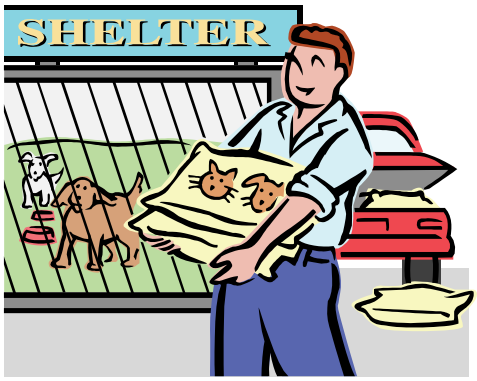
Animals in Disasters

Disasters disrupt and affect everything in its path, including pets, livestock, and wildlife.

Pets in Disaster

Pets need to be included in your household disaster plan since they depend on you for their safety and well being. It's important to consider and prepare for your pets before a disaster strikes. Consider the following:

- If you must evacuate, do not leave pets behind - there is a chance they may not survive or get lost before you return.
- With the exception of service animals, pets are not typically permitted in emergency shelters.
- Find out before a disaster which local hotels and motels allow pets and where pet boarding facilities are located. Be sure to include some outside your local area.
- Only some animal shelters will provide care for pets during emergency and disaster situations.
- Be sure you have a secure pet carrier or leash for your pet - they may need to be restrained during tense emergency situations.
- Assemble a disaster kit for your pet which includes food, water, medications, veterinary records, litter box, food dishes, and other supplies that may not be available at a later time, and an information sheet with pet's name, medical history, and behavior problems.
- All animals should have some form of identification.



Motorist Safety Tips

Disaster driving is one part preparedness, one part common sense, and one part learning from experience - your own, and others. After almost every disaster, search and rescue teams find victims who might have survived if they had known whether to stay or abandon their cars. The following are safety tips for drivers in different emergencies. This information can easily be kept in the glove compartment of your car. In any situation, the most important rule to follow is to not panic.

Flood: Get out of the Car

Never attempt to drive through water on a road. Water can be deeper than it appears and water levels can rise very quickly. Most cars will float dangerously for at least a short while. A car can be buoyed by floodwaters and then swept downstream during a flood. Floodwaters also can erode roadways, and a missing section of road - even a missing bridge - will not be visible with water running over the area. Wade through floodwaters only if the water is not flowing rapidly and only in water no higher than the knees. If a car stalls in floodwater, get out quickly and move to higher ground. The floodwaters may still be rising, and the car could be swept away at any moment.

Tornado: Get out of the Car

A car is the least safe place to be during a tornado. When a warning is issued, do not try to leave the area by car. If you are in a car, leave it and find shelter in a building. If a tornado approaches and there are no safe structures nearby, lie flat in a ditch or other ground depression with your arms over your head.

Summer Heat: Get out of a Parked Car

During hot weather, heat build-up in a closed or nearly closed car can occur quickly and intensely. Children and pets can die from heat stroke in a matter of minutes when left in a closed car. **Never leave a person or animal in a parked car during periods of high summer heat.**