

## **DIAL 1640 AM FOR EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

By tuning radios to the county's Resident Information Station at 1640 on the AM dial, you can receive continuous information on the status of an emergency and instructions on any protective measures that may need to be taken to ensure the safety of the public.

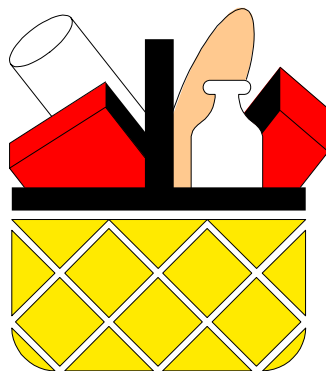
You can also call the **Rockland County Citizens Information System** at (845) 364-8990 for verbal and printed emergency preparedness information.

**The Rockland County Office of Fire and Emergency Services would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the North Virginia Regional Commission for their valuable contributions to this document.**

## **Preparing for an Emergency**

Emergency events can occur quickly and without warning. Planning for any emergency requires considering all likely scenarios. If you are able to stay at home, electricity, water, heat, air conditioning, telephone service and transportation could be disrupted or lost for a considerable amount of time. Most emergency management planners suggest having enough food, water and other essentials on hand to last your family for three to five days for weather-related events, for example. In other types of emergencies, you may have to evacuate your home or community. In any case, it is important to develop a household disaster plan that includes:

- An emergency communications plan. Choose an out-of-town person to be your contact point for family members to call if you are separated. Make sure everyone has the number.
- At least two emergency meeting places. Pick one right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, such as fire. Pick at least one other place outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home.
- A disaster supplies kit.
- Information about school and workplace emergency plans.



## **Your Emergency Preparedness Kit**

The basic items that should be stored in your home are water, food, first-aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools, emergency supplies and specialty items. Keep the items that you would most likely need at home in one easy-to-carry container such as a trashcan, camping backpack or duffel bag. Store it in a convenient place, and put a smaller version in your car. Keep items in airtight plastic bags. Remember to change the stored water and rotate the food supplies every six months (place dates on containers). Check the supplies and re-think your needs every year. Consult your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications, and maintain a list of your prescription needs.

### **Water**

Purchase bottled water, or store water in plastic containers. Avoid containers that will decompose or break, such as glass bottles. Plan for one gallon of water per person per day. Water should be stored in a cool, dark place with the date labeled on the container. Having some water purification tablets on hand could be useful in the event of an extended water service outage.

### **Food**

Store a three- to five-day supply of nonperishable food per person. Foods should require no refrigeration, preparation, or cooking, and little or not water. Examples include: ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables; canned or boxed juices, milk and soup; condiments such as sugar, salt and pepper; high-energy food like peanut butter, jelly, low-sodium crackers, granola bars and trail mix; vitamins, foods for infants or persons on special diets; cookies; hard candy; instant coffee and sweetened cereals. Bulk food items

Such as wheat, powdered milk, corn and soybeans can be stored for long periods of time.

### First-Aid Kit

Assemble a first-aid kit for your home and each vehicle. Items should include sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes, gauze pads, hypoallergenic adhesive tape, triangular bandages, sterile gauze roll bandages, Ace bandages, scissors, tweezers, needle, moistened towelettes, antiseptic, thermometer, tongue depressors, tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant, safety pins, cleansing soap, latex gloves and sunscreen. Other items include aspirin or other pain medication, anti-diarrhea medication, Syrup of Ipecac, activated charcoal (in case of poisoning) and laxatives.

### Tools and Supplies

Keep the following items handy for all-around use: battery-powered radio, flashlight, extra batteries or assorted sizes (check shelf life before purchasing), duct tape, aluminum foil, rope, bow saw, mess kits or paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, cash (include change) and/or traveler's checks, non-electric can opener and utility knife, small ABC fire extinguisher, tube tent, pliers, adjustable wrench, compass, waterproof matches, plastic storage containers, signal flares, paper and pencil, needles and thread, medicine dropper, whistle, plastic sheeting and local map. For sanitation, pack toilet paper, soap and liquid detergent, feminine supplies, plastic garbage bags with ties, a plastic bucket and lid, disinfectant and household chlorine bleach.

### Clothing and Bedding

Assemble one or two complete changes of clothing per person, sturdy shoes or work boots, rain gear, blankets or sleeping bags, hat and gloves, thermal underwear and sunglasses.

### Specialty Items

**Babies** – formula, diapers, bottles, powdered milk and medication.

**Adults** – medications, prescriptions, denture needs, eyeglasses and/or contact lenses and related supplies, personal hygiene items.

**Entertainment** – games, books and several quiet toys for children.

**Important Family Documents** – wills, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, passports, stocks and bonds, immunization records, important phone numbers, credit card accounts, Social Security cards and other personal family records.

### Emergency Planning for Pets

Emergency planning is for all members of the family, including pets. With the exception of service animals, most shelters do not accept pets. Prepare a list of kennels, friends or family members who may be able to care for your pet in an emergency. If you plan to place your pet in a kennel, make sure that the facility meets all requirements for long-term care and has an adequate disaster plan itself. If your family must relocate to a shelter or other site and there is no place for your pet to go, as a last resort, confine your pet to a specific room in the house and provide plenty of food and water to sustain the animal while you are away.

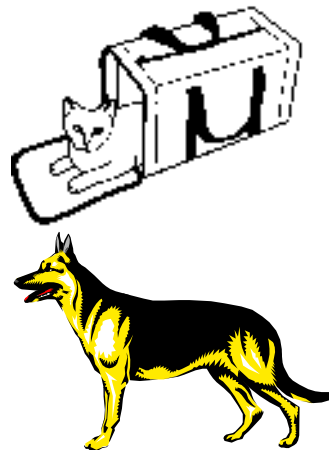
Put together a basic disaster kit for your pets in case you must leave your residence quickly.

Recommended items include:

- An airline-approved carrier for each dog, cat or other pets, with ID, photo vaccination records, registrations, special needs list, sufficient medicines and a muzzle/leash.

### Emergency Kit Checklist

- π Water
- π Non-perishable food
- π First aid supplies
- π Medications
- π Battery-powered radio
- π Flashlight
- π Duct tape
- π Cash/Traveler's Checks
- π Clothing
- π Bedding
- π Tools
- π Toiletry items
- π Special needs items
- π Important documents



- An extra supply of pet food (for dogs, a lower protein dog formula will produce less stool, a benefit when kept indoors).
- Plenty of clean water.
- Bowls (disposable containers if you must leave your residence), manual can opener, kitchen trash bags, bleach (disinfectant and water purification), blankets, towels, paper towels and other waste disposal supplies.

For more information on emergency preparedness for pets, call the Humane Society of the United States at 202-452-1100 or visit their Web site at [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org).

### **Making Financial Preparations**

Whether you own your home or rent, there are many things you can do to protect your home and possessions. You can increase your safety and reduce your insurance costs by:

- Installing safety equipment such as smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors to alert you to potentially deadly conditions.
- Securing large or heavy items that could fall and cause damage during storms.
- Covering windows, turning off utilities, or moving possessions to a safer location if you have adequate warning of something like a hurricane or flood.
- Having your house inspected by a building inspector or architect to find out what structural improvements could prevent or reduce major damage from disasters.

- Conducting an inventory of your household possessions to help you prove the value of what you own for insurance purposes if those possessions are damaged or destroyed and to provide documentation for tax deductions you claim for your losses. Make a visual or written record of your possessions. Include photographs of cars, boats, and recreational vehicles. Get professional appraisals of jewelry, collectibles, artwork, or other items that are difficult to value. Update the appraisals every two to three years.
- Keeping the originals of all important financial and family documents, such as birth and marriage certificates, wills, deeds, tax returns, insurance policies, and stock and bond certificates in a safe place. Store copies elsewhere. You'll need accessible records for tax and insurance purposes.
- Photographing the exterior of your home. Include the landscaping – that big tree in the front yard may not be insurable, but it does increase the value of your property for tax purposes.
- Making copies of receipts and cancelled checks for more valuable items.
- Updating your inventory list annually and putting a copy in a safe place.
- Buying insurance.

Even with adequate time to prepare for a disaster, you still may suffer significant, unavoidable damage to your property. That's when insurance for renters or homeowners can be a big help. Yet, many people affected by recent disasters have been underinsured – or worse – not insured at all. Homeowner's insurance doesn't cover floods and some other major disasters. Make sure you buy the insurance you may need to protect against the perils you may face.

## Emergency Planning for Business

Businesses are just as vulnerable to emergency situations as individuals. Business owners should develop emergency plans for the sake of their employees as well as the survival of their businesses. Emergency planning includes:

- Maintaining a list of emergency numbers of employees so their families can be contacted if necessary.
- Having a plan in place to evacuate staff and customers quickly and safely.
- Practicing the plan with staff.
- Backing up computer data regularly and storing it offsite.
- Purchasing ample insurance coverage to minimize losses.
- Identifying crucial business operations and developing plans to ensure their continuation in the event of an emergency.

Employees need to know what to do in an emergency. The time to think about what you need to do in the event of a disruption to your business is before you face a crisis. Your employees depend on you now for direction and leadership. They will depend on you even more should there be an emergency situation.

## Handling Mail Safely

Each day the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) handles 600 million pieces of mail. The USPS urges people to report suspicious letters or packages such as mail that:

- Has excessive postage, no postage, or non-canceled postage.
- Has no return address or a fictitious return address.
- Has an improper spelling of addressee names, titles, or locations.

- Looks lumpy or has a lopsided appearance.
- Is sealed with excessive amounts of tape.
- Is unexpected and is from a foreign country.
- Has a postmark showing a different location than the return address.
- Displays distorted handwriting or cut-and-paste lettering.

If you receive a suspicious letter or package:

- Do not open it.
- Do not shake, bump or sniff it.
- Cover it or place it in a plastic bag.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Call the police non-emergency number.

The police are interested in suspicious mail that displays any of these signs. If you have opened the letter or package and detected an unknown substance, such as white powder, cover it, wash your hands and call 911. Do not attempt to move the suspicious item. Do not shake it, sniff it or taste the substance.

In most cases the police will be dispatched for a report of an unopened suspicious letter or package and will advise you what to do with it after investigating it. If the letter or package does not meet specific criteria, they may simply advise you to dispose of the suspicious letter or package if you are uncomfortable opening it.

The fire department will respond to reports of suspicious substances for evaluation and proper disposal. When in doubt, however, call the police non-emergency number or 911.



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## **Coping with Emergencies**

People react to emergencies in different ways. Typical reactions may include:

- **Anger**
- **Restless sleep**
- **Nightmares**
- **Emotional numbness**
- **Need to talk**
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Weight loss or gain**
- **Headaches**
- **Mood swings**

### **Try These Strategies:**

- **Maintain good health practices**
- **Talk with family and friends**
- **Assure children they are safe**
- **Answer children's questions simply, directly, and honestly**
- **Encourage children to express their feelings**
- **Reach out to others**

**If additional help is needed, contact your community mental health services or call the Rockland County Department of Mental Health at 845-364-2374**

## **Chemical/Biological Emergencies**

A major chemical or biological emergency can happen when hazardous amounts of toxins are released into the environment. You can be exposed to chemical and biological toxins by:

- Inhaling them.
- Swallowing contaminated food, water or medication.
- Touching or coming into contact with contaminated items.

Many times you cannot see or smell anything unusual. In the event of a hazardous chemical or biological emergency, you will be given instructions by authorities. You may be told to evacuate, to move uphill and upwind of the release, to shelter in place, or to go to a designated facility.

### **Reporting Suspicious Activity**

Occasionally, the federal government may call for a heightened state of alert on the part of local law enforcement and residents. When the police go to a higher state of alert, they may add extra patrols in various locations, increase staffing, carry extra protective equipment and maintain more frequent communication with federal, state and other local law enforcement agencies.

Residents should also increase their awareness of their surroundings and report any suspicious activity to the police. Many people fail to act because they are not sure if what they are observing is worth reporting. When in doubt, call the police immediately. Don't lose precious time discussing the event with friends and neighbors first.

Types of activity that resident should report include people, vehicles, or circumstances that appear unusual or out of place, such as:

- A stranger around your neighborhood or a strange vehicle parked in your neighborhood for a long period of time.
- Someone looking into houses or vehicles.
- Recurring appearances of strange vehicles in the neighborhood.
- Someone tampering with the electrical, gas, or sewer system without an identifiable company vehicle and uniform.
- An unusually large amount of traffic coming to a house or apartment building.
- Houses or buildings where extreme security measures seem to have been taken.
- Houses or buildings where no owner or primary renter is apparent, and no home activities – yard work, painting, maintenance, etc. – seem to go on.
- Strange odors coming from around houses or buildings.
- Door-to-door solicitors without solicitor permits, or any stranger knocking at doors.
- Persons standing around, possibly acting as lookouts.

If you suspect a crime is being or is about to be committed, call 911. Do not panic and do not put yourself at risk. If the activity simply appears suspicious, call the police non-emergency number and describe the activity in either case. However, if you want a police officer to contact you, be prepared to give your name, address and telephone number, and ask that the officer contact you. This information is kept confidential.

## Emergency Shelter

When conditions warrant, local officials may instruct residents to seek shelter in their homes or establish community-based shelters for local residents. Normally, shelters are set up in public schools, recreation centers or other appropriate facilities where residents can seek refuge as well as sleep and eat. Persons needing shelter are asked to bring a change of clothing, bathing and sanitary supplies, pre-filled prescription and other medical needs, denture and eye care materials, and special dietary supplies or requirements. With the exception of service animals, pets are generally not permitted in the shelters.

If local officials advise you to “shelter in place,” they mean for you to remain indoors and protect yourself there. Take your children and pets indoors immediately. 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.

While gathering your family, you should:

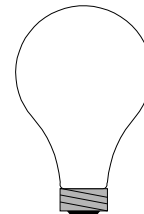
- Close all windows, exterior doors and fireplace dampers.
- Turn off all fans, heating, and air conditioning systems.
- Wet some towels and jam them in the cracks under the doors.
- Tape around the doors, windows, exhaust fans and vents.
- Use plastic garbage bags to cover windows, outlets, and heat registers.
- Close the window shades, blinds or curtains if you are told there is a danger of explosion.

- Stay inside and keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate.

## When Electrical Power Is Lost

Disruption of electrical service can occur as a result of many things, including lightning, high winds, ice and heavy snow, and equipment failure. For the most part, service is normally restored within a short period. However, major power outages can happen for extended periods from time to time. When power is lost, you should:

- Check to see if your neighbors have power. The power loss may be only in your home, due to a blown fuse or a tripped circuit. If your neighbors also are without service, call your local power company. If you must be outside to assess the situation, take a flashlight and watch for downed power lines that could still be energized. If downed lines are located, don’t go near them or touch anything that they may be in contact with. Report downed power lines immediately.
- Use flashlights or battery-operated lanterns for lighting. Candles and kerosene lanterns are not recommended for lighting because of the inherent fire safety hazards.
- Turn off all major appliances. When major appliances – refrigerators, electric water heaters, air conditioners and pumps – are left on, they could overload electric lines when power is restored causing a second outage.



**Additional information on preparing for emergencies can be found at the following Web sites:**

**Office of Fire and Emergency Services**

[www.rocklandgov.com](http://www.rocklandgov.com)

**American Red Cross:**

[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

**Centers for Disease Control Public Health Emergency Preparedness:**

[www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov)

**Federal Emergency Management Agency:**

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

**New York State Emergency Management Office:**

[www.semo.state.ny.us](http://www.semo.state.ny.us)

**Weather Channel:**

[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

**Department of Homeland Security:**

[www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Food can be kept cold for a day or two if the doors are kept closed. During the winter, you may be able to store some items outside in a proper container. If temperatures are below freezing, it's possible to freeze water outside in containers and place them inside your refrigerator to help keep food cold. Try to consumer perishable foods first. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Use portable generators cautiously. They can be used to provide limited electrical power during an outage. But, take care to ensure that they do not pose a threat to you and your family. Never fuel or run a portable generator in the home or garage, as gas-powered generators pose a serious fire and carbon monoxide threat. Generators should be installed in compliance with the National Electrical Code and local ordinances' guidelines. Always operate according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Be prepared to use alternate sources of water until power is restored if your water system uses electric pumps – such as for wells or cisterns – which will not operate when the power is out.
- Be aware that gas appliances may not work if the electricity is off because the equipment may require electricity for ignition or valve operation.
- Drain pumps, supply lines, water heaters, boilers and traps in drains of tubs, sinks, commodes, washing machines and dishwashers. Plumbing can freeze when power is lost during cold weather periods. To avoid major flooding when temperatures rise, turn off supply lines to outside spigots. Water heaters that are drained to prevent damage from freezing must have their power circuits shut off as well. Failure to do so could result in loss of the heating element when power is restored. Never turn on a water heater unless the tank is full.
- List life support equipment required for family members who depend on these devices (respirators, ventilators, oxygen equipment or other life-sustaining devices) with the power company. You should have a contingency plan that always includes an alternate power source for the device and relocating the person.

## **Keeping Warm**

Select a single room in the home in which the entire family can live – ideally a room that gets sunlight during daylight hours. Use fireplaces and wood-burning stoves with care, and always supervise them when burning. Make sure the fireplace is in proper working condition and has been inspected regularly. Wear layers of clothing, including sweaters and coats, which hold warm air and help to maintain body heat for longer periods. For homes with natural gas heaters, keep meters and vents clear of ice and snow.

## Checking on Relatives and Neighbors

During storms and other emergency events check to see how your relatives and neighbors are coping, especially senior citizens and persons with disabilities. If possible, help them plan or locate resources from which to obtain assistance. Contact the Office for People with Disabilities at (845) 364-2758 or the Office for the Aging at (845) 364-2110 on services available for the elderly and residents with disabilities.

## Evacuation

Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community. If you are told to evacuate, it is important to stay calm, listen carefully and follow all instructions. 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, but leave natural gas ON unless local officials advise you otherwise. Only a professional can restore gas service once it's turned off, and this could take weeks in a disaster situation. If you must choose quickly what to take with you, grab these things and go: medical supplies, disaster supplies (flashlight, batteries, radio, first-aid kit, bottled water), a change of clothes, sleeping bag or bedroll and pillow for each family member and car and house keys.

## Children in School

In the event of a community or national emergency or ordered evacuation, parents should check the local media for announcements about changes in school openings and closings. News about changes in school schedules is routinely

disseminated through most metropolitan radio and television stations and local school system cable stations, hotlines and Web sites.

While parents can always pick up their children from school during the school day, the best place for children during a regional crisis might very well be the school itself, where they will remain under supervision and be protected from hazards outside. If parents do go to school to pick up a child, they should be prepared to present the identification required by the school system – usually a photo ID. Generally, unless evacuation of a particular school is ordered, students will be kept at school until school officials can safely transport them home. Relying on the schools to transport students home on normal bus routes will help avoid gridlock in and around schools and help keep roads clear for essential emergency vehicles.

Under extreme circumstances buses may be delayed, and the schools may ask parents to assist with picking up their children. Parents should check the local media for announcements about school decisions.

## Keeping Updated

Getting information during an emergency situation is vital, especially at the height of the event when evacuation may be required. Radio and television stations provide the quickest means to obtain information. Have a battery-operated radio tuned to a local all-news or talk-radio station. Consider purchasing a battery-operated weather alert radio.



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