



# BEFORE DISASTER STRIKES

## *Steps to Plan and Prepare for Disaster*

- Assemble emergency kits (see Basic Emergency Supplies)
- Keep copies of important documents (passport, driver license, social security card, marriage license, will, deeds, financial statements, etc.) in an offsite location such as a safety deposit box. To facilitate insurance recovery, include an inventory of your valuables with photographs or video
- Go through your calendar now, and put a reminder on it—every six months—to review your plan, update numbers, and check supplies to be sure nothing has expired, spoiled, or changed
- Learn how and when to shut off your utilities (see Utilities)
- Discuss all possible exit routes from each room, building and neighborhood. Ensure that your family has at least two exits from each
- Decide where you will reunite after a disaster. Choose two places, one outside your home (in case of sudden household emergency like fire) and another outside your neighborhood, like a park or other open area (in the event that it is not safe to stay near or return to your home)
- Choose an emergency contact person outside of your area because it may be easier to call long distance than locally after a local/regional disaster
- Make back-up plans for children in case you cannot get home in an emergency; decide who will take care of children if schools are closed
- Think about how you would care for people in your family who have disabilities if support services are not available (see Tips for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities)
- Think about how you will transport or care for pets; including large animals and/or livestock (see Tips for Pet Owners)
- Conduct emergency drills and practice “DROP, COVER and HOLD” at least once every six months
- Always keep your car’s gas tank at least half full; have an “emergency car-kit” in each vehicle



## *Steps to Make Your Home Safe*

- Be sure your home’s street number is visible from the street, so emergency vehicles can find you.
- Have at least one traditionally wired landline phone, as cordless or cellular phones may not work in an emergency.
- In your home, install at least one smoke alarm outside of each sleeping area and one additional alarm on each additional living level, including the basement. If hallways are longer than 40 feet between the sleeping and living areas, use two smoke alarms. Test every six months and replace batteries once each year.
- Keep at least one ABC type fire extinguisher on each level of your home. Learn how and when to use them. Check the pressure gauges annually to ensure they are fully charged.
- Keep hallways and exits clear for easy evacuation. Ensure that all window safety bars have emergency releases.
- Ensure that valuable electronics and tall, large or heavy furnishings in your home are equipped with earthquake straps, available at most hardware stores. Move heavy objects to lower shelves and install cabinet door latches.
- California law requires your water heater to be properly braced so it won’t tip over in an earthquake.
- If your water heater isn’t equipped with a flexible supply line, contact a licensed plumber to install one.

## KEEP IN MIND:

THE THINGS THAT YOU WILL NEED THE MOST TO GET THROUGH A DISASTER...

- 1) breathable air
- 2) drinking water
- 3) food
- 4) warmth
- 5) sanitation
- 6) health supplies

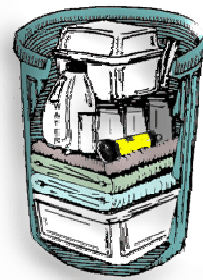
## Basic Emergency Supplies

You can buy pre-made disaster kits from a range of sources, or you can assemble one yourself using items you already own. Either way, make sure to familiarize yourself with your kit's contents and to replace any perishable items before they expire.

Divide your emergency supplies into a Household Disaster Kit to share at home, personal GO-bags for individual family members and emergency car kits in case of evacuation.

Store your Household Disaster Kit in a place that will still be accessible if your home is damaged and unsafe to enter (e.g. a backyard shed). If this is not an option, put it in an easily accessible location inside your home.

Store your household's 72 hour GO-bags in a location that is easily accessible in the event you must evacuate your home.

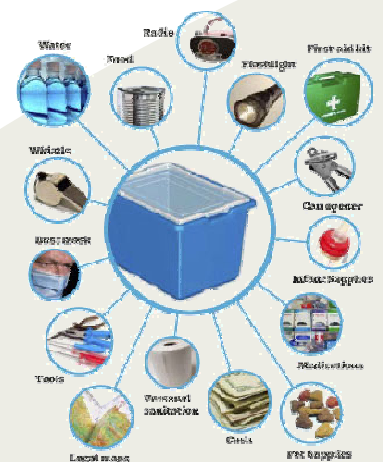


All items purchased at a local retail chain and stored in an ice chest with wheels.

## Household Disaster Kit Checklist

If your home is structurally sound following a disaster, your Household Disaster Kit will allow you to remain in place, even without utilities. Put contents in a watertight container that you can move easily (e.g. a large plastic garbage can with wheels). **(Essential items are marked with an asterisks <\*> and bolded):**

- Sanitation supplies (e.g. soap, liquid detergent, **unscented bleach with eyedropper & heavy duty garbage bags**)\*
- First Aid Kit and handbook**\*
- Duct tape**\*
- Personal hygiene supplies (e.g. feminine supplies, disposable diapers, tissues, toilet paper, pre-moistened towelettes)**\*
- Flashlights and battery-operated lanterns, portable radio (with extra batteries & bulbs)**\*
- Plates, utensils and paper towels, etc.
- Cooking supplies (**manual can opener**\*, camp stove, gas or charcoal grill, aluminum foil, fuel for cooking, **lighter**\*, pots, **utility knife**\*, etc.)—*CAUTION: Never burn charcoal indoors. The fumes are deadly when concentrated indoors.*
- Items to protect you from the elements, (e.g. warm clothing, **raincoats/raingear**\*, **sleeping bags**\*, mats, **blankets**\*, **sturdy shoes**\* and a tent or **heavy-duty plastic sheeting**\*)
- Work gloves, goggles, crowbar, hammer, staple gun, adjustable wrench.
- Permanent marker**\*
- Whistle (to alert rescuers to your location)**\*
- Supplies for persons with special needs
- Entertainment (games/books/movies)
- Map of area (for locating shelters and evacuation routes)
- Some extra cash**\*



# UTILITIES

Disasters have prompted people to ask how to turn off the gas and electric service to their houses.

*The first rule is to “STIFLE THE IMPULSE”*

Don't shut off gas and electric services unless there is evidence of damage to your house piping and wiring. Use the “Sniff Test” for natural gas.

If you shut off your electricity unnecessarily, you lose the vital services of refrigeration, lighting, and in many cases, cooking and heating. You may also miss important news and official announcements carried on radio and television.

If you shut off gas service at the meter, it should not be turned on again except by an expert, such as a gas company serviceperson. If the service is restored by an untrained person, dangerous accumulations of gas could be released into your home.

However, when a dangerous situation arises in your home (see following Gas and Electricity sections), it is advisable to shut off gas and/or electricity.

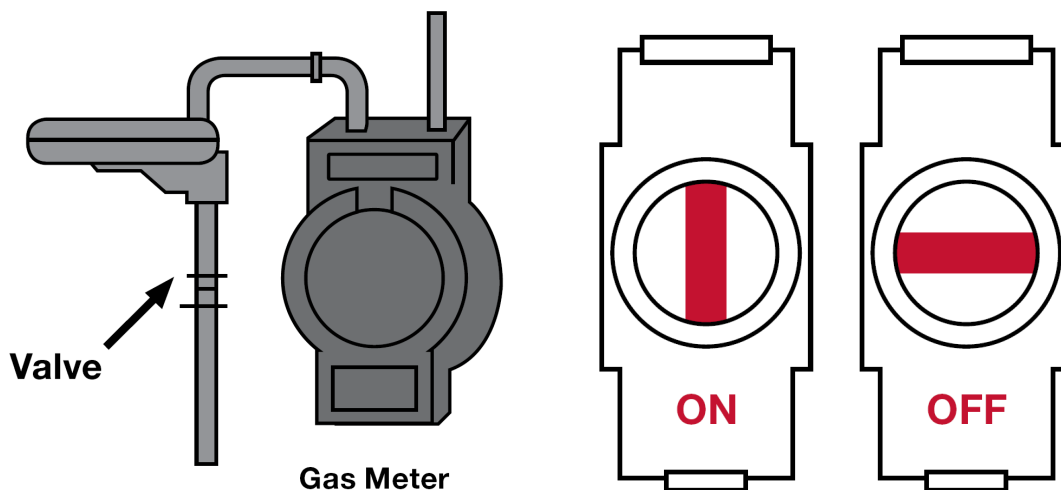
## Gas

Natural gas leaks can cause fires and explosions inside a building.

If you smell gas, hear gas escaping, see a broken gas line, or if you suspect a leak, shut off the main valve and open all windows and doors.

If you suspect a leak, never use candles or matches, and do not turn on electrical switches or appliances.

Identify the main shutoff valve, located on the gas line coming into the main gas meter. This is usually on the exterior of your home or building, or in an external closet. Your main valve may look like this:



To turn gas off, give the valve a quarter turn in either direction. When the lever crosses the direction of the pipe (see below) the gas is off.

Keep a crescent wrench or gas shut-off tool nearby to turn the lever.

**Once you turn off the gas, never attempt to turn it back on yourself. Wait for your utility company to do it, but be aware that it may take several days for it to be turned back on.**

## Electricity

Fuses or circuit breakers should automatically shut off house service or service to one or more branch circuits in the event of electrical trouble. **Do not attempt to restore this service if there is evidence of heat damage to wiring or to the fuse/circuit breaker box.**

Electrocution can result from direct contact with live wires or anything that has been energized by these wires.

Locate your home's main electrical switch, which is normally in the garage or outdoors, where the power lines enter the home. The panel box may have a flip switch or pull handle on the large circuit breaker.

Shut off electricity when:

- Arcing or burning occurs in electrical devices
- There is a fire or significant water leak
- You smell burning insulation
- The area around switches or plugs is blackened and/or hot to the touch
- A complete power loss is accompanied by the smell of burning material.

**Call the power company or an electrician if you cannot restore service or if it seems too dangerous.**



## Water

After a major earthquake, shut off water at the house to protect the water in your water heater, toilet tanks, and house pipes. Cracked pipes may allow contaminants into the water supply. In addition, water leaks can create property damage and electrocution hazards.

The water shutoff is usually located in the basement, garage or where the water line enters the home. The water shutoff is located on a riser pipe and is usually a red or yellow wheel. Turn the wheel clockwise to shut off.

If you need to access water in your water heater, look for a drain line on the bottom of the water heater.



## Sewer

A disaster that disrupts all or part of the City's water and/or sewer lines could affect the way you deal with human waste.

- If there is no water to your toilet, but the sewer lines are intact, pour 3.5 gallons of water into the toilet bowl to flush. You may use bath, laundry, or pool water.
- If you suspect damage to your home's water lines, do NOT flush the toilet. Turn off water at the house so contaminated water does not enter your water system.**
- If sewer lines are broken, line the bowl with double-bagged plastic garbage bags to collect human waste. Before discarding the bag, add a small amount of bleach; then seal the bag and place in a tightly covered container; away from people.
- If the toilet is unusable, use a sturdy bucket with a tight fitting lid, and line it with a double-bagged plastic garbage bag.

Butte County Environmental Health:

<http://www.buttecounty.net/publichealth/environmental/environmental.html>

Contact Number: (530) 538-7281