

# Evacuation Shelter Preparedness

## Planning Before Disaster Strikes

Staying in an evacuation shelter is not something anyone wants to do, but in an emergency it may be necessary. Learn what to bring with you and how to cope in a crisis.

No one likes to think about having to evacuate during a natural disaster, but knowing what to expect is important. If you are unable to evacuate the area, you may need to take refuge in a local shelter. Check with your local emergency management center for a list of shelters near you and begin making your evacuation plan now, before the emergency strikes.

Most shelters don't allow pets for health and safety reasons, so you'll need to plan in advance for your pet's needs. Consider boarding your pet with a kennel, or see if a friend can take care of your pet. Don't leave your pet to fend for itself.

Shelters are cramped, crowded, noisy, and stuffy. People handle stressful situations differently, and some will appear to be nervous or agitated. Tempers may flare. There will be long lines to restrooms and not much privacy. Don't expect showers or hot meals. Luxury goes out the window during an emergency.

Listen to the emergency personnel. They will have important news and instructions during the emergency that you need to know about. Be prepared to act quickly should they need to move everyone to a new location. Don't leave the shelter until told it is safe to do so.

## Emergency Supplies to Take to a Shelter

In the case of an evacuation, families should prepare to take care of themselves without outside help for several days. The average amount of time for an evacuation is three days. Check your Grab and Go Kit for to be sure these basic items are included for each person.

- ✓ Identification
- ✓ A change of clothes, rain gear, and good walking shoes, extra socks and underwear.
- ✓ A sleeping bag (or two blankets), extra blanket, and small pillow per person. Most shelters will be located in schools and other public buildings. While they will have a limited amount of supplies, you and your family will be much more comfortable if you bring your own supplies.
- ✓ Prescription and over-the-counter medicines. A first-aid kit, including adhesive bandages.
- ✓ Cash, checkbooks, and credit cards (during a power outage, cash may be your only option)
- ✓ Flashlight and spare batteries
- ✓ Toiletries such as toothpaste/toothbrush, contact lens solution, toilet paper (they may run out) and hand sanitizer and feminine supplies.
- ✓ Important papers such as birth certificates, social security cards, insurance papers, titles and deeds, bank certificates, etc. (store them in a plastic envelope or binder to help protect them)
- ✓ Important phone numbers for contacting family, insurance companies, and banks

- ✓ Special items for infants (clothes, diapers, food/formula, bottles and nipples, food, small toys, blankets, portable crib, etc.)
- ✓ Water, stored in plastic bottles with screw caps; one gallon per person per day. Water services may be disrupted at the shelter as well in the early hours of an emergency.
- ✓ Board games for entertainment.
- ✓ Non-perishable canned or packaged food and drinks (corned beef, tuna fish, apple sauce, cookies, juice, etc.), preferably that requires no cooking and a non-electric can opener. It may take a day or more to set up a regular meal schedule at a shelter.
- ✓ Reading and writing materials.
- ✓ Extra pair of glasses or contacts and contact lens case and solution.

### **Additional Items to Include:**

- Pillows.
- Pens or pencils.
- Sewing kit.
- Emergency cooking equipment, such as a camp stove.
- Plastic cups, plates and utensils. The shelter may not have utensils in the early hours of an emergency.
- Special items for elderly or disabled family members.
- Emergency preparation guides. Get these now. They contain valuable information not only on the immediate emergency, but what you need to do and know to recover – such as what aid is available and signs of stress in family members.

### **Practice Patience**

You may be in the shelter for several days. Remember to be respectful and considerate of others. Try to remain calm, and offer help where needed. It may not be an ideal situation, but try to make the best of things until the crisis passes.