

YOUR GUIDE TO PREPARING FOR AN EMERGENCY

THINK AHEAD, BE READY, STAY SAFE

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ACCESSIBILITY

The ACT Government is committed to making its information, services, events and venues accessible to as many people as possible.

- If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like to receive this publication in an alternative format — such as large print or audio — please telephone (02) 6205 0619.
- If English is not your first language and you require the translating and interpreting service — please telephone 131 450.

If you are deaf or hearing impaired and require the TTY typewriter service — please telephone (02) 6205 0888.

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STAY SAFE & BE PREPARED

This booklet has been developed especially to provide you with guidance on how to prepare for a range of hazards.

A companion booklet, *Your emergency grab and go* will help you develop an emergency plan and includes space for you to record important information you will need in case of evacuation.

There are also tear-out information cards for you to exchange contact details with trusted neighbours.

There are some things that you can do to make sure you are well-equipped for an emergency or unplanned situation.

- The information in this booklet will assist you in:
- making an emergency plan in case you need to evacuate your home
- putting together an emergency kit
- recording your medical information
- keeping important contact details together and up-to-date.

If you are unable to do this planning or preparation yourself, talk to your family, friends, neighbour or local community service about how they can help you.

Being prepared can help you to remain independent and well-equipped to face an emergency.

PLANNING AHEAD

- Make sure you have adequate home/contents insurance
- Be aware of what may not work if power or gas supplies are interrupted and how this will impact on you day to day, eg. automatic opening doors, electrical appliances, heating, telephone
- Keep your pantry well stocked. Include food that doesn't need cooking (eg. long life products). Remember to include basic items like toilet paper, tissues and sanitary supplies, alcohol-based handwash or wipes, and over the counter medications
- Have a quantity of bottled water on hand
- Keep a battery-powered radio and torch handy
- Keep a supply of candles, matches and batteries within easy access
- Get to know your neighbours so that you can make contact with them in an emergency situation
- Keep in touch with what's happening by listening to or watching local news
- Keep a fire blanket near your stove
- Make sure you have smoke alarms installed and test them regularly
- Keep house keys in a place where you can find them quickly.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

- Complete your emergency plan and put together an emergency kit using the guide at the back of this booklet
- Record your medication list
- Keeping contact information together, and up-to-date
- Consider some of the emergencies that are mentioned in this booklet.

IF YOU NEED AN AMBULANCE

THINKING AHEAD

- Install reflective house numbers at least 75mm in height on your letterbox or home, so they are clearly visible from the road at night.
- Ensure there is all weather access to the inside and around your residence.
- Locate house telephones at sitting height, with emergency and key numbers clearly displayed.
- Keep a home first aid kit, have knowledge of basic first aid.
- Record your medical history and current medications for easy access by Ambulance Officers.

EMERGENCY 000

- In an emergency dial 000 from any residential or public phone.
- If calling from a mobile phone and dialling 000 isn't successful, dial 112 to access the emergency operator through any mobile network operating in your area.
- Talk slowly and answer all questions asked by the operator.
- Do not hang up until told to do so — follow instructions from the call taker.

WHEN THE AMBULANCE IS ON THE WAY

- Keep the phone nearby in case the call taker calls you back.
- Avoid making unnecessary calls.
- If possible, rest in a room that is close to the front door.
- Avoid retiring in a rear bedroom which often makes stretcher access more difficult.
- Turn on the outside lights if it is dark.
- Lock animals in a separate room to avoid them getting out when the Ambulance Officers arrive.
- If possible, collect all your medications and medication chart.
- Call 000 again if the circumstances change.

BUSHFIRES

BEFORE A FIRE — PREPARE

- Familiarise yourself with fire danger ratings and bushfire warnings — information available from ACT Emergency Services Agency or Canberra Connect.
- Decide whether to leave early or stay. For more information go to www.esa.act.gov.au.
- Make sure gutters, backyard are cleared of leaves and vegetation. Mow your grass regularly.
- Be aware of the daily fire danger rating and be alert for signs of fire.

BEFORE THE FIRE APPROACHES — ACT

- Act decisively the moment that you know there is danger.
- Gather your Emergency Kit and important possessions.
- Listen for emergency warnings on the local radio station, television and telephone.
- Prepare your pets to take with you or leave with adequate water and food.
- Fill sinks and bath with fresh water in case the water supply is disrupted
- Let your neighbours know whether you are leaving or staying.
- Wet vegetation around your house with a hose or sprinkler.

IF THE FIRE COMES UNEXPECTEDLY — SURVIVE

- Shelter in the house until the fire front has passed, put out any spot fires inside the house.
- Shut all windows and doors. Seal windows and doors with wet blankets and towels.
- Keep watching for embers entering the house.
- After the fire front passes, put out any spot fires on or close to the house.
- Don't leave until the surrounding area is clear of fire and you can do so safely.
- Check local radio for up-to-date information.

AFTER THE FIRE HAS PASSED

- Let family and neighbours know where you are.

EXTREME HEAT

When the temperature is high or extreme some people become more vulnerable to heat stress. Symptoms of heat stress include: headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, muscle weakness or cramps, pale skin, and a high temperature.

THINKING AHEAD

- If possible, arrange for someone to call you twice a day during extreme heat, especially if you live alone – or arrange to exchange phone calls with a family member, friend or neighbour.
- Plan to do your shopping or outdoor activities in the cooler part of the day.

DURING EXTREME HEAT

- Stay inside where possible during the middle of the day and early afternoon.
- Use fans or air conditioning to keep cool.
- Wear light coloured, loose fitting clothing, preferably made from natural fibres and put on a wide brimmed hat that shades your face if outside.
- Drink water regularly, unless your doctor has advised you to limit the amount of fluid you drink. Don't wait until you feel thirsty to drink.
- Eat smaller meals more often during hot weather.
- NEVER leave children or pets in the car, even for a very short time.
- Check with your doctor whether your prescribed medication is likely to cause difficulties for you in the heat.
- If you are suffering from heat stress, you need to cool down straight away. Use cool baths, showers, or place wet towels on your neck and underarms.
- Call a doctor or an ambulance if your condition does not improve within an hour after taking steps to cool down, or if you have any heat related symptoms that are causing concern.

HOUSE FIRE

THINKING AHEAD

- Make sure smoke detectors are installed – check/change batteries each year when daylight saving finishes.
- Keep a fire blanket (or small extinguisher) near your stove.
- Have heaters checked regularly – check cords on electrical appliances for wear.
- Make a plan of how you could leave your house in the event of fire.
- Never leave doors deadlocked while you are inside the house.
- Keep keys handy at all times.
- Take care with candles or lamps and watch for curtains or clothing that may hang over heaters.
- Check electric blankets for wear and tear.

DURING A FIRE

- If safe and you feel confident, extinguish the fire if it is small.
- Ring 000.
- Alert all other persons in the house and implement your evacuation plan. Close all internal doors on your way out.
- Do not go back for missing pets or personal belongings. Once out – stay out.
- Advise the arriving fire crew if anyone is unaccounted for.

AFTER A FIRE

- Do not re-enter the house until cleared by the Fire Brigade, and abide by any warnings or alerts as advised by the Fire Brigade.
- Notify your insurance company.
- Do not consume any fire or smoke affected food or drink.

EARTHQUAKE

THINKING AHEAD

- Check that you are fully insured for earthquake damage.
- Store breakables and heavy items on bottom shelves.
- Keep a battery powered radio and torch by your bed.
- Think about where the safest areas are for you to shelter — in and outside your house during earthquakes.
- Make sure your pantry is stocked with at least 3 days of emergency non perishable food and water supply.

DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

- If you are inside, stay there. Shelter under a sturdy table, bench or interior doorframe.
- Stay tuned to local radio to find out what is going on.
- Keep clear of windows, chimneys and overhead fittings
- If you are outside, keep well clear of buildings, overhead structures, walls, bridges, power lines and trees.
- If you are in the street, shelter under strong archways or doorways of buildings. Don't stand under awnings.
- If you are in a car, stop in an open area until the shaking stops. Beware of fallen power lines, damaged roads, including overpasses and landslides.

AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE

- Check for injuries and attend to these.
- Look out for hazards (eg. power lines, trees or building debris).
- Turn off electricity and gas.
- Use your torch — don't light matches.
- If safe, check for damage in the house.
- Expect aftershocks so evacuate if the building is already damaged.
- Avoid driving unless it is an emergency.
- Don't enter damaged buildings until they are identified as safe.
- If you require assistance contact the SES on 132 500.

STORMS & WILD WEATHER

THINKING AHEAD

- Get your roof checked regularly for any damage, loose tiles or corrosion.
- Clear leaves and other debris from gutters, downpipes and drains so water can get away as quickly as possible.
- Secure outdoor furniture, awnings, blinds or other portable items.
- Keep an eye on trees that may pose a threat to your property or power lines.
- Check you have adequate home building and contents insurance and update as needed.
- Shelter vehicles under cover or away from trees or cover with blankets.
- Make sure you know where your electricity panel/gas mains are located so that you can quickly switch off if needed.
- Consider having surge protectors installed to protect electrical items from damage.
- Prepare a home emergency plan and identify risks around the home.

DURING A STORM

- If you are at home, stay indoors until the storm passes.
- Stay clear of windows, doors and skylights.
- Unplug electrical items such as TVs and computers.
- Make sure pets are in a safe place.
- Stop the car if driving. Stay well clear of power lines, trees and waterways.
- If outside, seek enclosed shelter, not under a tree or metal structure.
- Do not use a landline telephone during a thunderstorm.

AFTER A STORM

- If safe, check your house for damage – if you need assistance from SES phone 132 500.
- Keep children, animals and yourself clear of fallen trees, drains, power lines and damaged structures.
- Make contact with your neighbours and family to let them know that you are OK.

- Do not use electrical equipment that has been wet in the storm until professionally tested.

FLOOD

THINKING AHEAD

- Find out about your local area to help you assess if there is a risk of possible flooding.
- Keep a list of emergency numbers handy, consider who could help if you need to evacuate.

DURING A FLOOD

If there is a flood warning for your community, tune to local radio for updates. If you are instructed to leave your home, always follow the instructions from local authorities.

If you need to evacuate — depending on how much time you have:

- Tell police or SES and your neighbours.
- Take your mobile phone.
- Pack warm clothing, essential medication, valuables, personal papers, photos and mementos in waterproof bags to be taken with your emergency kit.
- If you are able to, move furniture, clothing and valuables onto beds, tables and into roof space.
- Turn off power, water and gas.
- Empty freezers and fridges — leave doors open.
- Lock your home and take recommended evacuation routes.
- Don't drive into water of unknown depth and current.
- Listen to the radio for the location of evacuation centres, current weather advice and warnings.

AFTER A FLOOD

- Check your house for damage. If you need assistance from the SES, phone 132 500.
- Avoid entering flood waters and don't allow children to play in, or near flood waters.
- Don't use gas or electrical appliances until checked for safety.
- Don't eat food that has been in flood waters.
- Boil tap water until supplies have been declared safe.
- When floodwater rises it is common for spiders, snakes, rats and mice to move inside. If you have flood water through your property, check for unwanted visitors.
- Stay tuned to local radio for updated advice.

PERSONAL SAFETY & HOME SECURITY

Canberra remains one of the safest cities in the world, but it helps to be aware of some commonsense precautions to avoid the risk of criminal behaviour, whether you are at home, shopping or outdoors.

AT HOME

- Your house number should be clearly visible from the street in case of an emergency.
- Keep your front door locked when you are at the back of the house. If you have deadlocks, remember to unlock them when you are at home.
- Keep cash and valuables out of sight.
- Always check the identification of strangers.
- Consider outside security lighting.
- Ensure trees and shrubs are trimmed, especially those close to your house that could be climbed to gain access.
- Make sure you keep all gates locked. The rear and sides of homes are often targeted by thieves.
- Always lock tools, ladders and garden equipment away. Thieves can use these items to gain entry to your home.

USING YOUR PHONE

- Be cautious about information you provide to strangers on the phone, especially private family or financial information, or whether you live alone or will be away.
- If you own an answering machine do not leave a message that you are out and not able to answer the phone. Consider what you are telling the caller.

KEYS

- Never leave spare keys outside your home unless they are in a properly installed key safe. Thieves know all the usual hiding places including under door mats and pot plants.
- Give a duplicate set of keys to a trusted friend, relative or neighbour.

WHEN SHOPPING

- Don't carry large amounts of cash or signed withdrawal forms with your bank book or in your bag.
- Never keep your personal identification number with your cash card.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SECURITY

THINKING AHEAD

- Get to know your neighbours so you can observe if there is something unusual happening.
- Make time to hear what's happening locally from your neighbours.
- Think about joining your local Neighbourhood Watch and / or becoming a Safety House.
- If you are going on holidays:
 - arrange for someone to collect your mail
 - cancel paper deliveries
 - install timer switches for lights and radios
 - place pets in a kennel or have someone look after them
 - have a neighbour park their car in your driveway
 - organise to have your lawn mowed
 - have a friend or neighbour visit your home regularly.

IF AN INCIDENT OCCURS

For an emergency that needs an immediate response from emergency services, call triple zero (000). This will put you in contact with police, fire brigade or ambulance. If you see anything that doesn't look right, call:

- Police on **131 444** OR Crime Stoppers on **1800 333 000**.

Be ready to provide:

- your location
- what has happened
- any information that will help to explain the situation.

Don't hang up until the operator instructs you to do so.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

A community-based crime prevention program with the aim of promoting a safe and secure environment.

T 0408 395 658

W www.nhwact.com.au

SAFETY HOUSE

A community-based network of safe places to assist anyone, especially a child or older person, who is feeling unsafe or threatened.

- T 0432 499 554
- W www.safetyhouseact.org.au

INFLUENZA (THE FLU)

THINKING AHEAD

- Consider having the annual flu vaccination.
- Keep your pantry and freezer stocked so that you have supplies on hand in case you are unable to leave the house.

- Check that you have medication available (prescription and flu/cold preparations).
- Make sure your contact list is up-to-date so that you have someone you can ring to let them know you are sick.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET THE FLU?

- Avoid contact with other people where possible.
- Stay at home – keep away from work, school and crowded areas or public gatherings until your fever has gone and you feel well.
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing and when using tissues, dispose of them carefully in a bin.
- Wash your hands regularly and always after coughing or sneezing – use soap and water or an alcohol based hand rub.
- Wipe down frequently touched surfaces (such as remote controls or door knobs) regularly using detergent or alcohol based wipes.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Use a pain reliever for aches but if you are concerned about your health, then contact your GP.