

The Prepared Family

It is often overwhelming to see daily stories in the news about terrorism, earthquakes and tsunamis. As citizens, we are far from helpless and can do much to prepare for emergencies. We must never forget, it is not if, but when the next emergency, such as an earthquake will occur. Be prepared.

First and foremost, we must be prepared at home. This means being able to sustain our families after an emergency. In the Loma Prieta Earthquake of 1989, significant areas of the Central Coast region had major roads compromised and were without electricity and telephone service for hours or days. Many homes were damaged. Every family should have some basic emergency supplies. Imagine for a moment, being without basics such as food, water and toilet paper for three days. It is vital to plan ahead.

Food & Water:

- Keep a separate supply of non-perishable food and water to sustain the entire family for at least three days. These should be canned goods, or other items that do not require cooking or preparation. Make sure this food is somewhat compatible with your average diet. Emergencies are NOT a time for indigestion.
- Maintain 1 gallon of water per person, per day. A family of three should have at least nine gallons of water in easily transportable containers, such as plastic gallon bottles.
- Hand-operated can opener and some utensils.
- Pet food.
- Don't forget prescription medications for at least 7 days.
- Special items such as formula and diapers for infants.

Seeing & hearing:

- Portable radio: Tune to 1620 AM for emergency information in Milpitas
- Flashlight
- Reading glasses (never throw away your old glasses, put them in your emergency kit)
- Keep lots of extra batteries for your radio & flashlight. Don't leave batteries inside this equipment. Batteries can leak over time. Replace your batteries every three years.
- Street map of your local area, so if necessary, you can find emergency shelters.

First-aid supplies:

- Gauze, bandages, aspirin, tape, scissors, disinfectants, antiseptics, latex gloves and non-prescription medications such as Benedryl which can help with allergic reactions

Other important items:

- Cash in small bills.
- Credit & ATM cards. **ALERT:** While credit & ATM cards are very helpful, remember they may not work in a store where the electricity is out. This is why sufficient cash is so helpful.
- Toilet paper
- Cell phone
- Small trash bags. If your water supply is compromised, or you must move from your home, trash bags placed inside a 5-gallon bucket make an excellent substitute bathroom facility.
- Two basic changes of clothes per person.
- Small combination knife with scissors.
- Rain gear such as umbrellas.
- Basic camping equipment such as sleeping bags.
- Any other special need items you may require
- Establish an alternative meeting place so family members who are away can meet you if they cannot get home because of road closures

EMERGENCY TIP!: Your local hardware store sells plastic containers about the size of a large ice chest. Keep the above supplies in this type of container so it is easy to take these critical items with you should you need to evacuate your home and stay with a neighbor or at a temporary shelter.

REMEMBER: Basic preparations can make all the difference. Your Milpitas Fire Department offers safety training free of charge to citizens. Call (408) 586-2810 for further information.