

Make a Disaster Plan

[Make a Plan \(washoecounty.gov\)](http://washoecounty.gov)

Prior to a disaster, each family must have a plan. You can begin this process by gathering family members and making sure each person is well-informed on potential hazards and community plans. Discuss with them what you would do if family members are not home when a warning is issued.

Additionally, your family plan should address the following:

Create an Emergency Plan

An emergency can strike anywhere and at any time. A little advance preparation can literally mean the difference between life and death for you and your family. The Washoe County Emergency Management Program has compiled some general information listed below that is intended to help you prepare for an emergency.

What to Do If an Emergency Threatens -- Important Safety Tips

Whether it's a flood, an earthquake, a wildfire or a power outage, when any emergency threatens, we don't always have a lot of time to act. Your personal safety is paramount. Listed below are some important tips people should follow, in the event of an emergency, in addition to staying tuned to news media for additional information.

Emergency Plan

- Meet with household members. Discuss with children the dangers of fire, severe weather, earthquakes, and other emergencies.
- Discuss how to respond to each disaster.
- Discuss what to do about power outages and personal injuries.
- Draw a floor plan of your home. Mark two escape routes from each room.
- Learn how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at main switches.
- Post emergency telephone numbers near telephones.
- Teach children how and when to call 911, police, and fire.
- Instruct household members to turn on the radio for emergency information.
- Pick one out-of-state and one local friend or relative for family members to call if separated by disaster (it is often easier to call out-of-state than within the affected area).
- Teach children how to make long distance telephone calls.
- Pick two meeting places.
 - A place near your home in case of a fire.
 - A place outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home after a disaster.

Escape Routes

Draw a floor plan of your home. Use a blank sheet of paper for each floor. Mark two escape routes from each room. Make sure children understand the drawings. Post a copy of the drawings at eye level in each child's room. Where to Meet Establish a place to meet in the event of an emergency and evacuation. Illustrated below is a chart each family can make:

Location	Where to meet...
Near the home ...	For example, the next door neighbor's telephone pole
Outside the immediate area...	For example, the neighborhood grocery store parking lot

Evacuation Plans

When community evacuations become necessary, local officials provide information to the public through the media, door-to-door notification or citizen telephonic notification system. Additionally, there may be circumstances under which you and your family feel threatened or endangered and you need to leave your home, school, or workplace to avoid these situations. The amount of time you have to leave will depend on the hazard. Many disasters allow no time for people to gather even the most basic necessities, which is why planning ahead is essential. Listed below are guidelines to assist each family in preparing for the event of an evacuation:

Evacuation Guidelines

Always:

- Keep a full tank of gas in your car if an evacuation seems likely.
 - Gas stations may be closed during emergencies and unable to pump gas during power outages.
 - Plan to take one car per family to reduce congestion and delay.
- Make transportation arrangements with friends or your local government if you do not own a car.
- Listen to a battery-powered radio and follow local evacuation instructions.
- Gather your family and go if you are instructed to evacuate immediately.
- Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather.
- Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts; they may be blocked.
- Be alert for washed-out roads and bridges. Do not drive into flooded areas.
- Stay away from downed power lines.

If time permits:

- Gather your disaster supplies kit.
- Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and a cap.

- Secure your home:
 - Close and lock doors and windows.
 - Unplug electrical equipment, such as radios and televisions, and small appliances, such as toasters and microwaves. Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding.
- Let others know where you are going.

Family Communications

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another. Think about how you will communicate in different situations. Complete a contact card for each family member. Have family members keep these cards handy in a wallet, purse, backpack, etc. You may want to send one to school with each child to keep on file. Pick a friend or relative who lives out-of-state for household members to notify they are safe. By choosing an out-of-state contact, if local phone lines are locked up, each family member should still be able to make & receive long-distance phone calls.

Utility Shut-off and Safety

In the event of a disaster, you may be instructed to shut off the utility service at your home. As part of your family preparedness, contact your local water, gas, and electrical companies to learn how to safely turn off these services.

Safety Skills

It is important that family members know how to administer first aid and CPR and how to use a fire extinguisher.

- Learn First Aid and CPR
- Take a first aid and CPR class.: Local American Red Cross chapters can provide information about this type of training. Official certification by the American Red Cross provides, under the “good Samaritan” law, protection for those giving first aid. Learn How to Use a Fire Extinguisher: Be sure everyone knows how to use your fire extinguisher(s) and where it is kept. You should have, at a minimum, an ABC type fire extinguisher.

Special Needs

If you or someone close to you has a disability or a special need, you may have to take additional steps to protect yourself and your family in an emergency.

Disability/Special Needs and the Additional Steps You May Want to Take During and Emergency

- Visually impaired: They may be extremely reluctant to leave familiar surroundings when the request for evacuation comes from a stranger. A guide dog could become confused or disoriented in a disaster. People who are blind or partially sighted may have to depend on others to lead them, as well as their dog, to safety during a disaster.

- Hearing impaired: May need to make special arrangements to receive warnings.
- Mobility impaired: May need special assistance to get to a shelter.
- Single working parent: May need help to plan for disasters and emergencies.
- Non-English speaking persons: May need assistance planning for and responding to emergencies. Community and cultural groups may be able to help keep people informed.
- People without vehicles: May need to make arrangements for transportation. People with special dietary needs Should take special precautions to have an adequate emergency food supply.
- People with medical conditions: Should know the location and availability of more than one facility if dependent on a dialysis machine or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.
- People with intellectual disabilities: May need help responding to emergencies and getting to a shelter.
- People with dementia: Should be registered in the Alzheimer's Association Safe Return Program.

If you have special needs: Find out about special assistance that may be available in Washoe County. Register with the office of emergency services or the local fire department for assistance so needed help can be provided.

Make Plans for Your Pets

If you evacuate your home, DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND! Pets most likely cannot survive on their own; and if by some remote chance they do, you may not be able to find them when you return. For additional information, please contact Washoe County Regional Animals Services.

- Contact your veterinarian and find out if they will accept your pet in an emergency.
- Decide on safe locations in your house where you could leave your pet in an emergency.
- Consider easy to clean areas such as utility areas or bathrooms and rooms with access to a supply of fresh water.
- Avoid choosing rooms with hazards such as windows, hanging plants or pictures in large frames.
- In case of flooding, the location should have access to high counters that pets can escape to.
- Set up two separate locations if you have dogs and cats.
- Buy a pet carrier that allows your pet to stand up and turn around inside. Train your pet to become comfortable with the carrier. Use a variety of training methods such as feeding it in the carrier or placing a favorite toy or blanket inside.
- If your pet is on medication or a special diet, find out from your veterinarian what you should do in case you have to leave it alone for several days. Try and get an extra supply of medications.

- Make sure your pet has a properly fitted collar that includes current owner identification tag, rabies tag, or license tag (if applicable). A microchip implant is also a great way to provide permanent identification for your pet.
- Current Owner Identification tag should include your name, address, and phone number.
- If your dog normally wears a chain link "choker" collar, have a leather or nylon collar available if you have to leave him alone for several days.
- Keep your pet's shots current and know where the records are.
- Most kennels require proof of current rabies and distemper vaccinations before accepting a pet.
- Contact motels and hotels in communities outside of your area and find out if they will accept pets in an emergency.
- When assembling emergency supplies for the household, include the following items for pets:
 - Extra food (The food should be dry and relatively unappealing to prevent overeating. Store the food in sturdy containers.)
 - Kitty litter
 - Large capacity self-feeder and water dispenser
 - Extra medications

In most cases, trained guide dogs for the blind, hearing impaired or handicapped will be allowed to stay in emergency shelters with their owners.

Plan for Pet Disaster Needs

- Identifying shelter. For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets. Find out which motels and hotels in the area you plan to evacuate to allow pets -- well in advance of needing them. There are also a number of guides that list hotels/motels that permit pets and could serve as a starting point. Include your local animal shelter's number in your list of emergency numbers -- they might be able to provide information concerning pets during a disaster.
- Take pet food, bottled water, medications, veterinary records, cat litter/pan, can opener, food dishes, first aid kit and other supplies with you in case they're not available later. While the sun is still shining, consider packing a "pet survival" kit which could be easily deployed if disaster hits.
- Make sure identification tags are up to date and securely fastened to your pet's collar. If possible, attach the address and/or phone number of your evacuation site. If your pet gets lost, his tag is his ticket home. Make sure you have a current photo of your pet for identification purposes.
- Make sure you have a secure pet carrier, leash or harness for your pet so that if he panics, he can't escape.

Prepare to Shelter Your Pet

- Call Washoe County Regional Animal Services for specific pet sheltering locations.
- If you are unable to return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Find out where pet boarding facilities are located. Be sure to research some outside your local area in case local facilities close.
- Most boarding kennels, veterinarians and animal shelters will need your pet's medical records to make sure all vaccinations are current. Include copies in your "pet survival" kit along with a photo of your pet.
- If you have no alternative but to leave your pet at home, there are some precautions you must take, but remember that leaving your pet at home alone can place your animal in great danger! Confine your pet to a safe area inside -- NEVER leave your pet chained outside! Leave them loose inside your home with food and plenty of water. Remove the toilet tank lid, raise the seat and brace the bathroom door open so they can drink. Place notices outside in a visible area, advising what pets are in the house and where they are located. Provide a phone number where you or a contact can be reached as well as the name and number of your vet.

Care for Livestock: Information for Livestock Owners

If you have large animals such as horses, cattle, sheep, goats, or pigs on your property, be sure to prepare before a disaster.

Preparation Guidelines:

- Ensure all animals have some form of identification that will help facilitate their return.
- Evacuate animals whenever possible. Arrangements for evacuation, including routes and host sites, should be made in advance. Alternate routes should be mapped out in case the planned route is inaccessible.
- The evacuation sites should have or be able to readily obtain food, water, veterinary care, handling equipment and facilities.
- Make available vehicles and trailers needed for transporting and supporting each type of animal. Also make available experienced handlers and drivers. Note: It is best to allow animals a chance to become accustomed to vehicular travel, so they are less frightened and easier to move.
- If evacuation is not possible, a decision must be made whether to move large animals to available shelter or turn them outside. This decision should be determined based on the type of disaster and the soundness and location of the shelter (structure).