

Are you prepared for a catastrophe?

Are you prepared to protect yourself and your family in the event of an extreme emergency, such as a major earthquake, a hurricane or some other disaster? Here are four essential steps recommended by international specialists to help you prepare for a serious and unexpected occurrence.



KNOW THE RISKS

Every single one of us, wherever we live on the planet, is likely to be affected by the risk of some kind of catastrophe resulting from a variety of causes, including natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes or flooding. But there can be other causes of severe and large-scale calamities: an incident at a nuclear power station, for example, or an accident involving the transport of highly toxic substances, an outbreak of a pandemic disease or even a tragic act of terrorism.

ALWAYS KEEP AN EMERGENCY KIT READY

During a situation of extreme emergency, there is a very good chance that you will not have access to water or electricity for a lengthy period of time. This is why you should always keep a basic emergency kit prepared and stored in a place known to the whole family. The kit would contain items such as drinking water, non-perishable foods, basic medicines and any prescribed drugs that anyone in the family needs to take, a radio, a torch, spare batteries and copies of key documents, among others. By doing this, you

will be better prepared to cope during the immediate aftermath of a catastrophe.

DRAW UP A FAMILY EMERGENCY PLAN

From time to time, get the family together and remind them of the normal procedures they should follow in the event of being separated from each other when an extreme emergency strikes. Choose a meeting point that everyone knows well and identify means of keeping in contact with each other in the event of a general communications outage. Find out about the emergency plans and evacuation procedures at your place of work and your children's schools.

STAY INFORMED

Being prepared to cope in the case of an emergency also means staying informed. Nowadays, there are various websites belonging to international organisations where you can look for information about how to cope in an extreme emergency. Additionally, familiarising yourself with the recommendations of your country's civil defence organisation is fundamental.

You can find out more about preventative and preparatory procedures in emergencies online at <http://www.ready.gov>, for example.