



Fort Carson-MEDDAC News

Be Smart: Be Prepared!

By: Lindsay Huse, RN, Nurse Epidemiologist

Walking in a winter wonderland is all fun and games until the snow is blowing so hard you can't see, you can't get your car out of your parking spot, and the power suddenly goes out. While winter emergencies are rare, they are one of the more likely ones to occur in Colorado. The inability to leave your home for food, medicine, and other needs for several days and the potential for power outages can mean injury, illness, and severe health problems. It pays to be prepared before an event ever happens. The Centers for Disease Control recommends families be proactive in preparing for any public health emergency that may arise. While some individuals are quite extreme in their preparedness plans, you don't have to build a bunker in your basement to start the process.

While emergencies can be very diverse in their causes and outcomes, some basic preparedness ideas hold true no matter the event. Having access to safe food, water, shelter, and medical care are vital whether the emergency is related to weather, disease, or terrorism. Most agencies, such as the CDC and American Red Cross, recommend having at least 72 hours worth of food, water, and medication on hand for each person in the family. It can be daunting to figure out where to start. Here are a few basic things you can do to begin preparing:

- Stock up on food and water. Water is especially important. The CDC recommends at least one gallon of water per person and pet, per day. Some agencies recommend even more. Store at least three days worth. Use either sealed water products, such as bottled or jug water, or buy food-grade storage containers at your local sporting goods store. In an emergency, you may need to go without bathing for a few days, but don't ration drinking water. Preventing dehydration is vital. When planning food supplies, consider that you may not have a heat source to prepare it, or plan for an alternate heat source. Items should be non-perishable. Canned and dehydrated foods may be easiest to both store and prepare. Don't forget to store basic prep items, like can openers, and don't forget to stock for pets! Rotate and replace your water supply every three months, and your food supply every six months. Also, ensure you have necessary items such as extra blankets, clothing, shoes, and even an emergency shelter such as a tent.



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- Make a plan. Making a plan helps you identify items you may want to have on hand and helps keep your family safe. Have both a shelter-in-place plan and an evacuation plan. Each member of the family should know what to do in either of those situations. Check your plan several times yearly to ensure you have necessary supplies, and drill with your family. Camp indoors to simulate a power outage, drill your evacuation plan and make it into a family outing. Not only is it practical to ensure everyone knows what to do, it can help foster a feeling of normalcy and decrease anxiety for your family in the event your plan has to be put to real use.
- Be informed. Know the most likely emergencies are in your area, and understand terms such Evacuation, Shelter in Place, Isolation, and Quarantine. Know where information will come from in an emergency and ensure you have ways to access it. If internet or cable service is down, do you have a battery-operated radio to ensure you are connected?
- Visit any of the many excellent websites that exist to help you prepare for an emergency: <http://emergency.cdc.gov/preparedness/plan/>, <http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/service/disasteremergency-preparedness-and-response>, or <http://www.redcrosslv.org/disaster/materials.html>.