



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Be Prepared

National Preparedness Month – September 2017

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Kathleen Dooling] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Kathleen Dooling.

"Be ready for emergencies." It's a good policy to live by because disasters can occur at any time. Dr. Dan Sosin is with CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response. He's joining us today to discuss the importance of preparing for emergencies and disasters. Welcome to the show, Dan.

[Dr. Sosin] Thank you, Kathleen. It's a pleasure to be here today and to encourage people to prepare for disasters.

[Dr. Dooling] Dan, how many people in the U.S. are prepared for disasters or emergency situations?

[Dr. Sosin] Kathleen, while the number of Americans who have taken steps to prepare for an emergency is quite large, nearly half of U.S. adults do not have the resources and plans in place in the event of an emergency. Even fewer have practiced a disaster plan at work, at school, or in their home in the past year. Personal preparedness is an important part of getting through an emergency safely. With the number and severity of weather-related disasters we've seen, it's important to take specific action to prepare, through planning, discussions, and exercises.

[Dr. Dooling] What kinds of emergencies should people be prepared for?

[Dr. Sosin] Well, it may surprise you that 80 percent of Americans live in counties that have been hit with a weather-related disaster since 2007. Part of the preparation is understanding the kinds of disasters you're likely to face and what special preparations are needed in each situation, such as with hurricanes or tornadoes, droughts or earthquakes. There are also things that we should all prepare for, like a long power outage or an influenza pandemic.

[Dr. Dooling] What are some steps we should take to plan for a disaster or emergency?

[Dr. Sosin] Here are three steps.

1. Assemble a basic emergency kit and know how to use it. The key is to have this kit assembled and ready to use, not scattered all over your house. Make sure everything is in working order and easily accessible.
2. Make a plan. Learn your area's evacuation routes. The time to figure this out isn't when there's a mandatory evacuation. You should talk with your family ahead of time. Discuss

how you will communicate with each other and where you will meet and the different ways that you might get there.

3. Be informed. Take steps now to make sure you'll get the information you need when an emergency happens. Sign up for local emergency alerts and know how your officials will communicate with you during a disaster. That may be through radio, through emergency text messages or social messages, it may be a phone calling system, or even sirens and loudspeakers. This can be different in different locations, so reach out now and know how you will get your local information.

[Dr. Dooling] What should be included in an emergency kit?

[Dr. Sosin] There are good planning materials online but here's a short list of must-have items. Water. Everyone needs it—at least one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days. So, for a family of four, that's 12 gallons. Food. Similarly, at least three day supply. Non-perishable food that's easy to open and prepare. 3. A battery-powered or hand crank radio. 4. A flashlight. It's hard to move safely in the dark and it will get dark. 5. Extra batteries for you phone, your flashlight, your radio, or any other emergency devices. And 6. A multiple day supply of your medications so you don't go without them.

[Dr. Dooling] When an emergency occurs, what are some of the general steps we should take?

[Dr. Sosin] Each disaster brings its own unique challenges, but for all emergencies, it's important to stay calm and assess the situation. Check the area around you for safety. Listen for instructions from your local emergency authority. Information may change rapidly during an emergency so it's important to listen regularly for updates. And then, execute your emergency plans, as they apply to the situation, including to check on neighbors who might need assistance. We encourage people to be preparedness role models for others. For example, you could learn CPR with your family, buy a weather radio for your office, or join your local medical reserve corps. That way, you will have the confidence to take immediate action when disaster strikes. By planning and preparing, we are more likely to take positive protective action when an emergency occurs.

[Dr. Dooling] Where can listeners get more information about preparing for disasters and emergencies?

[Dr. Sosin] There's a lot more great information on our website. That website is emergency.cdc.gov.

[Dr. Dooling] Thanks, Dan. I've been talking today with Dr. Dan Sosin about the importance of preparing for emergencies.

Whether it's a hurricane, tornado, infectious disease outbreak, or biological attack, have a plan and the tools to rely on. It can be the difference between life and death.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Kathleen Dooling for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.