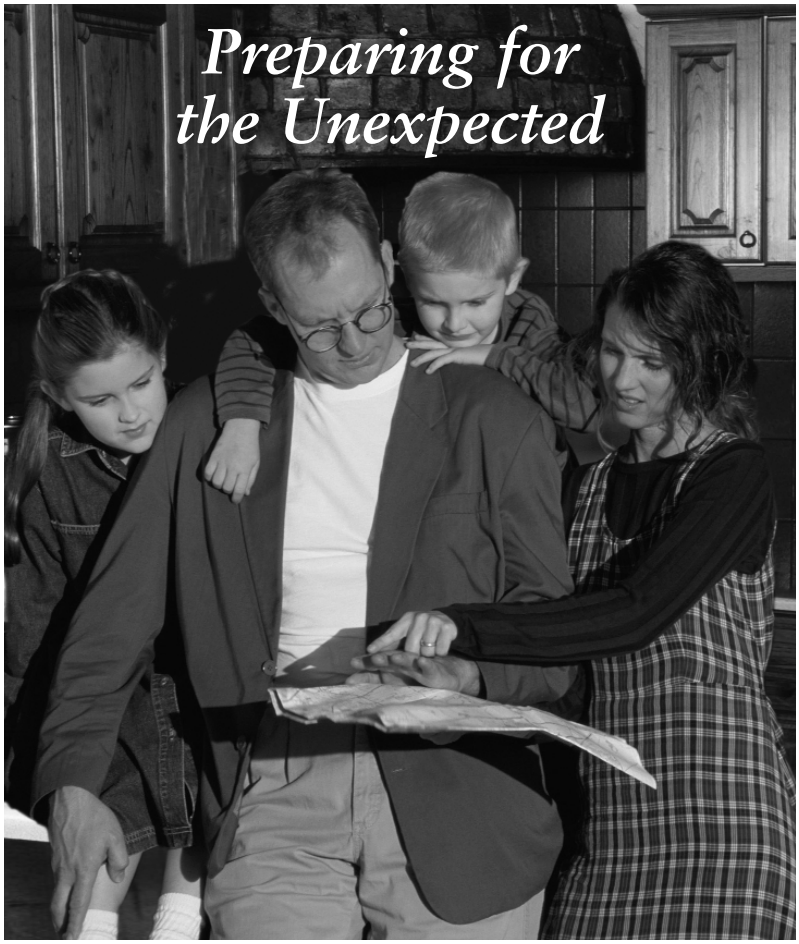
Terrorism



American Red Cross

Together, we can save a life

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American Red Cross

Disaster Services

A1366
Oct. 2001

An American Red Cross mobile service center stationed at the Pentagon Sept. 18 shows one small part of the ongoing response you can expect from the Red Cross in the advent of any disaster.

Devastating acts, such as the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, have left many concerned about the possibility of future incidents in the United States and their potential impact. They have raised uncertainty about what might happen next, increasing stress levels. Nevertheless, there are things you can do to prepare for the unexpected and reduce the stress that you may feel now and later should another emergency arise. Taking preparatory action can reassure you and your children that you can exert a measure of control even in the face of such events.

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Children need to know their family members' phone numbers and e-mail addresses. The information should be carried with them to school and easy for them to find at home.

What You Can Do to Prepare

Finding out what can happen is the first step. Once you have determined the events possible and their potential in your community, it is important that you discuss them with your family or household. Develop a disaster plan together.

1. Create an emergency communications plan.

Choose an out-of-town contact your family or household will call or e-mail to check on each other should a disaster occur. Your selected contact should live far enough away that they would be unlikely to be directly affected by the same event, and they should know they are the chosen contact. Make sure every household member has that contact's, and each other's, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers (home, work, pager and cell). Leave these contact numbers at your children's schools, if you have children, and at your workplace. Your family should know that if telephones are not working, they need to be patient and try again later or try e-mail. Many people flood the telephone lines when emergencies happen but e-mail can sometimes get through when calls don't.

2. Establish a meeting place.

Having a predetermined meeting place away from your home will save time and minimize confusion should your home be affected or the area evacuated. You may even want to make arrangements to stay with a family member or friend in case of an emergency. Be sure to include any pets in these plans, since pets are not permitted in shelters and some hotels will not accept them.

3. Assemble a disaster supplies kit.

If you need to evacuate your home or are asked to "shelter in place," having some essential supplies on hand will make you and your family more comfortable—

- Prepare a disaster supplies kit in an easy-to-carry container such as a duffel bag or small plastic trash can.
- Include "special needs" items for any household member (infant formula or items for people with disabilities or older people), first aid supplies (including prescription medications), a change of clothing for each person, a sleeping bag or bedroll for each, a battery powered radio or television and extra batteries, food, bottled water and tools.
- It is also a good idea to include some cash and copies of important family documents (birth certificates, passports and licenses) in your kit.

Copies of essential documents—like powers of attorney, birth and marriage certificates,

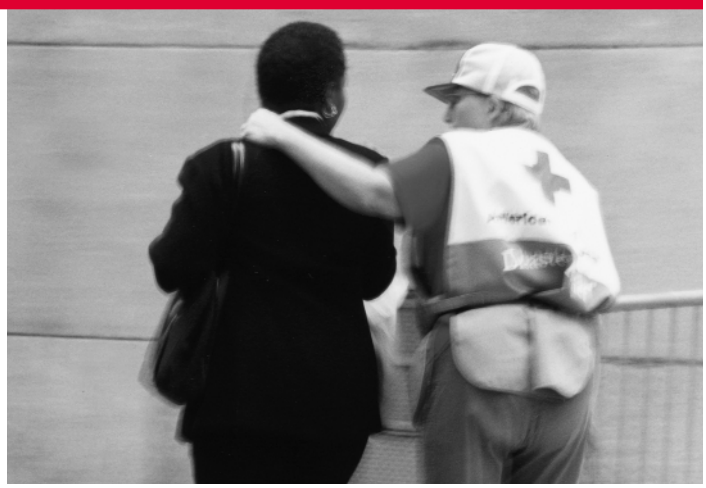
insurance policies, life insurance beneficiary designations and a copy of your will—should also be kept in a safe location outside your home. A safe deposit box or the home of a friend or family member who lives out of town is a good choice.

For more complete instructions, ask your local Red Cross chapter for the brochure titled *Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit* (stock number A4463).

4. Check on the school emergency plan of any school-age children you may have.

You need to know if they will keep children at school until a parent or designated adult can pick them up or send them home on their own. Be sure that the school has updated information about how to reach parents and responsible caregivers to arrange for pickup. And, ask what type of authorization the school may require to release a child to someone you designate, if you are not able to picup your child. During times of emergency the school telephones may be overwhelmed with calls.

For more information on putting together a disaster plan, request a copy of the brochure titled *Your Family Disaster Plan* (A4466) from your local American Red Cross chapter. You may also want to request a copy of *Before Disaster Strikes... How to Make Sure You're Financially Prepared* (A5075) for specific information on what you can do now to protect your assets. These documents are also available at **www.redcross.org**.



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On Sept. 14 in New York City, a Red Cross worker comforts a woman shaken by the World Trade Center attack.

If Disaster Strikes

- Remain calm and be patient.
- Follow the advice of local emergency officials.
- Listen to your radio or television for news and instructions.
- If the disaster occurs near you, check for injuries. Give first aid and get help for seriously injured people.
- If the disaster occurs near your home while you are there, check for damage using a flashlight. Do not light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches. Check for fires, fire hazards and other household hazards. Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly.
- Shut off any other damaged utilities.
- Confine or secure your pets.
- Call your family contact—do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.
- Check on your neighbors, especially those who are elderly or disabled.

A Word on What Could Happen

As we learned from the events of September 11, 2001, the following things can happen after a terrorist attack:

- There can be significant numbers of casualties and/or damage to buildings and the infrastructure. So employers need up-to-date information about any medical needs you may have and on how to contact your designated beneficiaries.
- Heavy law enforcement involvement at local, state and federal levels follows a terrorist attack due to the event's criminal nature.
- Health and mental health resources in the affected communities can be strained to their limits, maybe even overwhelmed.
- Extensive media coverage, strong public fear and international implications and consequences can continue for a prolonged period.
- Workplaces and schools may be closed, and there may be restrictions on domestic and international travel.
- You and your family or household may have to evacuate an area, avoiding roads blocked for your safety.
- Clean-up may take many months.

Evacuation

If local authorities ask you to leave your home, they have a good reason to make this request, and you should heed the advice immediately. Listen to your radio or TV, follow the instructions of local emergency officials and keep these simple tips in mind—

- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and sturdy shoes so you can be protected as much as possible.
- Take your disaster supplies kit.
- Take your pets with you; do not leave them behind. Because pets are not permitted in public shelters, follow your plan to go to a relative or friend's home, or find a "pet-friendly" hotel.
- Lock your home.
- Use travel routes specified by local authorities—don't use shortcuts because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous.
- Stay away from downed power lines.

Listen to local authorities. They will provide you with the most accurate information specific to an event in your area. Staying tuned to local radio and television, and following their instructions is your safest choice.

If you're sure you have time:

- Call your family contact to tell them where you are going and when you expect to arrive.
- Shut off water and electricity before leaving, if instructed to do so. Leave natural gas service ON unless local officials advise you otherwise. You may need gas for heating and cooking, and only a professional can restore gas service in your home once it's been turned off. In a disaster situation it could take weeks for a professional to respond.

A disaster supply kit, with items like those shown and a radio and extra batteries, is an essential resource in times of emergency.

Shelter in place

If you are advised by local officials to "shelter in place," what they mean is for you to remain inside your home or office and protect yourself there. Close and lock all windows and exterior doors. Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Close the fireplace damper. Get your disaster supplies kit, and make sure the radio is working. Go to an interior room without windows that's above ground level. In the case of a chemical threat, an above-ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air, and may seep into basements even if the windows are closed. Using duct tape, seal all cracks around the door and any vents into the room. Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

Additional Positive Steps You Can Take

Raw, unedited footage of terrorism events and people's reaction to those events can be very upsetting, especially to children. We do not recommend that children watch television news reports about such events, especially if the news reports show images over and over again about the same incident. Young children do not realize that it is repeated video footage, and think the event is happening again and again. Adults may also need to give themselves a break from watching disturbing footage. However, listening to local radio and television reports will provide you with the most accurate information from responsible governmental authorities on what's happening and what actions you will need to take. So you may want to make some arrangements to take turns listening to the news with other adult members of your household.

Another useful preparation includes learning some basic first aid. To enroll in a first aid and CPR course, contact your local American Red Cross chapter. In an emergency situation, you need to tend to your own well-being first and then consider first aid for others immediately around you, including possibly assisting injured people to evacuate a building if necessary.

People who may have come into contact with a biological or chemical agent may need to go through a decontamination procedure and receive medical attention. Listen to the advice of local officials on the radio or television to determine what steps you will need to take to protect yourself and your family. As emergency services will likely be overwhelmed, only call 9-1-1 about life-threatening emergencies.

First Aid Primer

If you encounter someone who is injured, apply the emergency action steps: **Check-Call-Care. Check** the scene to make sure it is safe for you to approach. Then check the victim for unconsciousness and life-threatening conditions. Someone who has a life-threatening condition, such as not breathing or severe bleeding, requires immediate care by trained responders and may require treatment by medical professionals. **Call** out for help. There are some steps that you can take, however, to **care** for someone who is hurt, but whose injuries are not life threatening.

Control Bleeding

- Cover the wound with a dressing, and press firmly against the wound (direct pressure).
- Elevate the injured area above the level of the heart if you do not suspect that the victim has a broken bone.
- Cover the dressing with a roller bandage.
- If the bleeding does not stop:
  - Apply additional dressings and bandages.
  - Use a pressure point to squeeze the artery against the bone.
- Provide care for shock.

Care for Shock

- Keep the victim from getting chilled or overheated.
- Elevate the legs about 12 inches (if broken bones are not suspected).
- Do not give food or drink to the victim.

Tend Burns

- Stop the burning by cooling the burn with large amounts of water.
- Cover the burn with dry, clean dressings or cloth.

Care for Injuries to Muscles, Bones and Joints

- Rest the injured part.
- Apply ice or a cold pack to control swelling and reduce pain.
- Avoid any movement or activity that causes pain.
- If you must move the victim because the scene is becoming unsafe, try to immobilize the injured part to keep it from moving.

Be Aware of Biological/Radiological Exposure

- Listen to local radio and television reports for the most accurate information from responsible governmental and medical authorities on what's happening and what actions you will need to take.
- The Web sites referenced at the end of this brochure can give you more information on how to protect yourself from exposure to biological or radiological hazards.

Reduce Any Care Risks

The risk of getting a disease while giving first aid is extremely rare. However, to reduce the risk even further:

- Avoid direct contact with blood and other body fluids.
- Use protective equipment, such as disposable gloves and breathing barriers.
- Whenever possible, thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water immediately after giving care.

It is important to be prepared for an emergency and to know how to give emergency care.

Supplies for rescue workers are unpacked at the Pennsylvania crash site on Sept. 13. The Red Cross can provide necessities very quickly to almost any location for as long as they are needed.

More Information

All of these recommendations make good sense, regardless of the potential problem. For more information on how to get ready for disaster and be safe when disaster strikes, or to register for a first aid and CPR course, please contact your local American Red Cross chapter. You can find it in your telephone directory under "American Red Cross" or through our home page at **www.redcross.org** under "your local chapter."

For information about your community's specific plans for response to disasters and other emergencies, contact your local office of emergency management.

For information on what a business can do to protect its employees and customers as well as develop business continuity plans, see **www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared** or request a copy of the *Emergency Management Guide for Business and Industry* and/or *Preparing Your Business for the Unthinkable* from your local American Red Cross chapter.

For more information about the specific effects of chemical or biological agents, the following Web sites may be helpful:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.bt.cdc.gov

U.S. Department of Energy
www.energy.gov

U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
www.hhs.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency
www.rris.fema.gov

Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/swercepp

Johns Hopkins University
www.hopkins-biodefense.org