



Your Response In Case of Emergency



A General Word About Disaster Response

After a disaster, the most important thing you can do is to remain calm! If you panic, you will not be able to respond effectively to the situation and its results. Remain calm and be prepared for possible additional events such as aftershocks or secondary incidents. Take the following precautions immediately following any major disaster.

Immediate Response Regardless Of Damage

- Stay home if you are home when the disaster hits. If you are at school, report to your teacher for instructions. Do not drive unless absolutely necessary, and then drive with caution, keeping streets clear for emergency vehicles. Turn on the radio to receive disaster instructions.
- Prepare for possible evacuation. Gather your emergency supplies to allow you to live in a shelter, your backyard or other neighborhood locations for a few days.
- When possible, notify your family of your well being. When communications return to normal, notify other worried friends and relatives. However, use your telephone only to report extreme emergency situations.
- Clean up spilled medicines, chemicals, broken glass and any hazardous material immediately.
- Stay with small children. They fear separation from parents during stressful times.
- Take routine medications, especially essential ones such as heart or diabetic medications.
- Confine pets so they will not run away or hurt themselves.
- Do not go without food or water for long periods. Under no circumstances should a person drink less than one quart of water each day, regardless of supply. Drink water as needed and then try to find more for future use.
- Cooperate with requests for help from police, fire-fighting teams and relief organizations. Do not go into damaged areas unless your help has been requested.



Immediate Response If There Is Damage

- If power has been interrupted due to damage to the structure, flashlights are the best light source.
- Protect your hands and feet near broken glass or debris. Keep head and face protected with something like a hard hat, blanket, coat, newspapers or a cardboard box.
- Check for fires, fire hazards or other household hazards such as chemical spills or toxic fumes.
- Turn off appliances and extinguish open flames. Check utility lines and appliances for damage. If you suspect utility line breaks, turn off the electricity at the main control point. If you suspect a gas leak, shut off the gas at the main valve, open the windows, evacuate, report to the authorities and stay away until utility officials say it is safe. Do not attempt to turn the gas back on yourself! PG&E personnel must restore gas service in order to ensure that all pilot lights are relit and the home is safe to occupy.



Recovering from Disaster

Returning to a Damaged Home

Never return home until authorities say that it is safe to do so. Use extreme caution when re-entering a home that has been damaged. Be sure to thoroughly check all utilities before resuming use. Clean up any hazardous spills before children re-enter the home.



Get Disaster Assistance

Throughout the recovery period it is important to continue to monitor local media sources for information about where to get emergency housing, food, first aid, clothing and financial assistance.

Mental Health and Crisis Counseling

The emotional toll that a disaster brings can sometimes be even more devastating than the physical or financial strains. Children and seniors are especially susceptible to the stresses caused by a major disaster. Even individuals who experience a disaster “secondhand” (that is, they do not experience the disaster, but view and assist with the effects of a disaster) can be affected.



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Evacuation

Should you need to leave your home, your first option and plan should always be to family and friends first. They can accommodate you, your pets, and help you be most comfortable in a stressful situation. However, emergency public shelters will be available, and can provide a safe place to stay and meals while you are there.

- Listen to the radio or television for locations of emergency shelters. If you require special accommodation, note those that are accessible or have disability-friendly amenities.
- Shut off water, gas and electricity if instructed to do so and if time permits.
- Wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Lock your home and be sure to take your disaster supplies kit.
- Use travel routes specified by local authorities and do not use shortcuts. Certain areas may be impassable or dangerous.
- Inform members of your support network and out-of-town contact of your location and status.
- If you require the care of a personal attendant and choose to go to a shelter, bring the attendant with you.
- If you are instructed to shelter-in-place immediately, do so at once.

Additional Resources

www.oes.ca.gov

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

www.fema.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency

www.redcross.org

American Red Cross

www.ready.gov

US Department of Homeland Security

www.ibhs.org

Institute for Business and Home Safety

www.72hours.org

San Francisco Office of Emergency Services

www.smcfire.org

San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department

Shelters

In a major disaster, your home may be damaged such that you cannot live in it or you may be asked to evacuate for your safety. Either way, you will need to be ready to live in an emergency shelter for a short time.



In order to minimize the potential confusion following a disaster, most cities do not advertise the location of shelters until a shelter has actually been activated. Which locations and how many are utilized will depend upon the nature, extent, scope and exact location of the disaster.

Remember that shelters provide for communal living; you will not have much privacy or extra amenities. If you can, it is a good idea to bring toys, games, books or other items to keep you and your family occupied.

There are specific rules for shelter living. In general, you will be encouraged to bring your emergency supplies to the shelter, but you will not be allowed to bring food in glass containers or alcoholic beverages. If you do not comply with shelter rules, you may be asked to leave.

Pets will not be allowed in a shelter. Be sure you make plans ahead of time for the safe shelter of your pets in the event of an emergency.



Most often, you will be instructed to "shelter in place." "Sheltering in place" means that you remain where you are until you are informed that it is safe to leave – whether you are home, at work or elsewhere. This may be a short term (hours) or long term (days) necessity, and you will definitely want to have emergency supplies handy in this event. For this reason, the City recommends that you keep a basic emergency preparedness kit in your car and your office in addition to a complete kit at your home.

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