



THE CITY OF ALTON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

Preface

Emergencies and disasters such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, terrorist activities, fires, explosions, transportation accidents, infectious diseases and other potential hazards continuously threaten the State of Texas and its citizens.

In response to such threats state law requires every county, city and school district in Texas to prepare and keep current a local emergency operations plan. These Emergency Operation Plans and their activities are shaped by Texas Law as well as national policies and guidelines.

The Emergency Management Coordinators (EMC) and Directors have been assigned to develop and maintain these emergency operation plans and to support first responders out in the field with resources and direction before, during and after a disaster.

The Emergency Management Coordinator for the city is the liaison between the City, the County, the State, School Districts and other Non-Profits during an emergency event.

The EMC and its Directors have assigned duties to perform during a disaster event and have the duty to notify the public of events that may threaten the health and safety of the public.

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INTRODUCTION:

Why prepare for a disaster? Disasters can strike without warning, forcing you to go for days without basic necessities (food, water, electricity) or to evacuate your home. The EMC and other agencies will assign relief workers to the scene following a disaster; however, they may not be able to reach you immediately following an emergency event.

You need to be prepared. Knowing the steps to take before, during and after a disaster, weather flooding, tornados, earthquakes or other crises can greatly reduce the danger and distress you and your family may face during this time.

The EMC has been assigned and appointed by the elected governing body of the city to help you and your family plan for a variety of emergency situations and how to persevere during them and recover afterwards.

The EMC would have contact information needed to prepare and recover a disaster and would have resources to alert the community on which potential disasters could strike the city and surrounding areas. This information and these resources can help you prepare for and reduce the risk you may face during a disaster event.

Creating a basic Emergency Plan:

Creating an emergency plan for your household, office or business place is one of the most important steps you can take in disaster preparedness and emergency management. Knowing what to do and how to do it can help you and your family/coworkers manage disaster with less worry, fear and uncertainty.

Testing out this plan throughout the year is very important to make sure that everyone assigned to a duty in the plan knows what is to be expected of them and that they know how to perform that duty.

The following check list can be used to create an emergency plan:

- Decide what you and your family (coworkers) would do in each potential emergency situation.
- Draw a floor plan of your home (business) showing escape routes.
- Choose a place away from the neighborhood where family members can meet in case you are separated and cannot return home due to a disaster.
- Identify a friend or relative who lives out of the area for family members to contact if you are separated.
- Have emergency numbers on your cell phones and teach younger children how and when to dial 911.
- Know how to shut off the water, gas and electricity at the main switch in your home (business).
- Plan how to help the elderly and disabled neighbors in a disaster.
- Check that your insurance policies are up to date and provide good coverage.

Preparing a Disaster supply kit:

Having a disaster supply kit ready to take with you at a moment's notice ensures that you will have necessary supplies no matter how fast you may need to evacuate. Pack supplies in duffel bags or backpacks and keep them in a designated place. Your kit will also come in handy if you must take shelter in your home. At a minimum your kit should contain the following items:

Water:

- Pack at least one gallon per person per day for at least three days.
- Store water in tightly sealed non-breakable plastic or enamel lined metal containers.
- Change your water every six months to keep it fresh in your supply kit.

Food:

- Pack enough food per person for at least three days.
- Included canned and boxed foods that require little or no preparation and that last long periods of time. Make sure to pack a can opener.
- Pack foods in sealed plastic containers.
- Replace the food items every six months to keep the food fresh.

Equipment:

- Radio, flashlight, spare batteries, re-sealable plastic bags, washcloths and towels, Paper cups, plates, utensils.
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant.
- Heavy duty plastic garbage bags, Change of clothing, extra pair of shoes.
- Blankets or sleeping bag.
- First Aid Kit.

Personal Items:

- Identification card, Credit cards, Bank cards
- Copy of Birth and Marriage Certificates, inventory of household goods, bank account numbers, other important documents.
- Extra car and house keys
- Prescription medications.
- Cash

In Case of Evacuation:

In a disaster situation, it may be necessary to evacuate your home for several days or longer. Because disasters can strike with little or no warning, you should be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. Knowing beforehand the steps to take in case of evacuation can make a big difference.

- Contact the local Emergency Management office to learn evacuation routes for your area.
- Determine where you and your family will go if your community is evacuated.
- Discuss with your family the possibility of evacuation.
- Find out your school's evacuation policy.
- Check your disaster supply kit so it will be ready to go.
- Fuel up your vehicle if it is going to be used for the evacuation.

When authorities tell you to evacuate:

- Bring your disaster supply kit.
- Wear sturdy shoes and clothing.
- Unplug home electronics.
- Lock the doors and windows at your home.
- Turn the main power off for Electricity, Gas and Water
- Inform a friend or relative of your route.
- Follow the recommended evacuation routes.

Managing a Disaster at Home:

Although you may not be asked to evacuate, and even if you are, disaster can isolate you from outside help and make it necessary for you to care for yourself for days at a time. Your disaster supply kit will contain many of the tools and supplies you will need. Here are some other ways to use and manage the resources you have at your home.

Water:

- Water is crucial for health and survival. If a disaster is imminent, fill pitchers, jars, buckets, water bottles and your bathtub in case your community water supply is cut off.
- This water can be used for drinking, flushing the toilet and light sponge baths.
- Water from the water heater can also be used for flushing the toilet.
- When conserving water, each person should drink at least two quarts of water a day to keep from dehydrating.

Food:

- Ration food supplies for everyone at the house. Most people can survive easily on half the normal amount.
- Avoid eating food from dented or swollen cans of food that looks or smells abnormal.

In case the power goes out:

- Know how to manually release your electric garage door.
- Protect your computer with a surge protector.
- Turn off computer, televisions and other appliances you were using when the power went off. Leave one light turned on so you know when the power is restored.
- Avoid opening the refrigerator and freezer door. Food will remain fresh up to four hours after the power goes off. Prior to a power outage, you can freeze water in plastic bottles to keep food cool longer.
- If you will be using a generator, operate it outside only and not in a garage where it would be enclosed.
- Do not hook up the generator directly to the home's wiring. Instead connect the appliances you want power to the outlets on the generator.

Dealing with Hurricanes:

Hurricanes are tropical cyclones that threaten areas of the United States along the Atlantic coastline and the Gulf of Mexico. They can cause extensive damage due to the winds, flooding and even tornadoes they produce. The hurricane season extends from June to November, and peaks from mid-August to late October.

During a Hurricane Threat:

- Stay tuned to radio or TV for updates.
- Shutter or board the windows in your home.
- Secure outdoor objects and bring them inside.
- Stock up on food and water in case you must shelter in your home.
- Fuel up your vehicle in case you have to evacuate.
- Turn off utilities at the main if instructed by authorities.
- Know the following terms:
 - Hurricane Watch – Hurricane conditions are possible within 36 hours.
 - Hurricane Warning – A hurricane is expected within 24 hours.
 - Storm Surge - A dome of water pushed ashore by hurricane force winds.
 - Storm Tide – A storm surge combined with a normal tide.

After a Hurricane:

- Remain in a secure location until you are notified it is safe to leave.
- Do not drive unless necessary.
- Do not drink the tap water until authorities have notified it is safe to drink.
- Stay away from water ways.
- Report downed power lines and broken gas and sewer mains to officials.
- Inspect your home for damage and report it to your insurance agent.

Note: Hurricane winds can range from 75mph to more than 150 mph.

Dealing with Tornadoes:

Tornadoes are violent rotating storms with winds that can exceed 300 miles per hour. The product of thunderstorms and sometimes hurricanes, they can be highly destructive. Injuries or deaths from tornadoes most often are due to collapsed buildings, flying objects, or people caught trying to outrun the funnel cloud.

Preparing for a Tornado:

- Designate a shelter area in your home. The interior rooms or hallway on the ground floor work well.
- Practice getting to your homes shelter area.
- If you live in a mobile home, move to a shelter where you can pass the storm. Mobile homes offer little protection in a tornado.
- Contact your local emergency management agency to find out if there are any public safe rooms or shelters nearby.
- Know the location of designated shelter areas in place like school gyms and recreation centers.
- Know the following terms:
 - Tornado Watch – Tornadoes are possible in the area. Stay tuned to radio or TV.
 - Tornado Warning - A tornado has been sighted. Take cover at once.

After a Tornado:

- Watch out for debris, especially broken glass, and downed power lines.
- Be careful when entering a tornado damaged structure. Roofs and walls may have lost their integrity.
- Inspect your home for damage and report it to your insurance agent.

Dealing with Earthquakes:

Earthquake damage can extend for miles from the epicenter of these traumatic shifts in the earth's crust, resulting in collapsed buildings, bridges and overpasses, cracked roadways, downed power lines, broken gas lines, and landslides. Earthquakes at sea can trigger tsunamis that crash into and devastate islands and coastal areas.

Preparing for an Earthquake:

- Secure major appliances to the floor.
- Move large objects and breakable items to lower shelves.
- Fasten pictures and mirrors securely to the walls.
- Install flexible pipe fittings to minimize breakage of gas and water lines.
- Know the following terms:
 - Aftershock – An earthquake of lesser intensity that occurs after the main earthquake.
 - Epicenter – The point on the earth's surface directly above the focus of the earthquake.
 - Fault – A fracture in the earth's crust.
 - Seismic Waves – Vibrations that travel out from the fault at hundreds of miles per hour (mph). These waves are the leading cause of damage in an earthquake.

After an Earthquake:

- Be cautious - aftershocks can further damage weakened structures.
- Stay off the streets.
- Check appliances and utilities. If you smell gas, open a window and leave, call the Gas Company and shut off the main gas valve to your house.
- Inspect water and gas pipes and electrical lines to your house.
- Open cabinets carefully.
- Inspect your home for damage and report it to your insurance agent.

Dealing with Fires:

Every year, more than 350,000 homes in the United States are struck by fire. There are easy steps you can take to reduce the chance that your home will be damaged or anyone injured in a blaze, whether it starts inside or outside your home.

Practice Home Fire Safety:

- Have smoke detectors and fire extinguishers on every level of your home.
- Test and clean smoke detectors monthly and replace batteries at least twice a year.
- Check fire extinguisher pressure gauges monthly.
- Store matches and lighters out of sight and out of reach of children.
- Don't overload electrical outlets.
- Inspect electrical cords for damage.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet from furniture and drapes.
- Clean the lint screen on your clothes dryer before each use.
- Store flammable materials and chemicals safely away from sources of heat.
- Clean fireplaces, coal stoves, wood stoves and chimneys once a year.
- Thin bushes and trees within 30 feet of your home.
- Store firewood at least 30 feet from your home.

Know what to Do in a Fire:

- Create a family fire escape plan that shows two ways out and a family meeting place outside. Practice this at least twice a year.
- In a fire get out fast and stay out. Crawl low under smoke. Telephone to report a fire from outside of the burning building.
- If clothes catch fire, stop, drop to the floor or ground and roll. Cover your face with your hands.

Dealing with a Terrorist Attack:

National security emergencies can include terrorist acts from bombing to biological or chemical attacks. Although terrorists intend their acts to spread fear, the actual damage the cause can often be minimized through preparedness and quick action.

If the U.S. Department of Homeland Security becomes aware of a credible terrorist threat in a community the public will be alerted by local and federal officials

Raise Your Awareness:

- Be aware of your surroundings. Note emergency exits and staircases.
- Leave the area if you feel something is wrong.
- Report suspicious behavior.

In Case of an Explosion:

- Watch for falling debris.
- Crawl beneath the smoke and exit the area as quickly as possible.
- If you are trapped in debris minimize your movement and cover your mouth with a cloth. Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can hear you. Do not use a match or lighter, due to potential gas line being broken.

In Case of a Biochemical Attack:

- Evacuate if ordered by authorities.
- Stay tuned to radio and TV for updates.
- If not evacuating, take shelter in an interior room that can be easily sealed off with pre-cut plastic sheeting and duct tape that you have stored in this room.
- Turn off the air condition system.
- If caught outside try to get upwind of the attack site and seek shelter as soon as possible.
- If in a vehicle get inside a building if you can. If unable, roll up windows shut the vents and turn off the engine.

If Exposed to Chemicals:

- Quickly remove all clothing and items in contact with the body. Cut shirts off to avoid contact with the face and eyes.
- Flush eyes with water.
- Wash hands and face with soap and water. Use soapy cloth to blot exposed skin. Rinse with clean water.
- Change into clean cloths.
- See medical help as soon as possible.

If Exposed to a Biological Attack:

- Pay close attention to instructions from authorities.
- Remove and bag clothes that may have come in contact with the infection substance.
- Seek immediate medical treatment if you notice symptoms of the disease.

In Case of Nuclear Attack:

- Take shelter even if you are many miles from the site of the explosion. If you are close enough to see the flash, fallout will arrive within 20 minutes.
- Inside a building use a basement or underground area shelter or a central room on the lowest floor.
- Remain in the shelter until authorities say it is safe to leave. This could be from two days to four weeks.

What to Do after a Disaster:

Weather returning home or venturing outside for the first time beware of new dangers that may have arisen because of the disaster. You may experience washed-out roads, downed power lines, contaminated drinking water or other hazards. Report problems promptly to local officials so that corrective measures can be taken.

Inspect Your Home for Damage:

- Look for structural damage, loose or damaged electrical wires, gas leaks before re-entering your home. If you doubt the safety of the structure, contact a professional to inspect the home before entering.
- Do not enter a fire-damaged house until authorities have inspected it.
- Check refrigerator and discard spoiled food.
- Contact your insurance agent.

Help Children Cope:

A child can be traumatized by a disaster whether it is experienced first-hand, seen on television or learned about from adults. Monitor the nature and quantity of disaster related programming your children are exposed to and contact your child's school to determine how teachers are dealing with the situation. If your children have questions about the disaster answer them truthfully but don't allow the subject to dominate your conversations. Provide reassuring words so they will be able to cope with the situation.