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COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS RESOURCE LIBRARY

RTF-123

Emergency Shelter Preparedness Guide

A Practical Guide to Preparing for Temporary Shelter During
Emergencies and Disasters

Building Resilient Communities Together

Emergency Shelters Provide Safety and Support

During disasters, it may become necessary to leave your home and stay in a temporary emergency shelter.

Shelters provide a safe place to stay while communities recover and emergency responders work to restore essential services.

Knowing what to expect before arriving at a shelter can make the experience less stressful for your family.

Preparedness begins before you need shelter.

Why Shelter Preparedness Matters

Preparing for emergency shelter helps your family:

- Transition safely during evacuations.
- Reduce stress and uncertainty.
- Protect important belongings.
- Meet your family's basic needs.
- Support a smoother recovery.

Preparation brings confidence during uncertain times.

Before an Emergency

Take these important steps:

- ☐ Learn where emergency shelters may be located in your community.
- ☐ Prepare a Go Bag for every family member.
- ☐ Keep important documents in a waterproof folder.
- ☐ Include prescription medications in your emergency supplies.
- ☐ Prepare supplies for infants, older adults, and persons with disabilities if applicable.
- ☐ Include pet supplies in your emergency plan.

Preparation today makes tomorrow easier.

What to Bring to a Shelter

If time allows, pack:

- ☐ Identification.
- ☐ Important documents.
- ☐ Prescription medications.
- ☐ Personal hygiene items.
- ☐ Clothing.
- ☐ Blankets.
- ☐ Mobile phone and charger.

- ☐ Glasses or hearing aids.
- ☐ Comfort items for children.
- ☐ Small amount of cash.
- ☐ Emergency contact information.

Pack only what you can safely carry.

Arriving at the Shelter

When you arrive:

- ☐ Register if requested.
- ☐ Follow directions from shelter staff.
- ☐ Learn shelter rules and schedules.
- ☐ Identify emergency exits.
- ☐ Keep your belongings organized.
- ☐ Inform family members that you have arrived safely.

Shelter staff are there to help.

Living in a Shelter

Help create a safe and respectful environment by:

- ☐ Respecting personal space.
- ☐ Keeping your area clean.
- ☐ Following quiet hours.
- ☐ Cooperating with staff and volunteers.
- ☐ Looking out for children and vulnerable individuals.

Communities recover best when people support one another.

Health and Hygiene

Protect yourself and others.

- ☐ Wash your hands regularly.
- ☐ Follow public health guidance.
- ☐ Take medications as prescribed.
- ☐ Stay hydrated.
- ☐ Notify shelter staff if you need medical assistance.

Healthy habits help everyone.

Protecting Children

Help children by:

- ☐ Keeping familiar routines where possible.
- ☐ Bringing books, games, or comfort items.

- ☐ Answering questions honestly.
- ☐ Encouraging positive activities.
- ☐ Reassuring them that the shelter is a safe place.

Children feel safer when adults remain calm.

Supporting Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

Ensure they have:

- ☐ Access to medications.
- ☐ Mobility equipment.
- ☐ Medical devices if needed.
- ☐ Caregiver support.
- ☐ Comfortable sleeping arrangements whenever possible.

Preparedness includes everyone.

Caring for Pets

Not all shelters accept pets.

Before an emergency:

- ☐ Learn which shelters accommodate pets.
- ☐ Prepare pet food and medications.
- ☐ Bring a carrier or leash.
- ☐ Keep vaccination records available.
- ☐ Ensure identification tags are current.

Planning ahead protects the whole family.

Returning Home

Return only after officials declare it safe.

Before re-entering your home:

- ☐ Inspect for hazards.
- ☐ Watch for damaged utilities.
- ☐ Photograph damage if needed.
- ☐ Follow cleanup guidance.
- ☐ Ask for assistance if needed.

Recovery is a journey.

Ready Together Action

Complete these three steps this week:

- ☐ Identify your nearest emergency shelter.
- ☐ Update your family's Go Bags.

- ☐ Review your shelter plan with every family member.

Prepared families know where they will go before an emergency happens.

Review Your Shelter Plan

Review your shelter preparedness:

- ☐ Every six months.
- ☐ After moving.
- ☐ After changes in your household.
- ☐ After updating emergency supplies.

Preparedness is an ongoing commitment.

About Ready Together Foundation

Ready Together Foundation is dedicated to building resilient communities through emergency preparedness, emergency relief and response, youth engagement, and outreach to vulnerable populations.

Our work focuses on:

- Community Emergency Preparedness
- Emergency Relief & Response
- Youth Preparedness & Leadership
- Vulnerable Population Outreach

Together, we are building stronger, safer, and more resilient communities.

Ready Together Foundation

Building Resilient Communities Together

Website: www.readytogetherfoundation.org

Email: info@readytogetherfoundation.org

Phone: 323-387-1785

Preparedness is a journey, not a one-time event. Every small step you take today helps protect the people you care about tomorrow.