

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR A DISASTER?

Disasters can happen anytime, with or without warning. A disaster can be the result of a man-made incident such as a terrorist attack, or natural event such as a flood or ice storm. Vermont's history demonstrates that no community is immune to the effects of a disaster – so it is important to take steps now to prepare.

This guide highlights some of the steps you can take now to prepare yourself, your family, your business, and your community.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION PLAN

All family members should know what to do in the event of an emergency. Fill out this plan together and review it often. If you have children, discuss emergency and evacuation procedures with their childcare or school.

It's important to know your local emergency number in case the 911 system ever fails. Prepare the following and keep the document where your family members can find it.

9-1-1 and backup local emergency number:

Home Address:

Home Phone:

Parent's Number:

Parent's Number:

Trusted Neighbor:

Location of Nearest Emergency Shelter:

Out-of-State Relative (Contact this person if your family is separated during an emergency. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.):

Parent's Work:

Parent's Work:

Text messages can often bypass network disruptions when a phone call might not get through.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

- Identify a friend or relative in a different state who can coordinate communications if your family is separated.
- Speak with your children's day care provider or school officials about their disaster plan.
- Build a disaster supplies kit with emergency supplies including, but not limited to:
 - Flashlight with extra batteries
 - Whistle for emergency signaling
 - Portable, battery-powered radio with extra batteries
 - First aid kit and manual
 - Three days' worth of food and water
 - Manual can opener
 - At least seven days' worth of essential medications
 - Cash and credit cards
- Determine which financial papers you will need to bring with you if you evacuate and determine if that should include your checkbook. It will be important to have access to money as you will likely have to continue to pay your bills and cover the cost of food and shelter.
- Make a list of your current prescription medications and dosages. Include contact information for your doctors and pharmacist, and details about your
- Medication regimen and medical history.
- Know the location of shelters, evacuation points and evacuation routes in your community.
- Do a hazard assessment of your home and mitigate identified hazards.
- Talk with your children about what they should do during an emergency.
- Keep important phone numbers listed by the phone and teach your children how and when to call 911.
- Purchase a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio with a tone alert feature to stay informed about severe weather and other important information. NOAA Weather Radios receive information broadcast by the National Weather Service (NWS) and Emergency Alert System (EAS).
- Consult with your insurance agent about your coverage, as most policies do not cover earthquake or flood damage. Protect valuable

property and equipment with special riders and consider obtaining business continuity insurance.

- Determine how you will protect your pets or animals in the event of a disaster. Some shelters do not allow pets (working service animals are permitted). If you evacuate your home, do not leave your pets behind.
- Check that all smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors are working in your home.
- Every six months, change the batteries in your smoke and CO detectors, and the perishable supplies in your disaster supplies kit.
- Speak with neighbors about their emergency plans and how you can help each other during a crisis.
- Enroll in a CPR, first aid or disaster preparedness course.

BUILD A FAMILY DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT

Your family's disaster supplies kit should contain all items that you need to survive for at least three days.

Keep your kit in an accessible location and make sure all family members know where it is.

Check the contents every six months and replace anything that has expired.

- Include important documents such as medical and financial records, maps, emergency contact lists, etc.
- If you have children, include a favorite stuffed animal, blanket, books, games, or toys.
- Store at least one gallon of water per person per day. Store the water in clean plastic containers.
- Label and date each container and replace the water every six months.
- Pack blankets, a first aid kit, whistle, prescription medications, a manual can opener, a pack of playing cards, tools, nonprescription medications (e.g.,
- fever reducers), seasonal clothing, basic hygiene supplies, battery-powered radio, and flashlight with extra batteries.
- Pack an envelope of cash.
- Store nonperishable foods that do not require refrigeration or cooking and need little or no water to prepare. Store the food in a plastic or metal container to protect it from pests. Label and date each container and replace the food every six months.
- Examples of food items include:
 - Ready-to-eat meals
 - Candy or cookies
 - Dried cereal, fruits or vegetables Instant coffee or tea
 - Canned or dried soups and juices Crackers or trail mix

- Peanut butter and nonperishable jelly
- Pet food
- Food for infants or people with special dietary needs
- Salt, pepper, spices, and sugar
- Include a can of solid fuel and matches to heat the food
- Keep canned foods in a dry place where the temperature is cool.
- Throw out any cans that become swollen, dented, or corroded.
- Rethink your needs every six months and update your kit as your family's needs change.
- Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers.

VT-ALERT

Stay informed of pending disasters, travel information, weather conditions, public health notifications and other alerts at: www.vtalert.gov. Sign up for VT-Alert and receive free localized notifications by text, email, phone, or mobile app. You choose what alerts you receive and how you get them.

VERMONT 2-1-1

Call Vermont 2-1-1 for information about community resources. You will be referred to government programs, community-based organizations, support groups, and other local resources based on your needs. 2-1-1 (or 866-652-4636) is a local call in Vermont, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Vermont 2-1-1 is also available online at: www.vermont211.org

Call for personal assistance or search the online database of services, including the following:

- Childcare resources
- Crisis services
- Domestic and sexual violence services
- Education (e.g., GED instruction, computer classes)

EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE ACTIONS

During an emergency, officials may recommend that you and your family take emergency protective action (e.g., evacuating your home or sheltering-in-place). Emergency management officials broadcast emergency instructions and information through the Emergency Alert System (EAS), which uses radio, TV, cell phones, the Internet and cable systems. National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radios also receive EAS messages.

HOW TO EVACUATE

When conditions threaten life or safety, public safety officials may order an evacuation. If you must evacuate your home or business, follow these guidelines:

- Gather all people in your home and leave together; take your disaster supplies kit with you.
- Do not try to pick up your children at their school. They will be taken to a reunification facility outside the affected area where you may pick them up.
- Household members outside the affected area may be advised not to return during an evacuation. They will be directed to the reception center or shelter where they can join you.
- Monitor local media for information and instructions. Listen carefully to the Emergency Alert System (EAS) for information about evacuation routes. Local officials may alter the routes to expedite evacuations. Unless it is an emergency, do not call your local fire or police department for information – they need their phone lines available for emergency use.
- Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provide some protection, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and a cap.
- Check with your neighbors to see if they need assistance or transportation.
- If you have livestock, unless otherwise instructed, shelter them with a three-day supply of feed and water.
- Obey all traffic control officials along your route.

If you have time...

- Secure your home by closing and locking doors and windows.
- Turn off the lights and unplug unnecessary appliances.
- If there is damage to your home and you are instructed to do so, shut off the water, gas, and electricity before leaving.
- Make arrangements for your pets, as they may not be allowed in shelters.
- Notify a friend or family member, who is outside of the affected area, where you are going and when you plan to leave.

HOW TO SHELTER-IN-PLACE

There may be situations when it's best to stay where you are and avoid any uncertainty outside. In this case, public safety officials may order you to shelter-in-place.

- This means you should immediately go indoors. If a shelter-in-place message is given for your community:
- Go indoors and close all doors and windows. Turn off all window fans, air conditioners, clothes dryers, kitchen and bath exhaust fans, and other sources of outside air.
- Keep pets indoors. If you have livestock, shelter them too. Use stored feed and water from a covered source.
- If you are traveling in a vehicle, close the windows and air vents and turn off the heater or air conditioner.
- If a shelter-in-place order is given during school hours, your children will be sheltered in the school.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

Preparedness is all about planning. If you have a disability or other access or functional needs, you must take extra steps to prepare for an emergency. Emergency preparedness is knowing what to do and being ready to do it promptly and effectively in an emergency. Being prepared means that you have a plan of action – you know what to do before the emergency occurs.

To do this, you must know what hazards you face, what resources are available to you and how to use those resources.

In some cases (e.g., a flood or hurricane), you may have an early warning, which will give you several hours to act. However, you may have little to no warning (e.g., an earthquake, a terrorist attack, a major fire).

Let local emergency officials know about your needs before an event. This way, your needs can be planned for, and resources allocated, before the emergency occurs. You can register for the CARE program (Citizens Assistance Registry for Emergencies) to make your needs known to local officials: <https://e911.vermont.gov/care>

Before a disaster, identify your “support team.” These are people who agree to check in on you and help you during an emergency. Your support team could include your home aide, a neighbor you know well, a good friend or a family member who lives with or near you.

Have at least two people on your team in case one is not reachable. Talk to these people about your emergency plans and needs.

You should also make an emergency contacts list. This list should include your support team, family members, doctor, pharmacy, and local emergency responders.

Extra preparedness steps:

- Keep a disaster supplies kit in your home and car.
- In addition to the basic kit contents, include any other special items that you would need to survive until help arrives.
- Store the items that you would need to take with you if you must evacuate in an easy-to-carry container, backpack or duffel bag.
- Wear appropriate medical alert tags and keep a current list of your medications and dosages.
- Be ready to give brief, clear and specific instructions to emergency personnel on how to assist you with devices such as wheelchairs.
- Prepare a disaster supplies kit for your pet or working service animal.
- If you do not drive, with the help of your support team and local authorities plan how you would evacuate.
- Make sure you have a source of backup power for medical support equipment.

PETS IN DISASTERS

70% of Vermont households own a pet. Community disaster plans cannot always provide for the care of animals. Therefore, it is best to create an emergency plan that includes provisions for your pets.

More and more emergency shelters now accommodate pets – but not all do. You should find an out-of-area friend or business that can house your pet if you need to evacuate your home.

Create a custom disaster supplies kit for your pet that includes food and other important items.

SERVICE ANIMALS IN PUBLIC SHELTERS

While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantees service animals may remain with their owners in any public accommodation (e.g., a shelter set up in response to a disaster), the ADA does not ensure other aspects of caring for service animals during disasters.

FARM ANIMALS

Farm evacuations present unique problems. Appropriate planning is essential. Evacuations are best coordinated with neighbors, friends, livestock associations, horse clubs and extension educators.

Determine the destination and method of transportation well in advance of any disaster.

Make sure your animals have durable and visible identification and are up to date on vaccines.

HOME FIRE SAFETY

Fire is a serious public safety concern, and your home is where you are at the greatest risk. Each year in Vermont, fire kills an average of 11 people; 1,000 people are treated for fire and burn injuries; and an estimated \$82 million in property is lost.

To protect yourself, it is important to understand the basic characteristics of fire.

- Fire spreads quickly; there is no time to gather valuables or make a phone call.
- In just two minutes, a fire can become life-threatening.
- In five minutes, a home can be engulfed in flames.

SMOKE DETECTORS

Properly working smoke alarms double your family's chances of surviving a fire.

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Place them outside bedrooms on the ceiling or high on the wall (four to 12 inches from the ceiling), at the top of open stairways or at the bottom of enclosed stairs, and near (but not in) the kitchen or bathroom.
- Check them at least once per month and change batteries every six months.

HOME FIRE SAFETY MAP

Draw a map of your home and surrounding property with your family. Identify smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and the exits you should use to escape from a fire. Mark a safe location where your family will meet after evacuating from a fire (e.g., by the large oak tree).

HOME FIRE SAFETY TIPS

- Make sure your home's windows are not nailed or painted shut.
- Make sure security bars and other antitheft mechanisms that block outside window entry can be easily opened from the inside.
- Consider purchasing escape ladders if your home has more than one level.

Tips for the Winter Heating Season:

- Keep a three-foot/36-inch/one-meter clearance between heating equipment and anything that can burn – or follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Never leave portable space heaters and candles unattended; turn off heaters before going to bed.
- Clean chimneys and vent pipes annually. Dispose of cooled ashes in a covered metal container.
- Never use lighter fluid, kerosene, diesel fuel or gasoline to start a fire.
- Store gasoline and heating fuels in proper containers outside your home.
- Always use the proper grade and type of fuel for heating equipment.
- Install heating equipment in accordance with codes and the manufacturer's instructions. It's best to have a professional install the equipment.
- About 25% of all fires are residential, and unattended cooking or human error are the leading causes.
- Careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths.

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is a genuine concern every winter. CO poisoning can kill you, and improperly heating your home is often the cause. The initial symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to the flu (without the fever) and may include headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea and dizziness. If you suspect CO poisoning, get fresh air immediately. Leave your home and call your local fire department from a safe location for assistance.

Steps to avoid CO poisoning:

- Install CO detectors on every level of your home.
- Place a CO detector in the same room as any unvented heaters.
- Make sure all heating vents are free of snow and other obstructions; if they are covered, CO will double back into your home.

- Never run a generator indoors; run it outside away from windows and doors.
- Have heaters and wood stoves properly installed by a professional.

Many local fire departments offer free smoke and CO detectors or fire prevention programs.

Fire and public safety officials urge citizens to remember to change their smoke and CO detector batteries when they change their clocks in the spring and fall. More than 90% of American homes have smoke detectors, but an estimated one-third are either not working or missing batteries.

For further assistance, ask your local fire department to inspect your residence.

GENERATOR SAFETY

When using a generator, it is important to follow these safety tips:

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when installing and using a generator. An improperly installed generator can feed back onto power lines, creating a hazard for utility workers.
- Operate your generator outdoors and away from windows and doors. NEVER use a generator indoors – including inside a garage.
- Let the generator cool down before refueling.
- Store gasoline and other flammable liquids away from the generator, outside of your home.
- Install CO detectors in your home to ensure fumes from the generator are not entering living quarters.
- Plug individual appliances into the generator using only heavy-duty, outdoor rated cords with a wire gauge adequate for the appliance load.
- Turn off all equipment powered by the generator before turning off the generator.
- Always keep children away from portable generators; many parts are hot and could cause burns.

WINTER PREPAREDNESS

In Vermont, winters can bring heavy snowfall and extremely cold temperatures. Snow can block roads and cause power lines to fall.

Hypothermia:

Cold outdoor temperatures can be dangerous if you aren't dressed appropriately. Hypothermia is a medical emergency that occurs when a

person is exposed to cold temperatures for a long time. The elderly and very young are particularly vulnerable. It is important to listen to weather reports and pay attention to winter weather warnings. Dressing properly for the weather is often the best protection against hypothermia.

Winter Weather Terms

- Freezing rain: Rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees and power lines.
- Sleet: Rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground, causing roads to freeze and become slippery.
- Winter Weather Advisory: Cold temperatures, ice and snow are expected.
- Winter Storm Watch: Severe weather (e.g., heavy snow, ice) is possible in the next day or two.
- Frost/Freeze Warning: Below freezing temperatures are expected.
- Winter Storm Warning: Severe winter conditions are occurring or will occur very soon.
- Blizzard Warning: Heavy snow and strong winds will produce blinding snow, near zero visibility, deep snow drifts and a severe wind chill.

Vehicle Safety

Vehicle safety precautions are vital during the winter. Keep cold weather gear in your vehicle in case it breaks down. During extreme weather, Vermont State Police may adjust patrol schedules to provide late night aid for motorists on the interstate.

Safe Winter Driving Tips

- Check the weather and road conditions before you leave and drive accordingly.
- Slow down: Driving too fast on wintry roads is the leading cause of crashes.
- Travel at a safe distance of at least three car lengths, leaving plenty of room to stop.
- Clear all snow and ice from your vehicle prior to travel.
- Be aware of black ice on what looks like bare pavement.
- If your car starts to skid, turn in the direction of the skid. It is your best chance to regain traction. If you have antilock brakes, apply firm and continuous pressure. If not, mimic that effect by pumping the brakes.

- If you are stranded during a winter storm, remain in your vehicle, stay awake and try to stay warm. Even a short walk in winter storm conditions can be dangerous.
- Pull as far off the road as possible and turn on hazard lights to minimize further traffic hazards.
- If you become stuck in deep snow, do not let your engine idle if your exhaust pipe is buried. This could lead to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.
- Carry a cell phone and call 911 in an emergency, but do not become overly dependent on it.

Prepare Your Vehicle for Winter Driving

- Install winter tires.
- Check your wipers and top up your washer fluid.
- Make sure your heater and defrosters work.
- Make sure your brakes are in good condition.
- Make sure your battery and the charging system operate properly.
- Carry tire chains if you have a large truck.

Pack a Winter Car Kit

- Booster cables
- Two or more blankets
- Snow shovel and ice scraper
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Extra clothing: hat, mittens, parka and overshoes or boots if you have to walk for help
- High-calorie, nonperishable food such as candy and canned nuts in a hard plastic container
- Sand or strips of carpet for traction
- Extra windshield washer fluid and antifreeze
- Flares or reflectors

For travel information and resources during hazardous weather visit:

<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/operations/winter>

PANDEMIC

A pandemic is a disease outbreak in several countries that affects a large number of people. Pandemics are most often caused by viruses, which can easily spread from person to person.

Planning for a Pandemic

- Prepare for the possibility of schools, workplaces and community centers being closed. Have a plan to care for children and connect with others by internet or phone.
- Have what you and your family would need to stay home for several days or weeks. This includes food such as rice or canned goods, bottled water, and cleaning supplies.
- Keep enough prescription medication at home. Have medicine in case you get sick, including for pain and fever, a thermometer, tissues, hand sanitizer, masks, and your health insurance and doctor's contact information.
- Think about how you would care for people in your family who have special needs if support services are not available.
- Limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues.
 - Stay home and away from others if you are sick.

Stay up to date on information and guidance about the disease from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at cdc.gov.

For more information, visit the Vermont Department of Health at: healthvermont.gov

POWER OUTAGES

The rural landscape and frequent storms of Vermont ensure that power outages will occur from time to time.

Tips to Stay Safe During a Power Outage

- If you are elderly or have special needs, contact your power company today to alert them to your needs in the event of a power outage.
- Check in with elderly people during power outages from time to time.
- Have batteries, a flashlight, and a battery-powered radio on hand.
- If power is expected to be out for an extended period, seek shelter elsewhere if it is cold outside. Don't wait until it is too late. Call Vermont 2-1-1 for shelter information.
- Call your power company to report the outage.
- Never touch a downed power line or anything touching a power wire as it could cause electrocution and death. Treat every power line as if it were live.

- Stay warm. If it's cold, keep your head, hands and feet covered. Several layers of light clothing usually work better than a single heavy layer.
- Locate and check all emergency supplies and equipment to ensure that you are prepared. Food stays frozen in a fully loaded freezer for 36 to 48 hours if the door is kept shut. If the freezer is only half full, food keeps for about 24 hours. Meat keeps longer than baked goods. Try not to open your freezer or refrigerator when the power is out unless necessary.
- Disconnect or shut off appliances that will go on automatically when power is restored.
- This includes furnaces, electric space heaters, air conditioners, electric ranges, water heaters and other appliances. If many appliances go on at once, they may overload the circuits.
- Don't use an unvented kerosene space heater.
- Don't use a gas range to heat your home.
- If you are using a generator, make sure to operate it only outside. An inadequately vented generator can lead to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning and death.
- Make sure your generator is properly installed; an improperly installed generator can feed back onto power lines, putting power crews at risk of electrocution.

FLOODS

As with the historic disaster of Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, flooding can and does happen year-round in Vermont. Quick thaws and ice jams in the winter and spring, and heavy rains in the summer and fall cause rivers and streams to swell and spill over their banks. That's why it's critical to be prepared for flooding all year.

Flood Terms

- Flood Watch: Flooding is possible. Watches are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) 12 to 36 hours in advance of a possible event.
- Flash Flood Watch: Flash flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground. A flash flood could occur without warning.
- Flood Warning: Flooding is occurring or will occur soon. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Flash Flood Warning: A flash flood is occurring. Seek higher ground immediately and stay away from streams and creeks.

Flood Safety Tips

- If you ever encounter floodwaters, never attempt to walk or drive through them.
- Monitor media reports.
- Ask local officials whether your property is in a flood-prone or high-risk area. Floodplain maps are available at most town offices or city halls.
- Listen to local and state public safety officials and follow their instructions in a prompt manner.
- Know your best flood evacuation routes, potential public shelters and where to find higher ground. In a flash flood, you may need to seek higher ground on foot quickly.
- Ensure your home is ready. Where possible, minimize damage from limited basement flooding by elevating utilities and materials that could be damaged.
- Anchor fuel tanks to ensure that they do not wash away, creating a safety and environmental hazard inside or outside your home.
- Be prepared to turn off the electrical power to your home when there is standing water, fallen power lines or before you evacuate. Know how to safely turn off gas and water supplies.
- Contact your insurance agent or local government to discuss flood insurance coverage. Flood losses are not covered under regular homeowners' insurance policies.

For more information, visit: www.weather.gov/safety/flood

EXTREME HEAT

Heat can cause serious illness. On very hot days, body temperature can get dangerously high, putting you at greater risk of serious heat illnesses, including heat exhaustion and heat stroke (which are life-threatening emergencies). During these times, it's important to take steps to stay cool to keep yourself, your family, and your pets safe.

Extreme Heat Tips:

- Stay cool. Stay indoors, in air-conditioning (if possible), or in cool places such as basements or air-conditioned public buildings (e.g., a library, a shopping mall). Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Keep your house cool. Draw light-colored shades to keep out morning and afternoon sun. Close windows during the day when it is hotter outside than inside. Limit use of the stove, oven, and other heat-generating appliances.
- Stay hydrated. Drink more water than usual, especially if exercising or being active outdoors.

- Be proactive—don't wait until you are thirsty. Avoid alcohol and caffeine.
- Listen to your body. Take it easy. Reduce outdoor work and exercise and perform such activities only during the cooler parts of the day. If you feel sick, ask for help. Stop what you are doing if you feel faint or weak. Heat can worsen existing chronic health conditions.
- Don't be a stranger. Check on your loved ones and neighbors, especially if they are elderly or have chronic health conditions.
- Stay informed. Follow local weather and news reports, and visit the National Weather Service at: www.weather.gov

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

New England Poison Control Hotline: 800-222-1222

Vermont State Police Headquarters: 800-862-5402

National Weather Service Burlington: 802-862-2475

National Weather Service Albany: 800-239-2123

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – Flood Insurance
Information: 800-964-1784

Vermont 2-1-1 (community information and referral): 211 or 866-652-4636

American Red Cross: 800-464-6692