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A Mother's Guide to Preparedness

Hurricane Preparedness Week Reminds Families to Get Better Prepared Before Hurricane Season Begins on June 1

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Thursday, May 29, 2008 — Predictions for an active 2008 hurricane season have left many families wondering what they can do to help protect their loved ones from a hurricane and the high winds, flooding and tornadoes that may accompany them. Even if you don't live in hurricane prone areas, the severe weather and tornadoes that accompany them can affect you. The Red Cross recommends that by taking three basic preparedness actions you can get "Red Cross Ready" for disasters and other emergencies 1) Get a kit, 2) Make a plan and 3) Be informed. Now is the perfect time to prepare your family for hurricane season which begins on June 1.

Getting prepared is easier than you think. Cathy Lange, a business owner, Red Cross volunteer, wife and mother, offers her own account of how she prepared her family for disasters.

What types of things have you done to get your family prepared?

First thing was to get a list of everything I needed. I have set up a closet in the guest room where I have everything stored from the [Red Cross list](#)- food, flashlights, batteries, Red Cross radio, medical kit, all the things that are listed as necessary. I've labeled the food so I know how to rotate it out. We have extra water to cover three days for three people. We have a dog and a cat so I have pet food. I also have medications, extra lenses and glasses for my daughter and me. I have packed clothes which I rotate on a seasonal basis. We have pillows, blankets, in addition to putting Red Cross packs in the back of our cars. I gave my eldest daughter and her husband backpacks for Christmas. I have cash set aside for an emergency. I made a list of important numbers, account numbers, etc. And I put emergency numbers in my daughter's backpack. The hardest part is making sure I update the food and water. I try to buy things that will last a long time. I have cereal, soup, cans of fruit, milk containers, coffee, chocolate bars. We have a generator for our house.



(Photo Credit: Stock Photo/American Red Cross)

When you get prepared, what types of scenarios are you preparing for?

For the most part I thought we were preparing for the worst situations, like a terror related event. Because we're prepared, we can handle other emergencies such as a hurricane. We learned a lot after the last hurricane, and purchased a large generator as extra protection.

When did you first decide to do something to better prepare yourself and what was that thing?

Right after 9/11- up until then I didn't prepare, that was pretty much it. Fortunately, getting prepared will help with other situations that might arise. What's important to me is that no matter what happens, we are as ready as we can be. I want to make sure my teenage daughter is informed. That's part of the reason I put emergency numbers in her backpack. I want her to know what to do and how to access our contact points if she can't reach me directly. The schools in the area have done a good job preparing as well. Now we have to do our part.

Did you involve other members of your family in getting prepared and if so, how? How did they respond?

My husband and I have had discussions about what would happen if a disaster occurred including where we would meet. My husband and daughter know where all the supplies are and the phone numbers and email addresses to make connections. Since we don't know what might happen, and where it might happen, the hardest part is planning where to meet. We do have some contingencies planned.

What did you learn while getting prepared?

What was surprising to me is how much you really need to do to prepare, but there are a lot of resources out there. It takes time and effort, but is well worth it, particularly since having control over what you can control makes you feel better. You feel better once you know you've done everything you can and that the basics are covered. Remember that during a disaster the emergency personnel will be focusing on that situation, not on smaller needs. So you have to be prepared to handle small things (minor cuts, bruises) yourself. You have to be prepared so you're not putting a strain on emergency personnel. That's important for people to know. My daughter has taken a first aid and CPR class through the girl scouts. I have a book on First Aid. We just assume that emergency personnel will be available no matter what.

Would you recommend that other mothers take steps to prepare their families and why?

Yes, it is a reality of the world today. There are tons of resources out there to get prepared. Even if you start small, get something going so at least you have some basics in place. Make preparedness a priority and you will do it! Also, make a list of all of your financial documents. I made copies and sent them to a relative in a mid-western state. It's tricky as a parent; you don't want to scare your children. But you also don't want to ill prepare them and act like nothing's going on. It's a balance of giving them the info they need. I notice that my daughter really doesn't want to talk about it, but I'm very gentle when we discuss it. I equate these preparedness actions to a snow storm, etc. Don't overreact.

In addition to being informed, the American Red Cross recommends a [few things that will help prepare you for a disaster](#).

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