

Family Communication Plan



THE GOAL: *Have the ability to communicate with family members during a disaster.*

Today we have more ways to speak with one another than ever before. We are used to staying in touch with cell phones, internet, and email, but disasters can change things. These devices may not be available. Cell phone towers quickly become overloaded with people trying to reach friends and family. If the power is out at your home, cordless phones, internet, and email will not work either.

||| CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH TO BECOME BETTER PREPARED:

- ☐ **Have a phone with a cord and a car charger for your cell phone standing by in case of a power failure.**

Phones with cordless handsets won't work in a disaster because they need more electricity than they can get from the phone jack. Old fashioned phones with a cord connecting the handset to the base will work even in a power outage. Make sure you have at least one phone with a cord in your home in case of a power outage.

Keep a car charger for your cell phone in your vehicle. If the power is out in your home, you can still charge your cell phone in your car.

If you don't have a landline and you use a cell phone as your home phone, remember that cell phone towers may be tied up with calls in an emergency. However, a text message from your cell phone may get through when a phone call doesn't. Make sure everyone in your family knows how to send and receive text messages.

Remember, never call 911 to get information about what is going on in an emergency. Only call 911 if you are injured or need help.

☐ **Develop a plan for how your family will stay in touch during a disaster.**

Develop a plan so you can stay in touch with your family in a disaster. Include phone numbers for all family members and those who can give you extra help, such as caregivers. Also include all work, school, and daycare phone numbers, if applicable. A wallet-size form you can use to write down this information can be found at www.ready.gov. Be sure each family member has a copy of your communication plan. Post the communication plan by a phone in your home, and include it in your go bag as well.

OUTSIDE THE AREA CONTACT

Local phone calls and long distance calls work on different circuits. When local circuits are overloaded, you may still be able to make long distance calls. Choose someone outside of the local calling area to be your “outside the area” contact. Make sure all family members carry this phone number with them. If something happens when your family is not together and you are not able to reach each other, each family member can call the “outside the area” contact and leave a message for the others.

Safe and Well

The Red Cross Safe and Well program is a way for families to keep in touch when they are separated in a disaster. Visit the website at www.safeandwell.org now and show family members how it works.

Make the website address part of the emergency information every family member carries. If you are separated from each other in a disaster, make sure everyone knows to go to the website to enter information about themselves, and how to find information on others.



☐ **Program In Case of Emergency (ICE) numbers into all family cell phones.**

If you are hurt and can't talk, first responders and hospital staff may not know how to contact your family right away. If you have a cell phone, you can provide the phone numbers for your emergency contacts to first responders and hospital staff.

1. Create a new contact in your cell phone's phone book.
2. Name the contact ICE.
3. Enter all phone numbers for the person you would like to have notified in a medical emergency.