



September 2020: National Preparedness Month

National Preparedness Month 2020

Preparing for the unexpected is important all year. However, National Preparedness Month (NPM) is an opportunity to learn ways that you can help be better prepared at home, work, school, and more.

The number of hurricanes and tropical storms we have seen this summer is a reminder that disasters won't wait for a pandemic to be over.

Regardless of the threat, everyone should have an emergency plan, including what they would do if they need to evacuate their home due to an approaching storm or severe flooding, and what they need to have handy at home should they lose power.

Below are tips to help you get started:

- Visit the Ready PA Blog for a [message from the PA Emergency Management Agency Director](#).
- Visit the [Ready PA National Preparedness Month 2020 web page](#) and [partner resources](#).
- Share *this* Ready PA newsletter for a chance to win one of the Ready PA Preparedness Kits. **Instructions are at the bottom of this newsletter.**



Preparing for a Disaster

Preparing *before* something happens reduces anxiety and losses that accompany disasters. Much like a fire drill, knowing what to do in an emergency makes the situation a little less frightening for everyone.

We prepare so we can be ready. Everyone's needs are unique. An emergency that is a "set back" for one might be catastrophic for another.

Rather than preparing only for a snowstorm or tornado, being prepared means identifying ways that emergencies can threaten your safety and identify what to do when the emergency occurs.

It's also important to consider what else may be going on around you, like the current COVID-19 pandemic. Remember to include masks and hand sanitizer in your disaster kit.



Know Your Home Escape Plan

There may be any number of reasons that you need a "home escape plan." Get your entire family involved in making and practicing the plan. Choose an outside meeting place, like a neighbor's house, a street light or a mailbox.

While we're thinking about home fire safety, download the home escape plan grid and fact sheet on smoke alarms from the [PA Office of the State Fire Commissioner](#).

Have a Family Communication Plan

Choose an emergency contact person outside your area because it may be easier to call long distance than locally after a local/regional disaster. Take a minute now to call or email an out-of-town friend or family member to ask him or her to be your family's designated contact in the event of an emergency.

Be sure to share the contact's phone number with everyone in the family. During an emergency, you can call your contact who can share with other family members where you are, how you are doing, and how to get in contact with you.

Know how you will connect. Don't lose the important preparedness steps you've taken. Download the emergency plan cards. Fill them out and give one to each member of your family to carry with them. You can also download a simple Ready PA [Family Emergency Plan card](#).

Communicate With Your Kids About Preparedness

It is important to include children in the disaster planning process. Review your family emergency plan together so they know what to do even if you are not there.

Involving children in preparing now will help reduce a panic reaction when an emergency does occur. Start by asking what would happen during various scenarios. For example, there's a snowstorm and you lose power. What would stop working in the house, and what can be done about it? It will get them thinking about disasters and what threats they can face.

When a thunderstorm, snowstorm, tornado, or flash flood occurs in your area, do you know where to go? Download the [Weather Terms Action Sheet for Kids](#) to learn more.

It is also extremely important to [talk to your kids about COVID-19](#). Children may worry about themselves, their family, and friends getting ill with COVID-19.

Parents, family members, school staff, and other trusted adults can play an important role in helping children make sense of what they hear in a way that is honest, accurate, and minimizes anxiety or fear.

Here are some tips to help ease their fears and anxieties:

- Try to keep information simple and remind them that health and school officials are working hard to keep everyone safe and healthy. Remain calm. Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others. Reassure children that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Make yourself available to listen and to talk. Let children know they can come to you when they have questions. Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online. Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.
- Provide information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.



Financial Preparedness

When it comes to emergencies, Pennsylvanians face more than flooding, tornadoes, and snowstorms. We also deal with broken hot water heaters, damaged roofs, and sudden medical expenses.

Recent data shows that a significant number of homes affected by flooding were not in a flood zone and many found the recovery process to be challenging and expensive, if not completely insurmountable.

Being financially prepared can seem difficult, especially during the pandemic. These small but critical steps could help with covering your assets when the unexpected occurs.

There is a lot to digest. Which is why PEMA and the Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities created this [financial preparedness digest](#). You may only have hours or minutes to react after a natural disaster or other emergency.

Recovering will be tough but taking three easy steps will help you put your finances and documentation in order.

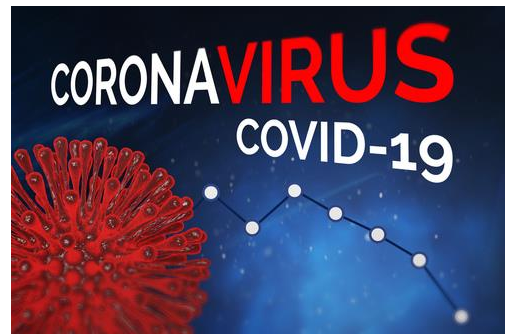
1. **Document what you have.** Take photos or videos of rooms in your home, showing what you own. This provides documentation if you need to file a claim. Keep these records along with as many receipts as you have for large items in a safe place, such as a bank safe deposit box or along with your other emergency documents.
2. **Save or print this recovery information.** It lists what to expect and what you need to do "After the Storm."
3. **Collect your documents.** Make your own Emergency Financial First Aid Kit. Place important documents such as deeds, birth certificates, passports, wills, titles, and financial documents in a safe deposit box at a bank or credit union. Keep copies of these documents in a zip lock bag and fire-safe box that you can easily access and take it with you in emergencies.



Preparing for COVID-19

What to Know

The first thing to know when it comes to COVID-19 is that the symptoms can look similar to the flu. These symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, and shortness of breath, and may appear two to 14 days after exposure to the virus. And, because influenza is also a viral respiratory infection, they can look very similar.



If you are feeling sick, monitor your symptoms carefully. Contact your physician for guidance if you have symptoms of COVID-19.

What to Do

- **Wash your hands.** Soap and water is the best option. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.
- **Avoid touching your mouth, face, and eyes.** Cover any coughs or sneezes, throwing away used tissues immediately. Plus, avoid sharing personal items like glasses, eating utensils, towels, or bedding.
- **Stay home if you're sick.** Do not go to your physician's office first, as you could risk infecting others. Instead, call ahead to your physician to discuss appropriate next steps.

For further information, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Health [website](#) or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [website](#). You can also read [our blog](#) about preparing for COVID-19 and hurricane season in PA.



Would you like the chance to win a Ready PA Preparedness Kit, featuring a wind-up radio, flashlight, phone charger?

It's easy! Share this newsletter with a friend or family member by clicking on one of the "Share this email" icons at the bottom of this newsletter. You will be entered into a drawing to win one of the Ready PA Preparedness Kits!

SEPTEMBER TIP SHEET: WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS



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