

Emergency Preparedness



The Girl Scout motto, "Be Prepared," applies to many life situations, including readiness to deal with emergencies and disasters. Knowing the kinds of emergencies and disasters that might happen in a given area is the first step to being prepared. Making a plan to ensure your own and your family's safety is next. This interest project will enable you to prepare yourself through practice and knowledge so that you can take care of yourself and others in an emergency situation.

Skill Builders

* Activities with an asterisk must be completed.

1 Complete a basic first-aid course offered by the Red Cross, a local hospital, fire station, or school. Know how to stop bleeding, give artificial resuscitation, do the Heimlich maneuver, and treat for shock.

2 Complete a certified cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) course offered by the Red Cross, American Heart Association, a local hospital, fire department, or other certifying agency. Know how to administer CPR to an adult as well as a child whose breathing and pulse have stopped. Keep your certification up to date.

3 Read "Life Success Skill #4: Staying Safe" in the *Cadette Girl Scout Handbook* or pages 56-57 in *A Resource Book for Senior Girl Scouts*. Complete a personal safety course offered by a women's group or your local police. Learn basic principles of self-defense and how to avoid situations that might put yourself in danger.

4 Evaluate your home or apartment for fire hazards and help to remove any that you find. Prepare evacuation plans for all areas of your house to be adopted and practiced by your family. Know how to test doors prior to opening them. Establish meeting areas outside of the home in case of a fire. Make sure that your home has suffi-

cient and charged smoke detectors, as well as recommended fire extinguishers for the kitchen and other areas. Know when, how, and where to use a fire extinguisher.

5 Make up first-aid and emergency preparedness kit(s) for your home and family car. Include items that are recommended by your local emergency managers or the Red Cross for disasters. Discuss with your family what to do in case of a crisis: if you are all at home and if you are separated. Choose and make plans for three different disasters that might happen in your community, such as a forest fire, tornado, hurricane, lightning storm, toxic spill, power failure, flooding, water contamination or drought, tsunami (tidal wave), earthquake, snowstorm, or ice storm. Practice disaster plans at home. Include one disaster that would require evacuation from your house.

Technology

1 Visit a local or state command center (police station, hospital, fire station, U.S. Forest Service, emergency manager, military) to learn about different technologies used for communication and handling emergencies in your community. Find out what back-up technologies are available for use in case of a disaster.

2 Learn about ham or CB radio operation through a club meeting, special training, or by spending time with an active

member. Learn basic radio procedures and take part in a conversation, drill, or actual emergency communication operation for your community, state, or another part of the world.

3 Know how to turn off the utilities where you live. Ask your parents or the building superintendent to show you how to locate the electrical control panel or fuse box and the water and gas turnoff valves. Learn how to reset a circuit breaker or change a fuse. Know what to do if there is a gas leak. Learn how to test and change smoke alarm batteries. Know what to do in case of a downed electrical wire. See that you have easy access to candles, matches, and flashlights in an emergency.

4 Make an emergency plan for how you, your family, and your community would deal with a severe oil shortage. Which services and products do you use that are oil dependent? For example, electricity from power companies is often generated by using oil. Does your community have an emergency plan? If not, discuss ways that your family and neighbors can cut back on oil use and how your community can still provide basic services.

5 What if your home was without electricity for between three and five days? How would you and your family keep warm or cool, cook food and keep it fresh, and keep water pipes from freezing? How would you do your homework? Think about ways to work cooperatively with neighbors. How could neighborhood cooperation improve the situation for everyone?

6 Learn how to operate an electric generator, propane or gaslight, and propane or gas stove for use in an emergency. Know how to store and handle fuel and where to place equipment safely. Know fire-safety procedures to use with each piece of equipment.

Service Projects

1 Become a trained emergency volunteer for your community. For example, work in developing a community disaster plan, on a search and rescue team, for a crisis "hot line," at a community or women's shelter, as a lifeguard, or as a member of a ski patrol.

2 Learn about the mission of disaster relief agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Red Cross. Help collect or pack items for a disaster relief effort in your community, state, country, or abroad or distribute disaster relief information in your community.

3 Organize or facilitate an event for young children that focuses on home safety, first aid, fire prevention, personal safety, and emergency response. Consider using the Federal Emergency Management Agency's *Disaster Dudes* video as a part of your program.

4 Help develop a plan for assisting wildlife or domestic animals affected by an environmental disaster, such as a wildfire, flood, oil spill, severe storm, or drought, or assist in the aftermath of a disaster with wildlife or domestic animals.

Career Exploration

1 Interview and, if possible, job-shadow someone responsible for community safety, such as a police officer, firefighter, safety manager, emergency medical technician (EMT), state or local emergency manager, or health department official. Find out what kind of education, training, and/or experience is needed for her position.

2 Interview or invite a health department worker or public health nurse to speak on control of health emergencies in your community. Find out what you can do to assist in preventing or controlling a health emergency such as food poisoning, contaminated water supplies, outbreak of a communicable disease, or severe air pollution.

3 Interview four parents of school-age children. What are some of the emergency situations that they have had to handle with young children? Based on the information you have collected, prepare a "Tips for Baby-Sitters" sheet and distribute it to your friends.

4 Develop and/or disseminate information on common household emergencies for parents of small children. This could be a collection of fliers, a news column, awareness posters, or a video.

5 Read a book about someone surviving a natural disaster. Determine what knowledge, preparation, and attitude are needed to survive a natural disaster, based on the survivor's experience.

And Beyond

IF YOU WANT TO DEVELOP YOUR SURVIVAL skills, try these related interest projects:

- Outdoor Survival
- Camping
- High Adventure

To safeguard your home or if you are around young children, look at Family Living and Child Care.