



Cochise Health & Social Services

Mary Gomez, Director

"Building A Healthier Future"

*** MEDIA RELEASE ***

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: *Emergency Plans Deemed Essential Tools for Every Home*

"Have a Plan" to Help Protect Loved Ones

Having a basic family emergency plan is one of the most important steps to take in disaster preparedness. Knowing what to do and how to do it can help your family manage disasters with less worry, fear, and uncertainty.

Emergency plan basics: Decide in advance what you and your family would do in each potential emergency situation. Draw a floor plan of your home showing escape routes, and practice evacuating your home at least quarterly. Post emergency numbers by every phone and teach children how and when to dial 911. Know how to shut off the water, gas and electricity at the main switches in your home. Plan how to help elderly or disabled neighbors in a disaster, and be sure to include your pets in emergency planning. Check that your insurance policies are up-to-date and provide adequate coverage, and be sure your family's immunizations are current.

Family communications plan: Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another. Consider a plan where each family member calls or emails the same friend or relative in the event of an emergency. Because it may be easier to make long-distance calls, an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members. Be sure each family member knows the contact phone number.

Emergency plans at school and work: Get to know how your children's schools and your employer plan to communicate with families during an emergency. You may also want to talk to your neighbors about how you can work together in times of crisis.

Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Depending on the nature of the emergency, the first critical decision is whether to stay put or get away. It is important to plan for both possibilities.

Shelter-in-Place: There are circumstances when staying put and creating a barrier between yourself and a potentially dangerous environment outside can be a matter of survival. For instance, if you see large amounts of debris in the air, or if local authorities say the air is badly contaminated, you may want to shelter-in-place and seal the room. Quickly bring your family and pets inside; lock doors; and close windows, air vents and

*** more ***

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fireplace dampers. Immediately turn off air conditioning, forced air heating systems, exhaust fans and clothes dryers. Gather your emergency supplies and go into the room you have designated. Seal all windows, doors and vents with plastic sheeting and duct tape. This is a temporary measure to create a barrier between you and contaminated air. Watch TV, listen to the radio, and check the internet for further instructions from local authorities.

Evacuation: Plan in advance how you will assemble your family and anticipate where you will go. Choose several destinations in different directions so you have evacuation options in an emergency. Keep at least one-half tank of gas in your car at all times. Become familiar with alternate routes as well as other means of transportation out of your area. Take your emergency supply kit unless you have reason to believe it is contaminated.

Don't Forget About Your Animals

Whether you decide to stay put in an emergency or evacuate to a safer location, you will need to make plans in advance for your pets and service animals. Keep in mind that what is best for you is typically what's best for your animals. If you must evacuate, take your pets with you, if possible. Be sure to take along additional water, medications, and food for your pet. Have a copy of your pet's vaccination record, and carry a picture with you.

If you are going to a public shelter, only service animals may be allowed inside. Plan in advance for shelter alternatives that will work for both you and your pets. Consider friends outside of your immediate area or pet-friendly shelters or motels in the area you will evacuate to.

More detailed information on making a plan, including a handy emergency plan form, may be found at <http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan>.

About National Preparedness Month

On behalf of the County Board of Supervisors, the Cochise Health and Social Services program has participated in National Preparedness Month since its inception and once again encourages all citizens of the county to be prepared in the event of an emergency. Look for weekly media releases throughout the month of September highlighting how you can be better prepared.

For more information contact the Program Director Elizabeth Lueck at elueck@cochise.az.gov. For more information about the Ready Campaign and National Preparedness Month, visit <http://community.fema.gov/connect.ti/READYNPM> or call 1-800-BE-READY, 1-888-SE-LISTO, and TTY 1-800-462-7585. You may also visit www.Ready.gov for more information on emergency preparedness.

About Cochise Health and Social Services

Cochise Health and Social Services promotes health and quality of life for all Cochise County residents through education, service and leadership. For more information, please visit our website at <http://cochise.az.gov/health>. Recent media releases may be accessed at <http://cochise.az.gov/healthnews>.

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