

The Pocket Guide to

Emergency Preparation

This guide has helpful information on how to plan for and respond to natural and man-made disasters. Please read your guide carefully and keep it close at hand.

Harris County

HCPHES

Public Health & Environmental Services



Houston Department of
Health and Human Services



Treat Unsafe Water

If there is contamination, flooding or low water pressure, your drinking water may become unsafe for use. Therefore, your local authority may advise you to treat your water prior to drinking, cooking, etc. Use one of the following recommended methods listed below to treat your water:



- Boil water before use; holding it at a rolling boil for at least two minutes before using it for drinking, cooking, etc. (the minutes start when the water begins to bubble).
- Disinfect water by adding 8 drops (about 1/8 teaspoon – this would form a puddle about the size of a dime) of plain unscented household bleach per one gallon of water, and then let it stand for 30 minutes before using. If the water is cloudy after 30 minutes, repeat the process.
- Treat water with chlorine tablets or iodine tablets. Read and follow the label instructions.
- Use bottled water, especially for mixing baby formula.

Continue to disinfect the water until you are notified that your water is safe.

Remember: ABC's of Keeping Food Safe in an Emergency

Always keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to help maintain cold temperatures. Food in a refrigerator should be safe for about 4 hours without electricity. Frozen foods may be safe for a longer period depending upon the type and temperature of the freezer.



Be prepared by having food items that don't require refrigeration and can be eaten cold or heated on an outdoor grill.

Consider what you can do ahead of time to store and keep food safe during an emergency. Keep coolers handy in case the power goes out for more than 4 hours. Filling the coolers with ice or frozen gel packs will help keep food cold.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

The following are numbers for emergency related help and information.

Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services	713-439-6000
Harris County Hospital District	713-873-2200
Houston Department of Health & Human Services	713-794-9320
Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management	713-881-3100
Harris County Sheriff's Office	713-221-6000
Harris County Fire & Emergency Services	281-931-1085
Southeast Texas Poison Control	1-800-222-1222
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention	1-800-232-4636

YOUR OWN IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Write down important numbers, such as family, friends, your doctor and your child's school, and keep them close.

Name: _____ Number: _____

Name: _____ Number: _____

In the event of a **Biological** Emergency



Your protection and treatment will depend on the type of bacteria, virus or organism that you have been exposed to, such as influenza or anthrax. Some bacteria, viruses or organisms can make people seriously ill or cause death. For some biological emergencies life-saving medication will be sent to the area where the agent is thought to be present.

In the event of a **Chemical** Emergency



SHELTER IN PLACE or **EVACUATION** orders may be issued for your protection. Local authorities will give these orders only when necessary. A chemical emergency occurs when a hazardous chemical has been released and the release has the potential for harming people's health. Chemical releases can be caused by an industrial accident or through the intentional release of a harmful substance.

In the event of a **Radiological** Emergency



Anuclear blast or an accident in a nuclear power plant can cause the spread of radiation. A terrorist attack with a "dirty bomb" can also spread radiation into the air. A "dirty bomb" is a mixture of explosives, such as dynamite, with radioactive powder or pellets.

SELF-DECONTAMINATION: If you have been in contact with a chemical agent or radiation, remove your clothes as quickly as possible. Put the clothes in a plastic bag and seal. Take a shower and wash with lots of soap and lukewarm water. Tell the local emergency authorities what you did with your clothes. **Do not handle the plastic bag yourself.**

Shelter in Place

In the event of a radiological, chemical, or biological emergency, authorities may direct you to **SHELTER IN PLACE** or **EVACUATE**. The term "Shelter in Place" means to remain inside your home or place of work and protect yourself there.

If emergency officials advise you to Shelter in Place:

- 1 Stay calm.
- 2 Bring children and pets indoors quickly.
- 3 Close and lock all windows and outside doors.
- 4 Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.
- 5 If you have a fireplace, close the damper.
- 6 Gather your emergency supplies and turn on the battery-powered radio or TV.
- 7 Go to an interior room, ideally without windows. In case of a chemical threat, a room above ground is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air and may seep into the basement.
- 8 Seal doors, exhaust fans, vents and windows with plastic sheeting and duct tape.
- 9 Damp towels can be used to seal gaps under doorways.
- 10 Stay inside and listen to the radio or TV and follow instructions of local authorities until told all is safe.



If you are told to evacuate, follow the instructions and routes given.

What Not to Do ...

Do NOT light matches or turn switches on or off if you smell gas or think there may be a leak. Also, do not use a regular phone or a cell phone.

Do NOT turn off any utilities unless instructed by emergency authorities or you know there has been some damage to gas pipes, water pipes, or electrical lines.

Do NOT drive your vehicle unless you have been advised to **EVACUATE** or you have a medical emergency. Be sure to check on road conditions or travel restrictions.

Do NOT call 9-1-1 except in the case of a life-threatening situation. It is very important to keep lines open for the emergency.



Be Prepared...

Emergency Supply Kit

Put together an emergency supply kit for use at home and/or in a vehicle. You should have enough supplies to last at least 3 days for you, your family and your pets. Make sure that your items are in an easy-to-carry container and stored in a convenient location. The kit should include:

- Water (1 gallon per person per day)
- Ready-to-eat or canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- Cash (secured in a locked container)
- Portable battery-operated radio or TV
- Baby formula, medicine and diapers
- Prescription and non-prescription medicine
- Change of clothes and shoes
- Garbage bags
- Entertainment – include games and books
- Plastic, duct tape and scissors
- First aid kit
- A hand-operated can opener
- Flashlight
- Extra batteries
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Blankets and/or sleeping bags
- Paper plates, plastic utensils and cups
- Extra set of keys
- Hygiene items – shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, deodorant, feminine supplies, unscented household chlorine bleach, comb and brush, toilet paper, garbage bags, hand sanitizer, liquid detergent, medicine dropper
- Items for seniors or disabled persons, if needed
- Pet items - food, medication, shot record, and/or cat litter, if needed

Important documents - Keep these records in a waterproof and fireproof portable container: Will, insurance policies, licenses, contracts, deeds, social security cards, shot records, record of bank accounts, credit cards, birth, marriage and death certificates, health insurance cards, and important phone numbers.

How to Get Information in an Emergency

Listen to your local radio or TV stations for information in the event of a major emergency. The emergency instructions will provide information on whether to **SHELTER IN PLACE** or **EVACUATE**.

Emergency Medication Messages

If there is an emergency, the following stations have agreed to play pre-recorded multilingual medication messages developed by Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services (HCPHES).



• KTRH 740 AM
News Radio
713-212-8000



• KUHT Channel 8 -Public
Broadcasting 713-748-8888

Helpful Web Sites

- Harris County Public Health & Environmental Serviceswww.harriscountyhealth.com
- Harris County Hospital District www.hchdonline.com
- Houston Department of Health & Human Serviceswww.houston.tx.gov/health
- Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Managementwww.hcoem.org
- Centers for Disease Control & Preventionwww.bt.cdc.gov
- Texas Department of State Health Services www.dshs.state.tx.us/preparedness
- Federal Emergency Management Agencywww.fema.gov