

Emergency Preparedness Tip of the Week

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If you received a phone call or a knock on the door by a public official and were told you needed to gather up personal belongings and evacuate your home in 20 minutes due to an approaching wild fire or other disaster, what would go through your mind? What do you take? Where do you go? Who do you notify? A flood of thoughts will go through your mind, all under the added pressure of an adrenalin surge.

Now consider leisurely sitting down at the dining room table with the whole family making an evacuation plan. Key components to that plan would be brainstorming a list of important, valuable or sentimental items to gather up if evacuation ever becomes a reality. Another important thing to preplan is to identify where your family members would meet if separated at the time the evacuation occurs. (Remember normal communications may be interrupted with no phone, cell service or internet available.) Additionally, identify someone that lives out of the area you could notify and use for messages to other family members. If local communications are out, often phone service is available to phones in a different area code. Your evacuation plan should include a list of things you should do if time allows such as turning off your utilities, closing windows and locking doors. Once your plan is written down, you may want to consider taping it to the inside of a kitchen cabinet or other place you will see it regularly and would be easily and quickly accessible.

Everyone's evacuation list will look different. It might be your favorite picture of grandma hanging on the wall, a photo album or your favorite jewelry. Some items everyone should consider are: titles, passports, tax returns, checkbooks, credit cards or other important documents, medication and special needs items, change of clothing, computer and other items that would be difficult to live without. Having a family evacuation plan will make a very stressful situation a little more tolerable.