

DHS Encourages Families to Prepare for Emergencies

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has updated their Web site as part of a national emergency preparedness campaign that involves television and radio announcements. These announcements are not as easily available to military personnel stationed overseas, but fortunately, much of the information can be found on the DHS Web site, www.Ready.gov.

The Department of Homeland Security recommends taking some simple steps in advance “to minimize the impact of a crisis on you and your family.” DHS emphasizes three principles:

Prepare a Kit: The Web site has helpful tips for gathering supplies that can be prepared in case of an emergency. Some items that are necessary for the “basics of survival,” include food, water, a first-aid kit, pet supplies, important family documents, cash and/or checks, and medicines for life-threatening conditions (i.e., insulin, heart medication). Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) can be a simple and effective means of putting aside food for an emergency. (These are available in most commissaries.)

Make a Plan: DHS suggests thinking through how you will reunite with family members in an emergency. “Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to plan in advance: how you will contact one another; how you will get back together; and what you will do in different situations.” Some strategies that can ease communication blunders include having a pre-designated out-of-town contact person, pre-paid phone cards, and a list of essential phone numbers.

Stay Informed: DHS suggests learning about potential emergencies and the emergency plans that have been established by local governments. There are important differences among potential crisis events that can impact the decisions you make and the actions you take. Parents and sponsors can enhance their family’s response plan by learning more about the potential disasters that could happen where they live, and the appropriate way to respond to them. The DHS Web site includes a page that directs users to information about emergency management agencies for all U.S. territories.

Making a plan can reduce the impact of disasters by identifying specific actions to prevent property damage and protect lives. Being prepared reduces fear and anxiety. Including children in the planning reassures them that they know what to do during a critical event.



The Ready.gov Web site, also includes a page dedicated to preparedness in schools and the workplace at www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/work_school.html. Ready.gov also provides information on all-hazards planning, including specific procedures for responding to biological and chemical incidents, extreme weather conditions, floods, fires, and pandemics. Users can download emergency supply lists, family emergency plans, and other information at www.ready.gov/america/publications/allpubs.html. Emergency supply lists for schools are available in DoDEA’s *Safe Schools Handbook*. The DoDEA Crisis Management Guide, on-line at www.dodea.edu/instruction/crisis/resources/docs/DoDEA_Crisis_Manag_Guide_07.pdf, provides information about incident response planning for schools. ■