

Good evening and thank you for joining us. Over the last few weeks we have talked about what you should have in your “go kit”, and about the basics for preparedness as amateur radio participants. What I would like to discuss this evening has more to do with your home and family.

Much of this information comes from an online course (IS-22) “Are you ready” offered through FEMA Independent Study. I found some of the information pretty interesting and I hope you do too.

Consider today's threats; floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, wild fire, chemical accidents, nuclear accidents, pandemic virus, terrorism, biological agents, and all kinds of other things; you fill in the blank.

You know, when I first looked at this it seemed very daunting. But after reading through the material and preparing this program, I realized that the preparation for your family will be about the same regardless of the event. In an event our concerns should, and will be, centered on our family.

Being prepared will reduce the fear, anxiety and losses suffered by your family during a disaster and planning is your first step.

Study and understand each possible threat. Know how they will impact you and try to consider this in your plan. Then have a family meeting so everyone understands what should happen. Create a network with your neighbors, relatives and friends, especially if they are an intended meeting place.

Photocopy the front and back of everyone's birth certificates, social security cards, drivers licenses, marriage license, deeds, insurance, credit and bank account information, basically anything you would need to start over. Make an inventory of major items and take photographs of the inside and outside of your home. Put all this in a waterproof container and make it the first piece in your family go kit. Consider putting away your mad money (hard cash) here. During Katrina we learned that bank cards don't work well when your bank and all its branches are under water or destroyed.

Plan an evacuation route for each type of incident. Decide on meeting places ahead of time both local and out of the area, and make sure each member of your family understands where to go and when. Print little cards if needed with contact information for young ones. Remember that things can happen during school. Ask how the school will communicate with you in case of an emergency; if they have water and food stores available; will they shelter in place or where they plan to evacuate to, and then make your plan accordingly.

If any member of your family has special needs by all means plan ahead for these by storing extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication or even specialized foods. A discussion with the doctor may give you additional insight as to how to plan.

Don't forget your pets. It surprised me to learn that one reason people don't evacuate when told, was their concern for their pets. If you have pets make sure to include their food and water supply as well. Make photo copies of their vaccination and health records to prove they are current. Most emergency shelters will not accept pets because of the possibility that they may affect the health of others, so plan ahead. If you have large or farm animals you are going to have to decide how to take care of them.

Take a first aid course and CPR. Local Red Cross chapters can provide information about this type of training and official certification by the Red Cross provides protection of those administering first aid under the Good Samaritan law.

If you are forced to evacuate, turn off all electrical, water and gas services to your home; compile the kits you have from your planning into your vehicle and leave a note outlining your destination and plan in a plastic baggy in your freezer.

Taking shelter may involve staying with friends or relatives; checking in to a motel or as a final option, entering a mass care facility. You should understand that mass care facilities involves living with many people in a very small space. You should not rely on the shelter providing much more than water, food, medicine and basic sanitary facilities. Bring your supplies with you so you will have the things you need and to keep your senses if it turns out to be a long stay. I will add that I can think of at least one book I would have in these conditions.

My family was touched by Katrina. My brother his wife and four sons spent several weeks at my home. During that time my brother and I visited several mass care facilities while searching for my nephew. I remember thinking two things; the first was that I would rather pitch a tent and stay in the woods than have to live like that and the second was that I was going to do everything in my power to be able to help more, the next time this happened. By the way, we finally found my nephew in good shape.

I hope this has been helpful. I look forward to your comments and experiences.