

Participant Handout #11

Preparing for Specific Types of Disasters

Natural Disasters

Natural disasters include conditions caused by weather, weather-related events, and geological events such as earthquakes. They include severe weather. Severe weather may be predicted several days in advance or less. The National Weather Service issues storm watch and warnings via the news media. A **severe weather watch** means conditions are present that could cause a weather emergency in the areas mentioned. A **severe weather warning** means severe weather is expected and precautions should be taken in the affected area.

Snow and Ice Storms

- Monitor winter storm warnings, blizzard warnings and travel advisories.
- Consider closing the night before or closing early, depending on conditions.
- Arrange for snow and ice removal as well as possible removal of fallen trees and utility lines.
- Check status of battery-powered radios, flashlights, backup lighting, power and heat.

Tornadoes

- Listen for tornado watches (a tornado is likely over a large area) and tornado warnings (a tornado has been sighted or is indicated on weather radar in a specific area).
- Direct children and staff to a shelter space preferably in an underground area of the home or center or an interior area away from windows. Bring a cell and cordless phone to the area.
- If there is no basement available, move to an interior hallway on the lowest level of the building.

- Avoid rooms with wide-span roofs such as cafeterias or multi-purpose rooms.
- Seek protection under desks and tables. If outdoors seek shelter in a low-lying area, culvert, etc. Have children use their arms to protect their head and neck.
- If the family child care home is in a mobile home, take the children and find shelter elsewhere.

Hurricanes

- Monitor hurricane watches and warnings. If time permits, return children to their families.
- Secure outside equipment.
- Close and board up windows.
- Turn refrigerators and freezers to their coldest settings. Open only when necessary and close quickly.
- Store drinking water in clean containers.
- Fill vehicles with fuel.
- Check emergency kits.
- Turn off propane tanks. Turn off utilities, if told to do so by authorities.
- Check status of battery-powered radios and alternate light sources.
- Remain indoors until storm passage is confirmed. Note: Hurricanes often have a lull as the eye of the storm passes.
- If power is lost, unplug appliances to reduce power "surge" when electricity is restored.

- Prepare to evacuate, if necessary. Move records, computers and other equipment to safer areas within the facility or move to another location. Forward all records to a computer out of the area.
- If necessary, evacuate children and staff to a more secure facility. Tell someone outside the immediate area where you are going. Provide information to parents (via a group email or telephone tree) to where the children are being evacuated. Consider road and safety conditions before evacuating.

Earthquakes

- Hang heavy items (pictures and mirrors) away from places people sit and children play.
- Place large or heavy items on lower shelves.
- Fasten shelves securely to walls.
- Strap heavy equipment to the walls.
- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Store breakable items on lower shelves.
- Stay inside. Move the children and staff to the safest location within each room.
- Take cover to protect the children and staff from falling objects indoors and outdoors.
- Turn off the electricity, gas, and water service.
- When leaving the building, use stairways and avoid windows, skylights, and damaged utility lines.
- If the staff and children are in a vehicle, stop quickly and stay in the vehicle. Move the vehicle to a clear area away from buildings, trees, overpasses or utility wires. Once the shaking has stopped, proceed with caution. Avoid bridges or ramps that may have been damaged in the quake.

Flooding

- Listen for announcements of flood watches and warnings.
- Review community flood maps to determine if the facility, evacuation routes, or assembly point are in flood inundation areas.
- Determine if the facility is in the dam failure inundation area.
- Inspect areas prone to flood.
- Move records and other equipment to higher ground. Forward records to a computer out of the area.
- Turn off utilities at main panel.
- Close main gas valve.
- Move emergency kits to vehicles.
- Close or evacuate the facility, if necessary. Heed evacuation orders from public officials.
- Do not walk or drive through flooded areas that are deeper than knee-high.

Technological Hazards

Technological hazards include emergency situations that may occur because of man-made or technological factors, materials, or processes. They include disruption of utilities most programs must have to remain open (water, gas, electricity, ground phone service, cell phone service).

Utility Disruption

- Maintain an up-to-date listing of utility telephone contacts to report disruption and schedule repair or restoration.
- Inspect the water supply and equipment on a regular basis. Make improvements as necessary to ensure an adequate and reliable supply.

- Have maintenance performed on heating and cooling systems on a regular basis and make required repairs.
- Maintain battery-operated radios, flashlights, and emergency lights in working condition and a supply of back-up batteries.
- Keep a fully charged cell phone in the facility.
- Have at least one ground phone that works when electrical power is out.
- Consider purchasing an emergency generator and having it attached to the facility power supply so power will be available if the electricity is disrupted. Be sure someone who will be present knows how to operate it safely.
- Maintain a supply of blankets to keep children warm if the power goes out.
- Have a supply of food that can be prepared when there is no electricity or gas.
- Have a can opener that does not require the use of electricity.
- Keep enough bottled water on hand to supply the staff and children for at least 72 hours.
- Have a plan for minimizing the impact on children with special needs who use special equipment such as signaling devices.

Hazardous Materials

Hazardous materials are substances that are flammable, combustible, explosive, toxic, noxious, corrosive, oxidizable, an irritant or radioactive. A hazardous materials accident (natural gas leak, spilling of a solvent on a roadway, etc.) could occur at or near a child care program. It could also occur as the result of suspicious mail.

- Identify hazardous materials in your center or home.
- Identify businesses and other organizations in your area that use hazardous materials, including materials transported on roadways or railways near your program.

- If a hazardous materials accident occurs, notify the fire department and follow their safety directions.
- Be prepared to isolate the immediate area, evacuate, or take shelter-in-place.
- If required to take shelter-in-place, seal windows, doorways, and shut off air intake systems.

Forest Fires

Forest fires can threaten programs located in or near wild land areas. They spread quickly and are capable of destroying a home or center in minutes.

- Remove outdoor plants and objects that burn easily.
- Keep trees, bushes and plants properly trimmed and well-watered.
- Keep chimneys clean.
- Avoid open burning; if you see a fire in your area, immediately report it by calling 9-1-1.
- If you see a fire approaching:
 - Close all doors and windows.
 - Turn on lights in order to see better in heavy smoke.
 - Close gas valves and turn off pilot lights.
 - If hoses and water are available, place sprinklers on roofs.
 - Leave at once if you are told to by emergency officials.