



For 2010, Resolve to Make a Plan

Here's a New Year's resolution that is easy to do and will make a big difference.

Everyone should have a family emergency plan, so resolve now to make yours. This is important because your family may not be together when an emergency happens. You need to plan in advance how you will contact one another, how you will get back together, and what you will do in different situations.

How do you make a family emergency plan? Start here:

- **Choose an out-of-town friend or relative as an emergency point of contact.** During emergencies it is often easier to make a long distance call than a local call. An out-of-town contact can help communicate among separated family members. Be sure everyone in your family knows the phone number for that person.
- **If you have cell phones, teach family members how to use text messaging.** Text messages can often get around cell network disruptions when a phone call might not be able to get through.
- **Decide on a meeting place in case you cannot return home.** Choose a neighborhood meeting place *and* another meeting place outside your neighborhood in case you can't return there. For example, your neighborhood meeting place may be a friend's house on the next street. A meeting place outside your neighborhood may be a nearby church, store or another friend's home.
- **If you are a parent, ask your schools and daycare providers about their emergency plans.** Find out how they will communicate with families during a crisis. Ask if they are prepared to "shelter in place" if needed and where they plan to go if they must leave.
- **Talk with your family about the types of emergencies that could happen to you.** Include weather emergencies, health crises and human-caused situations.
- **Write down your family emergency plan.** Get printable worksheets to make a plan at www.ReadyVirginia.gov. This Web site also provides information about emergency supplies and how to respond to all types of emergencies.

Research shows that families with written emergency plans are better able to handle and recover from unexpected situations. Making a family plan is simple, doesn't cost anything, and could save you and your loved ones a lot of heartache. Resolve to make your family plan now.

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