



Free Preparedness Checklist

A Practical Starter Guide for Families, Businesses, and Community Organizations

Preparedness does not need to be complicated. The goal is not to prepare for every possible scenario. The goal is to build enough readiness that you can protect, communicate, and make better decisions when normal systems are disrupted.

Use this checklist to identify your current gaps and take practical steps toward better emergency readiness.

1. Communication Plan

In an emergency, communication often fails before anything else. Make sure everyone knows how to reach each other and where to get reliable information.

Checklist

- Create a written emergency contact list.
- Include phone numbers, email addresses, and physical addresses for key contacts.
- Identify one out-of-area contact who can help relay information.
- Make sure every household member, employee, or team member knows who to contact first.
- Save important numbers in phones and keep a printed copy available.
- Establish a primary and backup communication method.
- Identify where updates will come from during an emergency.
- Review the communication plan at least twice per year.

Notes

Primary emergency contact: _____

Backup emergency contact: _____

Out-of-area contact: _____

Primary communication method: _____

Backup communication method: _____

2. Emergency Supplies

You do not need a bunker. You do need enough basic supplies to function safely if stores, utilities, roads, or services are disrupted.

Checklist

- Store enough drinking water for at least 72 hours.
- Keep shelf-stable food available that requires little or no preparation.
- Maintain a stocked first aid kit.
- Keep flashlights in accessible locations.
- Store extra batteries or rechargeable power banks.
- Keep a weather radio or other reliable information source.
- Have basic hygiene supplies available.
- Keep extra prescription medications when possible.
- Store copies of important documents in a safe location.
- Keep cash available in small bills.
- Maintain supplies for children, elderly family members, pets, or anyone with special needs.

Notes

Current supply gaps: _____

Items to purchase first: _____

3. Shelter-in-Place Plan

Some emergencies require staying where you are. This may include severe weather, hazardous materials incidents, civil unrest, utility outages, or other disruptions.

Checklist

- Identify the safest interior room or area.
- Know how to shut off utilities if needed.
- Keep emergency supplies in an accessible location.
- Identify backup lighting options.
- Identify backup heat or cooling considerations.

- Know how you will receive emergency alerts.
- Keep doors, windows, and access points secured when appropriate.
- Create a plan for pets.
- Practice moving to the shelter area quickly.

Notes

Primary shelter location: _____

Backup shelter location: _____

Utility shutoff locations: _____

4. Evacuation Plan

Evacuation decisions are easier when they are made before stress, panic, weather, traffic, or danger are already present.

Checklist

- Identify at least two evacuation routes.
- Choose a primary meeting location outside the home or building.
- Choose a secondary meeting location farther away.
- Keep vehicle fuel above half a tank when possible.
- Prepare a go-bag or quick-access emergency kit.
- Keep copies of important documents ready to take.
- Plan for pets, children, elderly family members, or anyone needing assistance.
- Know where you would go if you had to leave your area.
- Review evacuation routes seasonally.

Notes

Primary meeting location: _____

Secondary meeting location: _____

Out-of-area destination: _____

5. Medical Readiness

Medical preparedness is one of the most practical and overlooked parts of emergency planning.

Checklist

- Keep a well-stocked first aid kit.
- Know where the first aid kit is located.
- Keep a list of medications, allergies, and medical conditions.
- Identify who has first aid, CPR, AED, or medical training.
- Keep emergency medical contacts available.
- Know the location of the nearest hospital or urgent care.
- Keep basic over-the-counter medications available.
- Check expiration dates on medical supplies.
- Consider taking a first aid or CPR course.

Notes

First aid kit location: _____

Nearest hospital/urgent care: _____

Medical considerations: _____

6. Home, Workplace, or Facility Safety

Small safety gaps can become major problems during an emergency. Walk your space with fresh eyes.

Checklist

- Check smoke detectors.
- Check carbon monoxide detectors.
- Locate and inspect fire extinguishers.
- Know all exits.
- Keep exits clear.
- Identify trip hazards or blocked pathways.
- Secure heavy furniture or equipment where needed.
- Review lock, door, and access control procedures.

- Identify safe areas for severe weather.
- Identify areas to avoid during an emergency.

Notes

Safety concerns found: _____

Immediate fixes needed: _____

7. Business and Organizational Readiness

For businesses and organizations, emergency preparedness is also about continuity: protecting people, preserving operations, and recovering faster.

Checklist

- Identify essential functions.
- Identify key personnel and backup personnel.
- Maintain updated emergency contact information.
- Create a staff notification process.
- Identify critical vendors, suppliers, and service providers.
- Back up important digital files.
- Protect key documents and records.
- Create basic emergency procedures for staff.
- Identify who has authority to make decisions during an emergency.
- Review insurance, liability, and continuity considerations.
- Conduct a basic tabletop exercise or discussion.

Notes

Essential functions: _____

Key decision-makers: _____

Critical vendors/providers: _____

8. Community and Team Coordination

Preparedness is stronger when people are not operating alone.

Checklist

- Know your neighbors, staff, team members, or key volunteers.
- Identify people who may need help during an emergency.
- Identify people with useful skills or equipment.
- Coordinate with local emergency services when appropriate.
- Share basic preparedness expectations with your group.
- Create a plan for accountability after an incident.
- Establish when and how people should check in.
- Review the plan regularly.

Notes

People who may need assistance: _____

People with helpful skills/equipment: _____

Accountability process: _____

9. Practice and Review

A plan that nobody understands is not a plan. It is a document. Preparedness requires repetition.

Checklist

- Review your plan at least twice per year.
- Update contact information regularly.
- Check supplies and expiration dates.
- Practice evacuation routes.
- Practice shelter-in-place procedures.
- Talk through likely emergency scenarios.
- Update the plan after major life, staffing, or facility changes.
- Keep the plan simple enough that people will actually use it.

Notes

Next review date: _____

Top three action items:

- 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
-

Preparedness Priority Score

Use this quick scoring tool to identify where to start.

Rate each category from 1 to 5:

- 1 = Not prepared
- 3 = Somewhat prepared
- 5 = Well prepared

Category	Score
Communication Plan	_____
Emergency Supplies	_____
Shelter-in-Place Plan	_____
Evacuation Plan	_____
Medical Readiness	_____
Safety Review	_____
Business / Organization Continuity	_____
Community / Team Coordination	_____
Practice and Review	_____

Lowest-scoring areas

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Start there.

Need Help Building a Practical Emergency Plan?

VertexPoint Solutions helps families, businesses, and community organizations build practical emergency preparedness and safety plans based on real-world public safety and federal emergency management experience.