



SURVIVING THE STORM: THE DISASTER DEFENSE DIGEST

Monthly Safety Message:

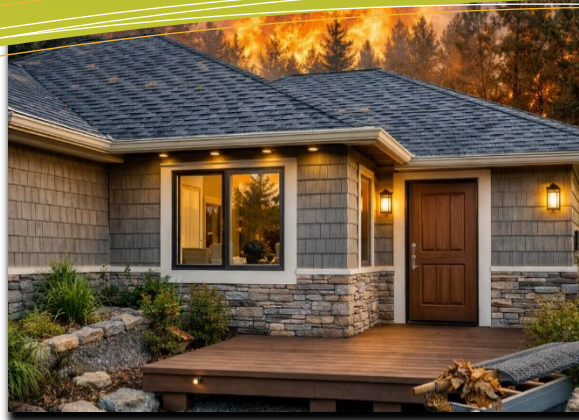
Refresh Your Readiness: Updating Your Emergency Kit for Spring

As seasons change, so should your emergency kit. Spring brings new risks, from heavy rains and flooding to storms and power outages, making it the perfect time to check what you have and what you might be missing. Start by replacing expired items like food, water, medications, and batteries. Swap out seasonal gear, adding rain protection, extra socks, and weather-appropriate clothing.

Think about what your household needs right now. Have routines changed? Do you need updated supplies for kids, pets, or medical conditions? Spring is also a good time to include items like allergy medications, waterproof storage bags, and a flashlight with fresh batteries.

Do not forget your important documents. Make sure copies are current and stored in a safe, waterproof container.

Updating your kit does not take long, but it makes a big difference. A few small steps today can help you feel more



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Shield Your Space: Simple Upgrades That Save Homes

When people think about disaster preparedness, they often picture go-bags and evacuation routes. Those are important, but one of the most powerful things you can do happens long before an emergency begins. It starts at home. Home hardening means making simple, intentional upgrades that help your house better withstand hazards like wildfire, high winds, and flying embers.

In wildfire-prone areas, embers are the number one cause of home loss. These small, burning pieces can travel miles ahead of a fire and find their way into the smallest openings. That is why one of the first steps in home hardening is sealing gaps. Check areas around vents, eaves, and where siding meets the foundation. Installing ember-resistant vent covers and using fine metal mesh can prevent sparks from getting inside.

Your roof plays a major role in protection. If possible, use Class A fire-rated roofing materials such as asphalt composition shingles, metal, or tile. Even if replacing a roof is not immediately realistic, keeping it clean is critical. Leaves, pine needles, and debris can easily ignite and allow fire to spread. Regular maintenance, especially in the spring, reduces that risk.

Windows are another vulnerable point. Heat can break glass, allowing flames or embers into the home. Dual-pane or tempered glass windows provide better resistance. Adding

metal screens can also help deflect heat and debris. Doors should be solid core or metal, and weather stripping should be intact to reduce gaps.

The area directly around your home matters just as much as the structure itself. Creating a defensible space, especially within the first five feet of your home, is one of the most effective strategies. Remove flammable materials like wood piles, dry vegetation, and mulch near the foundation. Consider using gravel, stone, or well-irrigated plants instead. This immediate zone acts as a buffer, reducing the chance of ignition.

Gutters and decks are often overlooked. Wooden decks and accumulated debris in gutters can catch embers quickly. Cleaning gutters regularly and considering fire-resistant decking materials can make a significant difference. Enclosing the underside of decks with non-combustible materials also helps prevent embers from collecting there.

Home hardening does not have to happen all at once. It can be done step by step, over time, as part of regular home maintenance. Each improvement adds another layer of protection. More importantly, it brings peace of mind. At its core, home hardening is about protecting your family, your memories, and your community. Small actions, taken early, can make a lasting difference when it matters

Quick Tip:

Stay Informed, Stay Safe: Understanding Alert and Warning Systems

When emergencies happen, seconds matter, and the right information at the right time can save lives. Alert and warning systems are designed to do exactly that, reach you quickly with critical updates so you can take action. You have likely seen Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) on your phone, those loud, attention-grabbing messages about severe weather, evacuations, or immediate threats. NOAA Weather Radio adds another layer, providing continuous broadcasts of weather and hazard information, even when cell service is limited.

For Tribal communities, locally managed alert systems play an equally important role. These systems can deliver culturally relevant, location-specific information that reflects the unique needs of the community.

The key is not just having these systems but knowing how to use them. Make sure alerts are enabled on your phone, understand what different warnings mean, and have a plan for how you will respond. Being informed is one of the strongest forms of preparedness.



Rooted in Resilience: Why Earth Day Matters for Disaster Preparedness

Earth Day often feels like a moment to pause and appreciate the beauty around us, the trees, the water, the open sky. It is a time for reflection, but it is also a call to action. What is sometimes overlooked is how deeply connected Earth Day is to disaster resilience. The way we care for the land directly influences how well our communities can withstand and recover from disasters.

When landscapes are healthy, they act as natural protection systems. Forests reduce wildfire intensity when they are properly managed. Wetlands absorb floodwaters and lessen the impact of heavy rains. Healthy soil holds moisture longer, reducing drought conditions and erosion. These are not abstract environmental benefits, they are real, measurable layers of protection that can mean the difference between resilience and devastation.

In many communities, especially within Tribal Nations, this connection has long been understood. Stewardship of the land is not separate from safety, it is part of it. Practices such as cultural burning, watershed protection, and seasonal land management are rooted in generations of observation and relationship with the environment. These approaches do more than protect ecosystems, they reduce risk before disasters ever begin.

Modern disaster management often focuses on response, how quickly we can react when something goes wrong. Earth Day reminds us to think differently. It encourages prevention and preparedness through care of the natural systems that surround us. For example, clearing excess vegetation, restoring native plants, and maintaining waterways are not just environmental tasks, they are resilience strategies. They reduce fuel for fires, improve water flow, and strengthen the land's ability to recover after an event.



There is also a human side to this connection. When people engage with their environment, whether through community cleanups, tree planting, or restoration projects, they build a sense of ownership and awareness. That awareness translates into preparedness. People who understand their landscape are more likely to recognize risks, respond appropriately, and support one another during emergencies.

Earth Day can serve as a starting point for these actions. It is an opportunity to move beyond a single day of recognition and toward ongoing commitment. Small steps matter. Maintaining defensible space around a home, reducing waste that could become hazardous debris, conserving water, and supporting local environmental efforts all contribute to a stronger, more resilient community.

Disaster resilience is often framed in terms of infrastructure and emergency plans, but it is just as much about relationship, with the land, with each other, and with the future. When we invest in the health of our environment, we are also investing in our ability to endure and recover.

At its core, Earth Day is not just about protecting the planet in a general sense. It is about recognizing that the well-being of the land and the safety of our communities are inseparable. By caring for one, we strengthen the other. In doing so, we create a foundation of resilience that supports both present and future generations.

Small Space, Big Risks: What You're Missing Under the

It is easy to overlook the space under the kitchen sink. For many households, it becomes a catch-all for cleaning supplies, trash bags, and anything else that needs to be tucked out of sight. But behind those cabinet doors is one of the most overlooked risk areas in the home.

One of the biggest concerns is chemical storage. Many common household cleaners contain strong ingredients like bleach, ammonia, and acids. When stored together without thought, they can become dangerous. Accidentally mixing certain products can create toxic fumes that are harmful to breathe. Even when sealed, some containers can leak or give off vapors over time, especially in a confined space.

Another issue is accessibility. If you have children or pets, the area under the sink can be especially risky. Brightly colored bottles and unfamiliar containers can easily attract curiosity. Without proper childproof locks, it only takes a moment for an accident to happen. Ingestion or skin contact with these chemicals can lead to serious health consequences.

Water damage is another hidden hazard. Small leaks from pipes or connections can go unnoticed for long periods of time. What starts as a slow drip can lead to mold growth, wood rot, and structural damage inside the cabinet. Mold, in particular, can affect indoor air quality and trigger respiratory issues, especially for those with allergies or asthma.

Clutter also plays a role in safety. When the space is packed with items, it becomes difficult to see potential problems. A leaking bottle, a loose pipe, or even a pest issue can go undetected simply because everything is hidden behind other items. Clutter can also increase the risk of spills when trying to reach for something in a tight space.



Electrical hazards are sometimes present as well. In some homes, garbage disposals or dishwashers share space under the sink with electrical connections. If water leaks come into contact with these components, it can create a serious safety risk.

The good news is that reducing these hazards does not require a major overhaul. Start by removing everything and taking inventory of what is actually needed. Store chemicals in clearly labeled, tightly sealed containers, and avoid mixing products. Use bins or organizers to keep items separated and easy to access. Installing a simple childproof lock can add an important layer of protection.

It is also worth checking for leaks regularly, even if everything appears to be working as it should. Take a few moments every few weeks to look closely at the pipes, connections, and the base of the cabinet for any signs of moisture, discoloration, or unusual odors. Catching a slow drip early can prevent mold growth, damage to cabinetry, and costly repairs down the line.

The space under your kitchen sink may be out of sight, but it should never be out of mind. This small area plays a bigger role in your home's overall safety than most people realize. With a little attention, consistent organization, and routine care, it can shift from a hidden risk to a well-managed and secure space. Simple habits, done regularly, can make a lasting difference in protecting your home and everyone in it.

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