



SURVIVING THE STORM: THE DISASTER DEFENSE DIGEST

Monthly Safety Message:

The Dollar-Store Emergency Kit

Preparedness does not have to be expensive. Many useful emergency supplies can be picked up for just a few dollars, especially if you focus on simple items that serve a clear purpose.

Good buys often include bottled water, basic first-aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, lighters, work gloves, duct tape, plastic bags, hygiene items, paper goods, can openers, and small storage containers. These are inexpensive, practical, and easy to replace.

Be more cautious with items that could fail when you truly need them. Very cheap batteries, flimsy flashlights, low-quality power banks, poorly made tools, and bargain medical supplies may not hold up during an extended outage or evacuation.

The best approach is to build gradually. Add one or two reliable items during regular shopping trips, test what you buy, and replace anything that does not perform **well**.

A useful emergency kit is not about having the most gear. It is about having dependable basics that work.



When the Signal Disappears

During a disaster, cell service can fail with little warning. Towers may lose power, equipment can be damaged, network connections may be disrupted, and heavy call volume can overwhelm available capacity. Wildfires, earthquakes, floods, severe storms, and extended power outages can all interrupt cellular service.

Because cell phones have become the primary way most people communicate, navigate, receive alerts, and access information, losing that connection can create confusion quickly. Preparing for that possibility should be part of every household and community emergency plan.

Start by keeping important phone numbers written down and stored somewhere easy to access. Include family members, neighbors, medical providers, schools, workplaces, and an out-of-area contact. During widespread emergencies, an out-of-area person may be easier to reach than someone within the affected area.

Use text messages when cellular networks are congested. Texts generally require less network capacity than voice calls and may go through when calls do not. Keep messages short and limit unnecessary communication so networks remain available for urgent needs.

Protect phone battery life by reducing screen brightness, closing unnecessary apps and turning off Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and

location services when they are not needed. Keep portable battery banks charged, and store vehicle chargers or solar chargers with emergency supplies.

Do not rely on a cell phone as the only source of emergency information. Keep a battery-powered or hand-crank radio available so official alerts and instructions can still be received when internet and cellular networks are unavailable.

Communities may also use public safety radio systems, amateur radio operators, satellite communications, neighborhood notification teams, or physical information points during extended outages.

Establish a family meeting location before an emergency. Make sure everyone knows where to go if communication is lost. Avoid relying entirely on shared apps or digital maps and have important addresses and evacuation routes available on paper.

Neighbors can also become an important communication resource. Check on older adults, people who live alone, and anyone who may need additional assistance.

Reliable communication should always have a backup. Written contacts, radios, charged batteries, planned meeting locations, and strong neighborhood connections can help keep people informed and connected when the cellular network goes dark.

this issue

When the Signal Disappears **P.1**

Before You Sip **P.2**

Meet Me Here **P.3**

Quick Tip:

Five Things to Photograph Before a Disaster

A few minutes with your phone can make recovery much easier after a disaster. Start by photographing each room in your home, including closets, garages, sheds, and major appliances.

These images can help document what you owned before damage occurred.

Next, take clear photos of valuable items such as electronics, tools, jewelry, artwork, and equipment.

Photograph prescription labels and medication lists so important information is available if containers are lost or damaged.

Keep secure digital copies of identification, insurance cards, vehicle information, and important household records. Include serial numbers, receipts, or other documentation for high-value property whenever possible.

Store copies somewhere protected, such as an encrypted cloud account or another secure location outside the home. Avoid keeping your only copy on the phone itself.

Good documentation cannot prevent a disaster, but it can reduce confusion afterward and provide useful information for insurance claims, replacement records, and recovery decisions.



Before You Sip

Clean water is something most of us rarely think about. We turn on the faucet, fill a glass, make coffee, brush our teeth, and cook dinner without giving it much thought. During a disaster or water system failure, that routine can change quickly.

Flooding, broken water mains, power outages, treatment problems, loss of system pressure, or contamination can make tap water temporarily unsafe. When that happens, local water systems and public health agencies may issue a drinking water advisory. The instructions matter because not every advisory means the same thing.

A boil-water advisory generally means the water may contain disease-causing microorganisms. Follow the specific instructions issued by the local water utility or health department. When boiling is directed, bring water to a rolling boil for at least one minute, then allow it to cool before use. Use safe water for drinking, preparing food and beverages, brushing teeth, making ice, and other activities identified in the advisory.

A do-not-drink advisory is different. It may be issued when chemicals or other contaminants are present that boiling will not remove. In these situations, use bottled or another approved source of water and follow local instructions carefully. A do-not-use advisory is more restrictive and may prohibit tap water from being used for any purpose until officials determine it is safe.

Never assume that boiling makes every type of contaminated water safe. Boiling can kill many bacteria, viruses, and parasites, which is why it is commonly recommended during certain water system emergencies. However, boiling does not remove heavy metals, salts, fuel, pesticides, or most other chemical contaminants. In some cases, boiling may even concentrate certain



as water evaporates. Always follow the specific instructions provided by your local water utility or public health agency.

Households can prepare before an advisory is ever issued. Keep an emergency supply of drinking water in a clean, protected location, and replace stored water according to the recommendations for the container or product being used. Store enough water for drinking, cooking, basic hygiene, and pets. It is also helpful to keep several clean, food-grade containers available for collecting or storing safe water if local distribution sites are opened.

Pay close attention to official notifications from the local water provider, emergency management agency, or public health department. Water advisories may change as testing is completed. Do not rely solely on neighborhood rumors, social media posts, or secondhand information when deciding whether tap water is safe to use.

After an advisory is lifted, follow the utility's instructions before returning to normal use. Residents may be directed to flush faucets for a certain amount of time, discard ice, replace water filters, clean appliances, because affected water may have entered household plumbing, refrigerators, ice makers, or other connected systems.

Safe water is essential during any emergency, and a little preparation can prevent a difficult situation from becoming more serious. Following official instructions can help protect everyone in the household until the water system is confirmed safe again.

Meet Me Here: Finding Your Way Back

Emergencies rarely happen when the whole family is together. One parent may be at work, another may be across town, children may be at school or with friends, and grandparents or other relatives may be somewhere else entirely. In those first confusing moments, the instinct is usually the same: find the people you love and make sure they are safe.

That becomes much harder if phone service is overloaded, roads are closed, or everyone is trying to reach home at the same time. A simple family reunion plan can remove some of that uncertainty. Choose a neighborhood meeting place close to home. This should be somewhere every family member can recognize and reach safely if the house cannot be entered. A trusted neighbor's home, a familiar park entrance, a community mailbox area, or another nearby landmark can work well.

Make sure children know the location by name and understand that this is where the family will gather if everyone has to leave the house quickly. Practice walking there together so it becomes familiar rather than something they are expected to remember during a stressful event.

Families should also choose an out-of-area meeting place in case the neighborhood is evacuated or inaccessible. A relative's home, close friend's house, community center, or other familiar location outside the immediate area can serve as a second gathering point. Write the address down. Keep copies in backpacks, purses, wallets, emergency kits, and vehicles. Do not rely only on a phone to remember the location.

It is also helpful to designate an out-of-area family contact. If local phone networks are congested, messages to someone outside the affected area may still go through. That person can help keep track of who is safe, where everyone is located, and whether plans have changed.

Families should also plan for anyone who regularly works, attends school, or spends



time outside the immediate neighborhood. Choose a designated meeting location that makes sense if returning home is not possible because of road closures, evacuation orders, damaged infrastructure, or other hazards. This could be a relative's home, a trusted friend's house, or another familiar location outside the affected area.

Make sure everyone knows which location to use, how to get there, and who to contact if plans need to change. Having both an out-of-area contact and a designated reunion point gives family members a clear plan even when they are separated by several miles when an emergency begins.

Build the plan around the people who actually live in the household. Include children, older relatives, pets, caregivers, and anyone with mobility or medical needs. Decide who is responsible for picking up children, helping an older family member, transporting pets, or bringing medications and essential items.

Review the plan regularly, especially after a move, job change, new school year, or other major change in routine. The value of a family meeting place is not complicated. It gives everyone a shared destination during a moment that may feel chaotic.

Choose the places now, write them down, practice getting there, and make sure every person in the family knows the plan.

During an emergency, that familiar place can become more than a meeting point. It can become the place where everyone finds each other again.

GET CERTS...!

**Train with Purpose.
Lead with Impact. Build
Your Future.**

Ready to step into something bigger than a job? CAL TERRA's training programs are designed to turn everyday people into skilled responders, environmental stewards, and community leaders. Whether you're looking to launch a new career, gain real-world certifications, or strengthen your community's emergency readiness, this is where it starts.

Our hands-on training blends classroom learning with field experience, giving you the confidence to respond when it matters most. From HAZWOPER and emergency response to environmental restoration and workforce development, every course is built for real-world impact, not just theory.

You won't just learn, you'll do. You'll train alongside professionals, gain recognized certifications, and become part of a growing network focused on resilience, safety, and opportunity.

This is more than training. It's a pathway.

Step up. Get trained. Make a difference.

Be part of something that matters. For more information about our training programs, contact us at:
info@calterra.org

