

REACTING TO AN EMERGENCY

AT HOME AND IN TOWN

Now, you have down your preplanning and it's time to think about the actions you will take during an emergency. We hope you will never need this information, but emergencies happen, so study these suggestions carefully.

ACCIDENT

You can assist the victim and first responders by keeping calm. This is hard to do, but try. Call 9-1-1 and give them all of the information they request. If someone else is available to make the call, have them do it while you help the victim. Use your first aid training to assist the victim, but the standard rule is: "When in doubt, don't!" Stop bleeding by pressing directly on the wound.

Help is only minutes away; don't move an accident victim if there is any suggestion of head, back or neck injuries. (Fall, auto accident, unconscious victim or if you don't know what happened.) Do only the procedures you've been trained to do. Keep others away from the victim, but let them help by bringing the first aid kit, blankets, etc. Have someone lead the emergency responders to the scene. Have others keep people back if there is a crowd. If people are trapped do not try to free them, you may only make the injuries worse.

POISON

If drugs or poisons are involved (child swallowing pills), try to find out what kind and tell the 9-1-1 operator. Save any bottles, pill containers, etc. and give these to the paramedics. If there is time and someone is available, have them call poison control and ask for instructions. Don't make the patient vomit before paramedics arrive unless you are told to do so.

ANIMAL BITES

A special case. If it can be done safely, try to get someone to follow the animal to report it to local officers. A doctor should see every animal bite patient, even if it is a minor bite by a household pet. If it appears serious don't try to take the patient to the doctor or hospital. Call 9-1-1.

WINTER STORMS

Winter storms are a fact of life in northern New England. Most of the time, even a severe winter storm is more likely to be an inconvenience than a life-threatening event, as long as you take the proper precautions and don't take chances. Before winter starts, stock up on food and batteries for your flashlight and radio. Make sure you have one wired telephone available; cordless phones won't work if the power is out and cell phones may not work because of high call volumes. When a storm is on the way, keep track of it via radio or television. Stay indoors during the storm. Don't overexert yourself by shoveling snow. If you do go outdoors, dress well and be careful. In a whiteout you may not be able to see your home from 50 feet away. NEVER use an outdoor heating appliance like a gas or charcoal grill inside for cooking or heating. They pose an extreme hazard for carbon monoxide poisoning.

BOMB

If you find something that looks like it might be a bomb, don't touch it. A device with wires, a clock or paper wrapped sticks, or any suspicious package of unknown origin might be a bomb. Clear the area and call 9-1-1. Give responding authorities as much information as you can about the suspected device. If you receive a bomb threat by phone, try to keep the person talking as long as possible. Listen for an accent or any other background noises. If you can, call 9-1-1 on another phone. After receiving such a threat call first and then look around. Do not open or shut any doors. You know your home or immediate office area; if there is anything unusual, you will recognize it. Evacuate and wait outside until emergency personnel arrive.

Give them all the information you have and they will handle the situation from there.

CAVE-IN

If a person is trapped by a cave-in call 9-1-1 for help at once. Do not try to dig for the person with tools—use your hands. Try to clear the area around the head and chest first and start rescue breathing, if needed. Do not try to dig the person completely out. There may be injuries you will aggravate. Be sure to have someone watch for the danger of other cave-ins while you are trying to get to the victim.

COLLAPSED BUILDING

Call 9-1-1. Get all uninjured persons out of the area. Turn off all utilities if they can be safely reached. Do not try to rescue trapped persons. Firefighters are professionally trained to do this and you may only make injuries worse or become trapped yourself. Merely touching a loose board might cause more collapses. Try to identify where the persons are trapped. If possible, make a sketch map of their location to give to rescue personnel when they arrive.

CHEMICAL SPILLS

Spills of potentially hazardous chemicals can result in deaths, injuries or environmental damage. Thousands of different chemicals are used in your homes and workplaces and they must be handled safely. If a spill of any size occurs, call 9-1-1 to get help. Give emergency responders as much information as you can about the identity of the chemical and the hazard associated with it. Stay up wind and up hill to avoid breathing vapors and don't touch any of the material.

EARTHQUAKE

We usually associate earthquakes with California, but in fact, all of New England is considered a moderate risk earthquake zone. We usually have several in New Hampshire every year, but most are so slight that they go unnoticed. If you feel an earthquake, usually with a low rumbling sound or a wavelike motion, stay calm. If you are indoors, stay there. Take shelter near an inside wall or doorframe, or under a heavy table or desk. Stay away from windows, skylights or any objects that may fall or tip over. If outdoors, get away from buildings. Head for clear areas and stay away from walls, poles, and downed wires. After the shock, turn off utilities if you suspect damage. If you smell gas, leave at once.

FIRE

When there is a fire in your home or you smell smoke, get out. Remember, extinguishers are to put out very small fires and to clear an escape route. Don't try to fight a fire. Heat and smoke rise. When in a smoky environment, go to the floor and crawl to an exit.

If in a basement, go out through a window. Check doors before opening them. If they are hot to touch, or smoke is seeping around them, do not open them—go out a window.

As you go out, close as many doors and windows as possible. This will help to contain the fire. (Don't be a dead hero. If you are out and one of your family members is still trapped inside, don't go back in. This is difficult to accept, but if you try to go after them you may not come out.) The fire department is only moments away and it will have the proper equipment to go in safely. You can more successfully save the life of a trapped person by advising the fire department that someone is trapped and pointing out the location.

FLOODING

Floods are among the most common emergencies faced by people in New Hampshire. Floods are a possibility every year, especially in the spring when the runoff from snowmelt can combine with heavy rains. Some areas, especially lowlands near rivers, are called flood plains because they flood on a regular basis. Construction is usually limited in flood plains because of predictable danger. But flooding can occur just about anywhere, anytime of year. A sudden thaw in the winter or a major downpour in the summer can cause localized flooding because there is suddenly a lot of water in one place with nowhere to go. Small rivers and streams pose special flooding risks because they are easily blocked by ice jams or debris. Urban flooding can occur when storm drains and catch basins are blocked in the same way. You can protect yourself from flooding by paying attention to National Weather Service flood watches and warnings and familiarizing yourself with flooding hazards in your neighborhood. Stay back from flooded rivers and streams because saturated banks can collapse. Never drive on flooded roadways; you could easily become stranded, even on familiar roads. Floodwater is likely to be contaminated, so never drink or touch it. Emergency workers will provide instructions if evacuations are necessary. If you are stranded in your house, call for help and move to the highest location possible and wait for help.

Personal Comfort and Life Support

- Energy foods – dextrose, etc.
- Winter – extra clothing
- First aid kit
- Dried foods
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Light nylon rope
- Flashlight and fresh batteries
- Sunglasses

Car Maintenance and Equipment

- Extra Oil
- Flares
- Spare tire and changing tools
- Tool kit
- De-icer and window scraper
- Battery jumper cables
- Heavy rope or tow cable

REACTING TO AN EMERGENCY (CONTINUED...)

GAS LEAK

If you smell gas in your home immediately get out and call the fire department from some other location. If the odor of gas is strong, don't try to turn off the gas and electricity, just get out and call for help.

HIGH WINDS

Damaging high winds may be associated with hurricanes, winter storms or thunderstorms. New Hampshire may even experience tornados or small intense windstorms known as micro bursts. All high wind events can cause damage to buildings or bring down trees and power lines. Falling objects and downed power lines are extremely dangerous. Wait out a severe windstorm at home if possible. If your home is badly damaged, get to a neighbor's house or other shelter and call for help.

LIGHTNING

During an electrical storm get inside and stay away from electrical objects. Turn off radio and TV and use your battery-operated radio. The safest areas are the center of a room. Do not use the telephone or any electrical appliance. If your home is struck by lightning, call the fire department immediately, and advise them of the nature of the damage, as well as if there are any injuries.

Weather Watch or Warning... What's the difference?

Watch – Forecast issued well in advance to alert the public of the possibility of a particular weather related hazard (e.g. tornado watch, flash flood watch). The occurrence, location and timing may still be uncertain.

Warning – Forecast issued when a particular weather or flood hazard is "imminent" or already occurring (e.g. tornado warning, flash flood warning). A warning is used for conditions posing a threat to life or property.

LOST PERSON

Small children or elderly people may become lost, even close to home. Finding the missing person can be seriously complicated by the behavior of relatives. If a child is missing from home, the parents often search for hours, get neighbors in on the search and then call police. By that time, the person can be miles from home.

If a person is lost, family members should first very carefully check the house and immediate vicinity. (Children have been found under beds and on shelves!) Then, call police at once. Police are highly trained to search for missing persons and they would much rather be called immediately. While waiting for the police, write out a description of the missing person, locate recent photographs and stay home. A relative should be at the house at all times to answer calls and to report if the missing person returns home.

POWER FAILURE

If there is a power failure at your home, determine if it is just your house or a wider area. Look for lights in other homes or check with a neighbor. Report power outages to your electric utility. Food will keep in your refrigerator and freezer for at least two days if you do not open the doors. Do not call the police or fire departments unless you have an emergency. The dispatcher will be quite busy.

Use flashlights rather than candles for light. Do not use fuel fired heaters that may produce carbon monoxide indoors.

OUT OF TOWN

It could be a trip, or a vacation in the mountains, but wherever it is, there are some special emergency considerations for you when you and/or your family are on a trip. And be sure you have your survival equipment in the car—even for a day's picnic in the White Mountains. You can never tell when an emergency will happen.

ACCIDENT

If you have an accident and your car is off the road. Do not move anyone who is injured. The least injured should try to get help. Call for help if you have a cell phone. Bear in mind that there are gaps in cell phone coverage. Flag down a car and ask them to help by calling 9-1-1. Flares can help, provided there are no fuel spills. Many cars will pass by a person who is waving for fear of getting into trouble, but they will often stop for the flare. Send several people for help and remain to direct the help to the accident. Be sure someone in town knows where you are going and when you plan to return so if you are not back at the planned time they can notify authorities of a possible problem.

CAR IN WATER

You may have an accident where your car goes into the water.

Roll the windows up quickly. Air in the car will buoy it up and you stand a better chance. When ready to get out, lower the windows and try to get out. Stay with the car. You stand a much better chance of being rescued. If you can wade ashore, fine, but if stranded in the middle of a swift river your best bet is with, or on, your car.

INJURED PERSON

Never hike alone. You are inviting disaster. If one of your party is injured, someone should stay with the injured person while others go for help. Don't try to evacuate the person yourself if the injuries are serious. (Any back, head or neck injury is serious.) The persons going for help should carefully mark their route so they can lead rescuers back in. The persons going for help should call 9-1-1 and they will contact the nearest rescue team for you. Remain at a contact point (store, home, phone booth, etc.) where rescuers can meet you. They are professionals and can evacuate the injured person without complicating the injuries.

LIGHTNING

If you are in your car during a lightning storm, stay there. You are insulated by the tires and the fact that the lightning will travel over the outside of your car, not into it. If you are out in the open, get to low ground, stay away from tall trees or crouch down in the open until the lightning storm passes by. Do not lie flat on the ground. The rain may soak you, but you will be safe.

LOST

The procedures are basically the same as in town. If you determine a person is lost, do not begin elaborate searching. Get out and contact law enforcement. Arrange a meeting place for you and the search team and lead them to the last place the missing person was seen. Do not go searching. You will be needed in their base camp to give information about the missing person. The searchers are professionals. They would much rather be called at once and arrive to discover the missing person has been found than to be called out after several hours and have a massive area to search.

THINK ABOUT IT

A child lost in the mountains can travel as much as two miles an hour. If searchers arrive in an hour they have an area of about 12 square miles to search. However, if you wait five hours before calling them, they will have over 300 square miles to search when they first arrive and this makes their work more difficult.

If you get lost in the woods, you can make the work of the searchers much easier if you stop! The moment you are sure you are lost, stop, build a shelter, make a fire and wait. They will find you, but if you keep moving, you may be moving away from them and their work is much harder. Be sure you have told someone where you are going and when you'll return. In your family, train your children as early as possible that if they think they are lost in town, they should go to the nearest business and say so. In the field, they should stop and wait.

COLD

It's bitter winter and you are stuck in a snowdrift or the car won't start. Be careful. Use your emergency kit and clothing. If there is snow, dig into it and build a snow cave with your shovel. It may be 20 degrees below zero outside and in your car, but deep in the snow the temperature is 32 degrees above zero and you will survive. If you plan to do a lot of fieldwork be sure to take a course in survival education—available through most mountaineering stores.

SCHOOL INCIDENTS

Parents of school aged children should take the time to educate themselves about what their children's school will do in the event of an emergency. Should a disaster happen at or near a school, the first priority of the staff of that school will be the safety of the children. Find out what role you, as a parent, can play in the school's response to a disaster. Find out what you can do in partnership with the school to ensure your child's safety.

SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES

Teach your family and friends to be aware when opening the mail. Signs of suspicious mail include the following:

- It is unexpected or from someone you don't know. This may possibly be from overseas.
- It is addressed to someone no longer at your address.
- It is handwritten, has no return address, or bears a return address that you cannot confirm as legitimate.
- It originates from a known suspicious location.
- It is lopsided or lumpy in appearance.
- It has wires or other unusual contents protruding or can be felt through the envelope or wrapping.
- It is sealed with excessive amounts of tape.
- It has excessive postage.
- It is excessively heavy or has oily or powdery residue on it.

What should you do with a suspicious piece of mail:

- Do not handle a letter or package that you suspect is contaminated.
- Stay away from the package and don't shake it, squeeze it, or sniff it.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling.
- Notify local law enforcement authorities immediately.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is the use of force or the threat of force to further a political message or goal. The threat of terrorism has grown in the United States, beginning in the 1990s. Incidents such as the Oklahoma City and World Trade Center bombings were the first major acts of terrorism on U.S. soil in recent years. These attacks prompted some policy changes among emergency management and law enforcement agencies, but the threat of terrorism was not driven home to the general public until the September 11, 2001 aircraft attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

September 11, 2001 instantly became an important national symbol in what has now become known as the "war on terrorism." But in terms of emergency response, terrorism is not much different from other sorts of calamities. People are killed and injured, property is destroyed and infrastructure is put out of commission. In fact, a terrorist attack is sometimes described as "a HAZMAT incident with an attitude."

To someone trapped in a collapsed building, it doesn't matter whether that building fell down because of an earthquake, structural failure or a bomb. The only thing that matters to the victim is that he is trapped and needs to be rescued. The only real difference is that if the cause of the collapse is a bomb, the incident is a crime scene as well as a rescue operation and police and rescue crews need to work together to carry out their work.

New Hampshire is at no special risk for terrorist attacks. The Granite State has no particular ties to parts of the world where terrorism is a frequent occurrence, so any attack by international terrorists is very unlikely. But home grown acts of violence, such as the Carl Drega shootings in Colebrook in 1997 and the Concord Public Library were both terrorist acts.

Nevertheless, terrorist acts remain rare occurrences. People are much more at risk of death or injury on the highway. The Police and Fire Departments encourage all residents to take precautions that will protect you and your family in an emergency. Extreme measures prompted by fear of terrorism, such as buying gas masks or stocking up on antibiotics, is unnecessary and a waste of money.

RECOVERY

What happens after a disaster? Recovery. This may involve rebuilding a home or an entire city. Regardless, the recovery stage begins while the disaster is going on. At your home it might involve the fire department covering your broken windows with plastic, or the emergency workers finding you a place to stay for the night.

Local, state, and federal governments have outstanding recovery programs that include everything from small business loans to placement in new jobs for those whose business has been destroyed. They are all available to city residents and coordinated by city, state and federal officials.

In the non-governmental area there is also the outstanding help available from such organizations as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and many church organizations.

During, and after a disaster, your Town has access to all of these resources to help with the recovery activities.

NOW, HELP US TO SAVE A LIFE!

This publication has been meant to assist you in preparing for a multitude of situations that you may face in your day-to-day life. If you find that you require more specific information, please take advantage of the resources provided within this document. There are countless web sites, organizations, and agencies available to provide information on these topics as well as many others. We have provided a list of some of the helpful resources that are available, but by no means have we listed all.



Eoin Stapleton of Lancaster, an Explorer with their Emergency Services, helped extinguish a brush fire in April 2006 on Mechanic Street. (Photo by Lyndall Demers)

EMERGENCY!

AT THE AIRPORT

ALLOW EXTRA TIME

• The heightened security at airports requires more time to properly screen travelers. Travelers should contact their airline to find out how early they should arrive, and any special information about carry-on luggage allowed.

- Take public transportation to the airport if possible.
- Parking and curbside check-in may be controlled and restricted. Travelers should contact their airline to see if curbside check-in is in place at their airport.

CHECK-IN

- A government-issued photo ID (federal, state, or local) is required.
- Have your IDs and boarding passes out and ready as you approach the checkpoint. Travelers may be asked to show this ID at subsequent points, such as the gate, along with their boarding passes.
- E-ticket travelers should check with their airline to make sure they have proper documentation. Written confirmation from the airline, such as a letter, fax, or email, may be required.

SECURITY CHECKPOINTS

- Only ticketed passengers are allowed beyond the checkpoints, except for those with specific medical problems, or a parent accompanying children to the gate.
- Each traveler is limited to one carry-on bag and one personal bag such as a purse, laptop, or briefcase.
- All electronic items such as laptops and cell phones may be subjected to additional screening.
- Be prepared to remove your laptop from its travel case so that they both can be x-rayed separately.
- Wear as few metal objects as possible and remove all metal objects before passing through the metal detectors to facilitate the screening.
- Most airports require passengers to put their coats and jackets through the x-ray conveyor. You'll save time in line if you have it off and ready to approach.
- Do not gift-wrap carry-on items; they may need to be opened during security screening.

You must transport the following items as checked baggage or risk their confiscation at the x-ray security checkpoint. When in doubt, transport the item in checked baggage.

- Knives of any length, composition, or description
- Cutting instruments of any kind and composition including carpet knives, box cutters, and spare blades; any device with a folding retractable blade, and ice picks, straight razors, double-edged razor blades, metal scissors, and metal nail files
- Corkscrews
- Baseball/softball bats
- Golf clubs
- Pool cues
- Ski poles
- Hockey sticks

The following items are permitted aboard the plane as carry-on items:

- Walking canes and umbrellas following inspection
- Nail clippers without an attached metal nail file
- Safety razors, including disposable razors
- Syringes with documented proof of medical need
- Tweezers
- Eyelash curlers

AT THE GATE

- Travelers must be prepared to present a valid photo identification card along with their boarding pass.
- Travelers and their bags may be subjected to additional screening, including random checks of travelers and their baggage. If you are asked to participate in a random check, please be polite and cooperate with the requesting official.

AT ALL TIMES

- Be patient
- Keep control of all bags and personal items
- Do not bring anything on board for another person unknown to you, or who is not traveling with you, however innocent or small the package or item may appear.
- Report any unattended items in the airport or aircraft to the nearest airport or airline personnel.

ON THE PLANE

- Listen carefully to the safety instructions from the airline personnel.
- Be aware of your surroundings and report anything suspicious to airline personnel.
- Review the passenger safety card before takeoff and landing.
- Be able to locate emergency exits both in front and behind you. Count the rows between you and the nearest front and rear exits.
- Make a mental plan of action in case of emergency.

Many of these suggestions are applicable to other modes of transportation. The same vigilance to travel safety should be applied when using buses, trains, subways, cruise-ships, and other forms of transportation.

WHILE TRAVELING INTERNATIONALLY

• Americans residing abroad or considering traveling abroad should monitor current events and review the latest information on the countries they plan to visit. Most important are the bulletins on the Department of State's website at www.travel.state.gov. Travelers may also call the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate or the State Department's Overseas Citizens Services at 202-647-5225. Assistance is available at this number 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- When traveling, dress conservatively.
- Bring traveler's checks and one or two major credit cards instead of large amounts of cash. Leave a copy of the serial numbers of your traveler's checks with a friend or relative at home. Carry your copy with you in a separate place and, as you cash the checks, cross them off the list.
- Make two photocopies of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license, and the credit cards. Leave one copy with family or friends at home; pack the other in a place separate from where you carry your valuables. Bring an extra set of passport photos.
- To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep medicines in their original, labeled containers. Bring a copy of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs. If medication is unusual or contains narcotics, carry a letter from your doctor attesting to your need to take the drug. If you have any doubt about the legality of carrying a prescription drug into a country, consult the embassy or consulate of that country first.
- If you wear glasses or contact lenses, pack an extra pair.
- List your name, address, and telephone numbers inside and outside each piece of luggage. Use covered luggage tags to avoid casual observation of your identity.

PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE WHILE TRAVELING

Use the same common sense when traveling overseas that you would at home. Be especially cautious in or avoid areas where you are more likely to be victimized. These include crowded subways, train stations, elevators, market places, festivals, and marginal areas or cities. Do not use short cuts, alleys, or poorly lit streets. Don't travel alone at night.

Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.

Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments. Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers.

Try to seem purposeful when you move about, even if you are lost. When possible, ask directions from individuals in authority.

Consider registering with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, and continue to monitor the Department of State's website for information about the country or region in which you are traveling.

GENERAL SAFETY TIPS

Make sure your streets and homes are well lit.

Make sure every external door has a sturdy, well-installed deadbolt lock. Key-in-the-knob locks alone are not enough.

Keep your yard clean. Prune shrubbery so that it does not hide doors or windows. Cut tree limbs that could be used to climb to an upper-level window.

If you travel, create the illusion that you are at home by getting timers that will turn lights on and off in different areas of the house throughout the evening. Lights burning 24 hours a day signal an empty house.

Instead of hiding your keys around the outside of the house, give an extra key to a neighbor you trust.

For other home security tips. Contact your local Police Department.