

Emergency Kits

Are You Prepared?

I recently had a conversation with a county emergency manager within the presbytery about being prepared for emergencies. Our discussion centered around how the presbytery will need to communicate and coordinate with emergency managers in a disaster and how we can not only obtain aid but also provide helpful assistance to our communities in an emergency. We had an excellent discussion and this conversation will help the Disaster Coordination and Communication Team better understand our role and work with the presbytery should we encounter a major disaster. However, of everything that we talked about two topics stood out above all the others.

The manager related that almost without exception there is one thing that they always hear from victims following a natural disaster: "**I can't believe it happened here.**" Despite all that we see on TV or read in the news about severe weather, floods, wildfires, or any other disaster we always believe that it happens somewhere else and not to us. Unfortunately it did happen to the victims and as much as we may not want to believe it, a disaster could happen to us as well.

So, if we accept that a disaster can indeed happen to us what are some of the steps we can take to keep our families and ourselves safe. According to emergency managers the number one action that we all need to take is...**We must be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least three days.**

In the situation of severe weather or flooding, which by the way are the two most common disasters in Michigan, it may very well take first-responders that long to get to you. First-responders are often overwhelmed in the first hours or days of a disaster. Their own families may be some of the people in serious need of help. Roads may be blocked by flooding or downed wires or trees. Some of the response vehicles may have been damaged and not available. Despite everyone's best efforts you may be on your own without resources for a while. It's up to you to do what is necessary to stay safe and keep your family safe. It is also important that you check on any elderly neighbors who may need help.

The first step is to Prepare and maintain a disaster preparedness kit that should contain:

- At a minimum, one gallon of drinking water per person per day. This is for drinking or cooking. Additional water may be necessary for other uses especially if you are on a well and without electricity or the local water main is ruptured. For such purposes filling the bathtub in preparation can be a good idea.
- You should have enough non-perishable food such as canned vegetables, soups, grains and meats, powdered milk and dried foods to feed your family for three days preferably with some to spare..
- Anything you need to prepare and eat meals, include it. Better to be over prepared than under.
- Personal care items like toothpaste, shampoo and hand sanitizer
- A flashlight with extra batteries
- A cellphone with a car charger or external battery pack. Remember that a text will often go through even when a phone call will not.
- A small amount of cash, preferably in small bills. If the power is out at the local store a credit card is probably useless and its unlikely they can break a \$100 bill.
- Gallon-size, plastic zip-close bags to act as weatherproof totes or serve many other useful purposes.

- Whistle (to alert rescue parties)
- Directions on how to turn off the gas, water supply or electricity if necessary.
- A basic first aid kit including band aids, bandages, antiseptic creams, aspirin or acetaminophen. Don't forget your prescriptions!

Mark it on your calendar to check and refresh your preparedness kit at least every six months. Spring is often a time for severe weather and flooding in Michigan so now is a good time to make sure you are ready.

Blessings

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