

# Emergency nurse

## Disaster Preparedness Checklist Guidelines



The purpose of these guidelines is to provide more background information to assist you in completing the *Emergency Nurse Disaster Preparedness Checklist*. If you would like to read more about the evidence behind the checklist and these guidelines, click [here](#).

### Personal preparedness for the home

By discussing the points and completing the activities below with your family members or housemates you will become more aware of your personal and family's/housemate's resilience to a disaster. To then record the decisions that you make with your family/housemates note them on the *Home Emergency Preparedness Template*. Remember this is a dynamic process which will change as your circumstances change, so you will need to review the plan regularly.

#### Discuss the following points:

##### **Find alternate ways to contact each other**

During a disaster traditional ways of contacting people may not be possible as phone services may be disconnected or overwhelmed. Consider using email. Message boards may be available at local evacuation or shopping centers, depending on the type and severity of the disaster.

##### **An alternate place to meet up if your house is damaged or threatened**

This is important if you are unable to contact your family or to get home. Roads may be blocked or your house may be damaged or threatened by a disaster. Pre-arranged alternate places to meet could include the local evacuation centre or a friend or relative's house some distance away.

##### **What your child care arrangements will be**

Childcare arrangements should be discussed in case you are unable to be home or collect your child/children from school/childcare. Questions to consider in the discussion are:

- How do your children normally get home from school?
- Who usually picks them up?
- Does the school have a disaster plan?
- What are the childcare arrangements in place if the school is closed?
- Does the school provide extended hours care?

##### **What you will take with you**

The first thing people might think of when they read this is their jewelry, photos and sentimental items. Often people forget the practical things such as medication, or important documents. Keep some of your medication in an emergency kit.

##### **What you will do with your pets**

If you are unable to get home you will need to consider a number of questions about your pet's care and safety. Do you have someone who can feed and water your pets for you? Does this person have access to your property to do this? Do you have an emergency supply of pet food? You also need to consider any medication that your pets are taking and who will give this to them if you can't get home.

##### **Responsibilities to volunteer organisations**

You, your partner or other family members may be part of a volunteer organisation that will respond to a disaster. Or your partner may have a job whose role it is to be involved in a disaster response (for example, police, fire, ambulance). It is important to discuss the logistics of this to determine who will volunteer or go to work if someone has to stay behind to look after the children/pets/property?

## **Complete the following activities:**

### ***Place your important documents together in a safe place***

Keep all your important documents (birth certificate, marriage certificate, Wills) in a safe place together such as a fire proof safe or a bank safe.

### ***Complete your Will***

Make sure you have an updated and completed Will and keep it together with important documents in a safe place.

### ***Find out where your nearest evacuation centre is***

Some state/territory governments may have a policy not to make the location of evacuation centres known until a disaster has occurred, so it is important to listen out for media broadcasts/websites/emergency alert SMS. This may provide alternate places to meet or to find your family if you have become separated.

### ***Create a home emergency survival kit***

In a disaster it might be a number of days before services such as water, gas and electricity are functioning. This might mean that you will be 'on your own' for a few days. A survival kit will see you through that initial period. One such survival kit is the Australian Red Cross RediPlan: [http://www.redcross.org.au/files/03561\\_RediPlan\\_Emergency\\_step3\\_Sept2011.pdf](http://www.redcross.org.au/files/03561_RediPlan_Emergency_step3_Sept2011.pdf) However, there are many survival kit templates available on the internet, it is a matter of choosing the one that you feel suits your needs.

## **Professional preparedness**

As an Emergency Nurse other health care staff may look to you for guidance in a disaster event. Therefore to have considered some of the issues that you may be faced with is part of your professional preparedness. Review the following points below and start to build your professional preparedness plan.

### ***Know your departmental disaster plan***

These are some of the issues that you may like to follow up in your department. Where is the departmental disaster plan? What happens to the department when a disaster is initiated? How does your department's disaster plan fit within the hospital plan? Have you practised it? Is it reviewed regularly, and by whom? Are there additional resources kept for mass casualty events and where are they?

### ***Know your role in that plan***

What will your role be in a disaster? Who do you report to? What is the chain of command? What terminology do they use?

### ***Be proactive in practicing the plan with your colleagues***

Disaster drills don't need to be expensive or overwhelming, simple steps can be undertaken to raise awareness. Discuss the plan with your colleagues during a lunch break. Practise parts of the plan. Talk to your managers about regular disaster exercises. It is not enough to practice your plan just once, it needs to be reviewed and practiced regularly.

### ***Have a discussion with your supervisor about any concerns you may have***

These are the kind of issues that are often left unsaid at work. People are thinking about them, but may feel uncomfortable discussing them with their colleagues. This does not help when a situation does occur, so you may want to have a conversation with your supervisor about them first. What are your concerns related to working in a disaster? If there is a pandemic will you come to work or will you stay at home with your family? If you live in a bushfire prone area will you stay and protect your house? Going to work when there is a disaster may not be an easy decision. You may be thinking about your own safety and that of your family. You may have care commitments, or you may not be able to get to work. Think about these things and have a discussion with your supervisor about the best way to manage these challenges.

### ***Access educational or training opportunities***

There are a number of education opportunities available for Australian nurses in the form of short courses and post graduate studies. While these may be costly and difficult to access it is important to remember that a discussion with colleagues or a disaster exercise may help prepare you.

### ***Consider obligations to volunteer organisations***

Outside of work you may be a member of a volunteer organisation that will be involved in a disaster response. You will need to determine whether you will respond to a disaster in your capacity as an emergency nurse or whether you will respond as part of your volunteer organisation. You will also need to advise your employer of this decision should you choose to work with the volunteer organisation.