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Family Emergency Planning 101

Every family should have an emergency plan. Most families have home and car insurance, but do you have a plan for what you would do in a major catastrophe? During an emergency, you and your family could be on your own for an extended period of time. Food, shelter, and medical attention in the aftermath of any large-scale disaster may not be immediately available. Roads, utilities, and communication services may be down, and it is possible that help won't be able to arrive for days.

The Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada recommend that individuals be prepared to be self-sufficient for a minimum of 72 hrs. Though this seems like a lofty goal at first, it is actually not that hard to implement and you will probably find that you have most of what you need to make a kit – it just needs to be organized! Here are a few things to consider and over the next few months we will bring you specific tips on how to create your plan and emergency kit.

1. Call a family meeting. All of the family members should be involved in the creation of your emergency plan. Yes, even your kids! Including kids in the planning process makes it more likely that they will remember what to do in an emergency.
2. Learn what disasters and emergencies may occur in your area. These events can range from those affecting only you and your family, like a home fire or medical emergency, to those affecting your entire community, like a flood. You may want to contact your local government to find out the hazards we have identified in our emergency plans to get you started.
3. Determine family meeting places both immediately outside your home (like a neighbour's house) and out-of-town (like a relative's home). In the event of an emergency, all family members should stay at the meeting place until you've all been accounted for unless you are directed to move to another location by emergency responders. In addition to your local meeting spot, choose somewhere further away from the home in case the entire neighbourhood must be evacuated.
4. Keep the plan simple. Focus on a few main points such as what must be done as you exit, where you should go, and where to find your kit. Consider what you will do to care for those in your family with special health needs as well as your pets or livestock if you were to be evacuated. You will also need to identify the locations of your fire extinguishers, water valve, electrical box, gas valve and floor drains. Your emergency plan should be adaptable for a variety of emergencies, from a fire in the kitchen to a major natural disaster.
5. Make a kit. In an emergency you will need some basic supplies. You may need to get by without power or tap water. Be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours. Make sure your kit is easy to

carry and everyone in the household knows where it is. Keep it in a plastic tote, duffle bag or suitcase with wheels, in an easy-to-reach, accessible place, such as your front-hall closet.

6. Practice your plan. This step is especially important if you have kids in the home, as you'll need everyone's help to get the family out safely. At least twice per year, practice your drill to keep the information fresh in your mind. This step can also remind you to update your plan to account for household changes and to refresh your kit.

For more information please check the Peace River Regional District's website at www.prrd.bc.ca under "Emergency Services" and "Get Prepared" or contact us at 250 784-3200.

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