



Travel Preparedness

What to do when disaster strikes when you least expect it

"It is just horrific. It is like a war zone... I can't quite comprehend it - we came away for holiday."

- Nicola Barton, Survivor of 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami

As Americans across the country head into the final

stages of summer, many of us are finally gearing up for that much needed vacation. From finding pet-sitters, to setting out-of-office replies, there are many ways that we prepare our homes and our home life for a vacation. It's vital to remember that emergency preparedness is important even when you travel—life doesn't take a vacation, and neither do disasters and emergencies. Whether traveling domestically or abroad, there are things you need to consider before you go.

TRAVEL PREPAREDNESS TIPS: HOW TO BE READY WHEN ON THE GO

Before you leave

- Know your destination's vulnerability to natural disasters (hurricanes, storm surges, earthquakes, flooding, wild fires etc.) and be alert. Enable emergency alerts on your cell phone. Most cell carriers can issue alerts as you travel through areas you are visiting. In addition, install the mobile app from CodeRED to receive alerts from home.
- For young children, make an identification card stating the family name, hotel and phone number, including your name and cell phone number. Use a safety pin to attach it to a piece of their clothing. If they wander off, someone will be able to identify them. If you have little children who don't know your name or your cell phone number, write your cell number on their arm with a permanent marker. You can get really creative with magic markers for short day trips.
- Pack a travel-size emergency supply kit with water, snacks, a first-aid kit, flashlight, small battery-operated radio, extra batteries and an emergency contact card with names and phone numbers.
- Pack extra supplies of critical items, such as prescription medications and baby formula, in case your return is delayed by a disaster.
- Make copies of all essential documents: passports, prescriptions (write down both the generic and the name brand names for your medications), ID's, insurance cards, etc. Laminate if possible!
- Let family and friends know your itinerary and how to reach you.
- Develop a communications plan and make everyone in your traveling group aware of the plan. Make sure everyone has the cell phone numbers of the others in your group. Designate an out-of-area person to contact in case your group is separated during an emergency and unable to place local calls.
- If traveling internationally, register with the U.S. Department of State through a free online service at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>. The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) allows travelers to enter information about upcoming trips abroad so that the Department of State can better assist them in an emergency.

During your trip

- If traveling by car, check the forecast for your entire route before and during your trip. Weather conditions can change drastically, especially if thunderstorms are expected.
- Bring along a travel weather radio, which will automatically switch to the weather radio station closest to your travel area and will alert you to any hazardous weather.
- Become familiar with the names of the counties you are traveling through because hazardous weather warnings are issued by county.
- If you are in a vehicle when a tornado warning has been issued or you see a tornado approaching, seek shelter in a sturdy building until the storm passes. If you're unable to reach a sturdy building, pull over and find a low area, such as a ditch, and take cover there.
- Familiarize yourself with emergency plans in your hotel or place you are staying as soon as you arrive.
- Know safe shelter locations and evacuation routes at campground, hotels or resorts. Pack a travel size emergency preparedness kit that includes water, snacks, first aid kit, and hand crank flashlight and radio.
- Have someone check on or take care of your pets in case severe weather strikes while you are away.
- Always keep your vehicle's fuel tank above half full. Power outages or severe weather could keep you from refueling.
- Have a map and familiarize yourself with the area of destination. Do not rely on cell phones or computers as your only navigation source.

If disaster strikes your vacation or work area, you can register on the American Red Cross' "Safe and Well" website at www.safeandwell.org so family and friends will know that you are safe.