

City of St. Charles
Emergency Preparedness Guide



ST. CHARLES

S I N C E 1 8 3 4

Preface

This brochure contains some basic information about disasters and tips on emergency preparedness. It will help you and your family to make an Emergency Plan, put together an Emergency Kit, and learn what to do before, during and after a disaster.

Acknowledgements

Preparedness is not stationary; it is a process that requires frequent attention to potential hazards around us. We gratefully acknowledge the City of Denver's Emergency Preparedness Guide for providing ideas and content for this first edition of the City of St. Charles' Emergency Preparedness Guide.

"We want to be a Nation that serves goals larger than self. We have been offered a unique opportunity, and we must not let this moment pass."

President George W. Bush -State of the Union, January 29, 2002

January 2004

Dear Residents of St. Charles,

The recent terrorist attacks against the United States have left each one of us asking the question, “How can our families and our community better prepare in the case of an emergency?”

The City of St. Charles' Emergency Preparedness Guide will help you and your family to be better prepared for all types of emergencies ranging from a tornado to a bioterrorism event. It offers advice on how to make an emergency plan, put together a preparedness kit, and gives basic information on what to do before, during and after any public emergency.

Although we cannot always prevent emergencies, there are many things we can do to be better prepared as individuals, families and as a community. I ask that all St. Charles residents take a moment and read this guide. I also encourage you to assist others, such as senior citizens and others in need, to help them to be better prepared for an emergency. I hope you find this Emergency Preparedness Guide helpful. This guide, as well as additional emergency information, is available on the City of St. Charles website “Emergency Management Agency” link at <http://www.stcharles.gov>

Sincerely,

Donald P. DeWitte
Mayor

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General Rules of Thumb

If an emergency or disaster happens, there are a few things you should do right away:

Stay calm. Try not to panic, take time to understand what has happened and to think about what you can do to stay safe or avoid worse injury.

Check the scene. Pay attention to your surroundings to see whether you are safe where you are, and whether anyone around you needs help; if you think you are in danger, get to a safer place as soon as you can.

Give and get help. If you or others are hurt or still in danger, call 911; explain what has happened, where you are, what injuries people have, and whether the danger still exists.

Listen for official emergency announcements. Local radio and television stations will give emergency updates and instructions. This is your best source of information.

Get prepared to evacuate if told to by local authorities. If told to leave your home or work, do so right away, follow exact evacuation routes, and go to the specified shelter or safe area. If you can, bring your Emergency Kit with you, and get in touch with your family's designated emergency contact person as soon as you can to let them know how and where you are.

Getting Ready

An emergency often happens without warning, leaving little or no time for you and your family to plan what to do next. So, it is important for you to learn about the things you can do to be ready – before an emergency happens. Two key things you can do are to make an Emergency Plan and put together an Emergency Kit.

Make an Emergency Plan

Talk with your family about why and how you need to prepare for disaster emergencies:

- Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen and what to do in each case. Some of those are described in the next section
- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers.
- Teach children how and when to dial 911.
- Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio that automatically alerts when a severe weather watch or warning is issued.
- Find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, children's school or child care center, and other places where your family spends time away from home; make sure your child's school or child care center has your current emergency contact numbers.
- Pick two places to meet if something happens: one that is right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency like a fire; and a second one outside of your neighborhood in case you can't return home.
- Ask a friend or relative to be your emergency contact person. Make sure everyone has this person's address and phone number; list them on the emergency contact page of this booklet and by each phone. If your family members get separated, they should call this person to tell them where they can be reached.

- Think about the special safety needs of small children, elderly or disabled relatives or neighbors, and pets.
- Keep important documents and records in a secure location.
- Get an Emergency Kit ready (see checklist that follows).

Put Together an Emergency Kit

Preparing an Emergency Kit ahead of time can save you time in case you must leave home quickly or go without power or water for a while. Put your Kit together with items you may need after a disaster, and if you can, try to keep enough supplies on hand to meet your needs for at least three days. Store them in sturdy, waterproof, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffel bags or clean, covered trash cans.

Things you might try to include or have on hand are:

- ❑ A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) for drinking and cooking – store in clean plastic soda bottles (milk containers will break down and leak).
- ❑ Food that won't spoil or need much cooking (e.g., canned fruits and vegetables, cereals, peanut butter, crackers or cookies, and dry mixes like instant oatmeal or soups, rice or noodles). Use or replace them every 6 months if possible.
- ❑ One change of sturdy clothes and shoes, and one blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- ❑ Small household tools or items such as a battery-powered radio, flashlight with extra batteries, utility knife, bowls and cups, silverware, can opener, lighter or matches, dishtowel, etc.
- ❑ An extra set of car and house keys, personal identification, and credit cards, cash or traveler's check. Keep important family papers (e.g., birth certificates, passports, special medical information, etc.) in a waterproof container or plastic bag.
- ❑ Sanitation supplies such as toilet paper, hand wipes, diapers, tampons or sanitary pads, plastic trash bags.
- ❑ Special items for young children, elderly or disabled family members, and pets (e.g., special foods, medications, aid devices, carriers, etc.).
- ❑ A basic first aid kit that includes your prescription medications, bandages in assorted sizes, safety pins, cleanser/soap, latex gloves, gauze pads, scissors, tweezers, sewing needle, thread, alcohol wipes, burn cream, oral thermometer, non-aspirin pain reliever, antacid, cotton balls or swabs.
- ❑ A battery operated radio.

When a Disaster or Emergency Happens

The next section will give you some tips on how to know when there is an emergency, information about different types of disasters that could happen in the St. Charles area, and advice on how you can stay safe if and when they do.

How You Will Know When a Disaster Happens

There are different ways that you will find out that an emergency or disaster is happening. Weather warnings will usually be given on television and radio. A "severe weather watch" means a severe storm might develop. A "severe weather warning" means that severe weather has already developed, and that you should seek shelter right away.

In other situations, a siren could sound, or you may be contacted by phone. Emergency workers may drive by and give instructions over a loudspeaker, or they might even come to your door. In the meantime, you should listen to radio or television for further emergency information.

What to Do for Different Types of Disasters

Floods Floods can occur quickly and can be dangerous because of fast moving waters. If there is a flood warning or you believe a flood will happen soon:

- Save yourself, not your belongings.
- Stay away from floodwaters – even water just six inches deep can knock you off your feet.
- Do not let children play in or near floodwaters, flooded creeks or flood retention ponds.
- Never try to drive through floodwaters – if your car stalls, leave it and head for higher ground on foot.
- Once you are in a safe place, listen to a battery-powered radio for official updates or wait for emergency workers to give you instructions.

Thunderstorms All thunderstorms produce lightning that can cause death or serious injury. Lightning can strike from up to 5 to 10 miles away, even if it is not raining or is sunny where you are. If there is a thunderstorm warning, or if you see or hear a storm coming in the distance, follow these steps:

- Get inside a home, building or vehicle right away.
- Close all windows and doors; draw the shades or blinds to reduce the risk from flying glass if window or door glass breaks due to high winds.
- If you're outside, drop to a crouching position with your feet on the ground and close together.
- Stay away from trees, metal objects, and power lines, and do not use appliances such as phones, televisions, or computers that could carry the lightning current into your home or office.

Tornadoes Tornadoes produce very high winds in funnel-shaped clouds that can lift and move heavy objects such as buildings and cars. They can move extremely fast and do a lot of damage to people and property. If there is a tornado warning, or if you see a tornado coming or hear a tornado siren, follow these steps:

- If you are outside, try to seek shelter in a house or other building (but not a car or trailer) right away; if there is no shelter nearby, lie flat, face down, in a ditch or low area and cover your head until the tornado passes.
- If you are already inside, move to the basement, or to a room or hallway near the center of the building. Stay away from windows and doors, and listen for official updates.
- If in a high-rise building, go to small, interior rooms or hallways on the lowest level possible.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs, such as auditoriums, cafeterias, gymnasiums and large hallways.
- If you are in a vehicle, get out and lie flat, face down, in a ditch or low area and cover your head until the tornado passes – do not stay in your car or try to outdrive a tornado!

Winter Storms Winter storms can be dangerous because they could leave people stranded in their homes or cars and sometimes without power. If there is a winter storm warning, you believe a storm is headed your way, or you are already stranded by one:

- If already inside, get your Emergency Kit and listen for official updates.
- Do not travel unless you really have to, and if you do, try to take public transportation.
- Stay indoors and dress warmly – if you must go outside, wear enough clothing to keep you warm and dry (e.g., hat, boots, mittens or gloves, extra layers).

- Eat and drink liquids on a regular basis.
- Conserve heat and fuel – keep the thermostat at 65 degrees or less during the day and 55 degrees at night, close off unused rooms, stuff towels or rags in cracks under doors, and cover windows at night.
- If you get stranded in your car or other vehicle, stay with your vehicle, and hang a brightly colored cloth on the radio antenna. Turn on the engine for about 10 minutes each hour (or 5 minutes every half hour) to keep warm, but make sure the tailpipe is clear of snow and that you leave a window open a bit to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

Fires/Explosions As you know, fires can cause death and serious injury to people because of burns and the breathing in of smoke. Explosions may occur on their own or as part of a larger fire, and can also do a lot of damage to people and property. If you hear a fire alarm or smoke detector, see fire, or see or smell smoke, follow these steps:

- Escape the building as fast as you can, then call 911 from an outside phone.
- If a fire starts in a pan, slide a lid over it and turn off the burner. Never pour water on grease fires – this will make the fire spread.
- If you try to use a fire extinguisher on a small fire and the fire does not go out right away, drop the extinguisher, get out of the building and call 911.
- Be careful when opening doors – feel a closed door, cracks, and doorknob with the back of your hand before you open it. If it is cool and there is no smoke at the bottom or top, open it slowly. If it is warm or you see smoke at the cracks, you need to find another way out.
- Stay low – if your only way out is through smoke, crawl on the floor under the smoke to get to your exit.
- If the smoke is too thick, or heat or flames block your exit, stay in a room with the door closed and window open, and hang a sheet outside the window so firefighters can find you.
- Once you are out of the building, stay out!
- Meet family members at your pre-designated meeting area.

Toxic/Chemical Events Dangerous amounts of chemicals can be released into the environment from industrial accidents, or on purpose, as happened in Japan when nerve gas was released in the subway system. These events can cause fires or explosions, and can be very poisonous to people and animals.

- If you receive any threat about a toxic spill or release, or see strange activity that you believe may be part of a chemical event, call 911 right away!
- If you live or work near the scene of a chemical event that is not in your building, stay where you are, listen for emergency updates, and wait for instructions from emergency workers or police before leaving the area.
- If you are at the scene of a chemical event, get yourself and others far away from the spill or leak, and then call 911. Try to stay upwind and wait in a safe place nearby for emergency workers to arrive. Watch for signs of toxic poisoning (e.g., trouble breathing, dizziness, irritated eyes, skin or throat, stomach cramps or diarrhea) and report these right away to emergency workers.
- Try to avoid breathing in fumes or smoke by covering your mouth with your hand or a cloth. Never touch, taste, sniff or put your eyes near any real or suspected chemical substance.
- Pour cold water over yourself or others if you come in contact with chemicals, and remove any contaminated clothing. If you don't have water, brush chemicals off of skin with a glove, plastic bag or cloth.
- If you are outside, try to stay upstream, uphill, and upwind of the accident.
- If you are told by local officials to “shelter in place” (i.e., remain in your home or office), turn off all heating and air conditioning systems, get your Emergency Kit, and go to an interior room (preferably without windows). Use duct tape and/or towels to seal all cracks

around the door and any vents into the room, and keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or that you should evacuate.

- Do not buy a gas mask, there are too many variables to ensure safe and effective use.

Bioterrorism Events Bioterrorism involves the deliberate use of harmful viruses and bacteria to make people sick. We have seen this with anthrax in the mail. While these types of events are rare, they can be very dangerous. Although we cannot always prevent them from happening, we can help by reporting strange activity to local officials. If you get news that bioterrorism has taken place where you live or work, or strongly suspect that it has, you should follow these steps:

- If you receive any threat of bioterrorism, or see strange activity that you believe may be part of a bioterrorism event, call 911 right away!
- If you live or work near the scene of a bioterrorism event that is not in your building, stay where you are, listen for emergency updates, and wait for instructions from emergency workers or police before leaving the area.
- If you are at the scene of a bioterrorism event, get yourself and others far away from the biological agent, and then call 911. Wait in a safe place nearby for emergency workers to arrive. If you later notice signs of biological infection (e.g. severe breathing problems, shock, nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting, fever, abdominal pain, severe diarrhea, etc.), call 911 right away or call your doctor.
- If you see or get a suspicious looking package (e.g., bulky envelopes, unfamiliar or missing return address, heavy or oddly sealed boxes, anything leaking powder or other substance, etc.) do not open, shake, or put your face or bare skin near it. Put it down gently, get yourself and others out of the room, close off the room, and call 911 right away. Wash your hands right away with soap and water. Never touch, taste, sniff or put your eyes near any real or suspected biological agent.
- Do not purchase or stockpile drugs, there are too many safety variables and biological strains to assure effectiveness.
- Wait and listen for Public Health Department information and direction.

What to Do Until Help Arrives

If someone with you is sick or hurt, follow these basic first aid steps – *Check – Call – Care*:

- *Check* the scene. Make sure it is safe for you to get closer, then check the injured person to see if she/he has any life-threatening conditions (i.e., constant or sudden chest pain, trouble breathing, heavy bleeding, lack of consciousness, or severe injuries from falls, head wounds, or burns).
- *Call* for help. If the injured person has any of the life-threatening conditions listed above, call 911 right away, or have someone else call while you stay with the person.
- *Care*. Do your best to comfort the sick person and prevent further injury until emergency workers arrive. Here are some ways you can help:

Control Bleeding

- Cover wounds with a pad, bandage, or cloth and press firmly.
- If there are no broken bones, lift and keep the injured area above the level of the heart.
- If the bleeding does not stop, put on extra bandages, and squeeze the artery against the bone at a point between the injury and the heart (usually inner legs or inner arms).

Care for Shock

- Keep the injured person from getting either too cold or too hot.
- Lift and keep the legs about 12 inches above the floor or ground (if no broken bones).
- Do not let the injured person eat or drink anything.

Tend Burns

- Cool the burned area with lots of cool water.
- Cover the burn with a dry, clean bandage or cloth.

Care for Injuries to Muscles, Bones and Joints

- Apply ice or a cold pack to control swelling and lessen pain.
- Avoid movement or activity that causes the injured person any pain.
- If you must move the victim because the area is unsafe, try to keep the injured part still.

Reduce Any Care Risks

The risk of getting a disease while giving first aid is rare. However, to lower the risk more:

- Avoid direct contact with blood and other body fluids.
- Use latex or rubber gloves if you have them.
- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water right away after giving first aid.

Basic Survival Tips

If Your Power Goes Out Remain calm, call City Electric at 630-377-4407 or 630-443-3681 after business hours to report the power outage, and follow these steps:

- Do not call 911.
- Use a flashlight for emergency lighting instead of candles.
- Turn off electrical appliances you were using when the power went out.
- Avoid opening the refrigerator and freezer so they will stay cold.
- Listen to your battery-powered radio for updated information.
- Assist family or neighbors who may become ill from extreme heat or cold
- If you need to cook, use a grill or camp stove outdoors, or use your fireplace. Canned food can be heated up and eaten right out of the can (be sure to open the can and remove the label before you heat it).
- Never run a generator, grill or kerosene heater inside a home or garage as these can cause house fires or release poisonous fumes.

If Food Supplies Are Low Healthy people can survive for a long time on half of what they would usually eat, and without any food at all for many days. Food, unlike water, may be rationed safely, except for children and pregnant women. Follow these tips if your food supply is limited during an emergency:

- Eat salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals and canned foods with high liquid content rather than high fat, high protein or salty foods that make you thirsty.
- If at home, use up foods from your refrigerator and freezer first, then use the canned foods, dry mixes, and other things you already have on your cupboard shelves.
- Do continue to drink water and other liquids as normal, if you can.

Staying Healthy and Safe After a Disaster

Coping with Trauma

Recovery continues even days or months after a disaster as you and your family faces the emotional and psychological effects of the event. Reactions vary from person to person, but may include: restless sleep or nightmares, anger, fear, wanting revenge, lack of emotion, needing to keep active, loss of appetite, weight loss or gain, headaches, and mood swings.

All of these are normal reactions to stressful events. It is important to let yourself and others react in their own way. It may be helpful to:

- Talk with your family and friends about what happened and how you feel about it.

- Volunteer at a local shelter, blood bank, or food pantry to help with emergency efforts.
- Talk to your minister, spiritual advisor or other counselor.
- Encourage your children to share their feelings, even if you must listen to their stories many times – this is a normal way for children to make sense of traumatic experiences.
- You may also want to share your feelings about the event with your children.

If these strategies are not helping to lower your stress, or you find that you or your family members are using drugs/alcohol or resorting to other unhealthy behaviors in order to cope, you may wish to seek outside or professional help.

Ways You Can Help Others

Here are a few more basic things to keep in mind that may help you, your family, or emergency workers get through a disaster more quickly and safely:

- Call 911 or the operator only for a possible life-threatening emergency. Telephone lines are very busy in disaster situations, and they need to be kept clear for emergency calls to get through.
- If you do not have an emergency, do not go to or call the hospital emergency department.
- If you are able to donate blood, contact LifeSource to make an appointment at the donation center closest to you.

Emergency Contact Information:

Emergency (Police, Fire, Rescue, Medical, Hazardous Materials): 911
Non-Emergency Police: (630)377-4435
Non-Emergency Fire: (630)377-4457
Poison Control: (800) 222-1222
City Electric: (630)377-4407
City of St. Charles (630)377-4400
Delnor Community Hospital (630)208-3000
NICOR: (800)747-1470

Other Emergency Information Sites:

American Red Cross <http://www.redcross.org>
National Weather Service <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/lot>
Illinois Emergency Management Agency <http://www.state.il.us/iema>
Illinois Homeland Security <http://www.state.il.us>
Federal Emergency Management Agency <http://www.fema.gov>
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov>
City of St. Charles <http://www.stcharlesil.gov>
National Institute of Standards and Technology <http://www.fire.gov/>
Illinois State Fire Marshal <http://www.state.il.us/osfm/>
National Volunteer Fire Council <http://www.nvfc.org/>
United States Fire Administration <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/>
The Weather Channel <http://www.weather.com>
Kane County Sheriff's Police <http://www.co.kane.il.us/sheriff>
Kane County Emergency Management Agency <http://www.kcoem.org/>
Illinois Department of Public Health <http://www.idph.state.il.us>
Illinois Department of Nuclear Safety <http://www.idns.state.il.us>
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency <http://www.epa.state.il.us>
National Domestic Preparedness Office <http://www.ndpo.gov>

Sites for Children:

United States Fire Administration <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/kids/>
Illinois Firefighter's Association <http://www.state.il.us/kids/fire/>
Federal Emergency Management Agency <http://www.fema.gov/kids/>

Your Family Emergency Plan: Fill this out and make copies for family members to keep:

<p>Emergency Contact Information:</p> <p>Emergency Contact Person: _____</p> <p>Emergency Contact Phone and Address: _____</p> <p>Meeting Place #1 (near home): _____</p> <p>Meeting Place #2 (away from home): _____</p> <p>Cell or Home phone: _____</p> <p>Home Address: _____</p>
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