Save the Children®

Protecting Children in Disasters

A Guide for Parks and Recreation Professionals

Developed in partnership with FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE PARKS & RECREATION

ABOUT SAVE THE CHILDREN

Save the Children invests in childhood—every day, in times of crisis and for our future. With nearly 100 years of emergency response experience, Save the Children is the national leader in protecting children before, during and after disasters. Since Hurricane Katrina, we have served more than 1 million children affected by U.S. emergencies. Save the Children's Get Ready Get Safe initiative is designed to help U.S. communities prepare to protect and care for the most vulnerable among us in times of crisis—our children. We help generate child-focused emergency plans, provide emergency training and ensure emergency resources are in place before crisis strikes. We keep kids safe, securing the future we share.

For more information, visit **www.savethechildren.org/GetReady**.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE PARKS AND RECREATION

The Foundation for Sustainable Parks and Recreation (FSPR) was established in November 2012 to serve as a resource for Parks and Recreation Professionals in their efforts to have a positive impact on the health and livability of youth, families, and communities. Through Operation Recreation Response, FSPR supports the role of parks and recreation in disaster planning, emergency response and recovery.

For more information, visit **www.yourparksyourlegacy.com**.

REVIEWED AND ENDORSED BY OPERATION RECREATION RESPONSE

Save the Children, the National Foundation for Sustainable Parks and Recreation and GP RED are partnering to help parks and recreation communities are safe when disaster strikes. Conceived by New England recreation professionals, Operation Recreation Response and is dedicated to helping communities be ready to weather any storm. This alliance is building and training an emergency response team, to encouraging families and caregivers to prepare, and to ensuring emergency plans are in place to help communities bounce back quickly and more resilient.

WRITTEN BY SAVE THE CHILDREN

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Contents

INTRODUCTION 4

Th Role of Parks and Recreation in Protecting Children 4

Unique Needs of Children in Disasters 6

PREPARE 9

Preparing Parks and Recreation Programs: Best Practices 10

Preparing Children: Tips for Talking to Kids About Disasters 12

Preparing Families: Make a Plan You Can Count on 13

RESPOND 15

Tips for Protecting Children in Disasters 16

Child Safety Guidance for Shelters and Local Assistance Centers 17

RECOVER 21

Supporting Children in Disaster 22

Taking Care of Yourself After a Disaster 26

RESOURCES TO SHARE 31

PREPARE

Disaster Checklist for Parents and Families 31

Emergency Contact Forms 33

Child ID Card Template 37

RESPOND

Disaster Tip Sheets 39

RECOVER

How to Help Children Cope with Disasters: 10 Tips 59

Introduction

The Role of Parks and Recreation in Protecting Children

Parks and recreation agencies are at the heart of every U.S. community, and through their extensive reach of programs and services, are woven into the fabric of everyday life for millions of Americans.

Of these agencies' many roles, none is more important than their commitment to safety—especially the safety of children whom are often the most vulnerable in dangerous situations. Children rely on adult leaders and care providers as they lack the skills, knowledge, coping mechanisms and physical size to effectively deal with crises themselves.

Parks and recreation professionals are on the front lines of ensuring children's safety every day. They provide the structures and programs that help children learn, play and thrive in safe and familiar environments where they feel protected. Parks and recreation professionals also deliver programs that include fundamental safety lessons such as water safety or first aid programs. Often times these safety lessons come through experiences with parks and recreation programs, for example as children discover nature or interview a park ranger during summer camp.

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

When disaster strikes, parks and recreation agencies' safety role is amplified. A disaster is defined as a serious disruption of the functioning of society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of affected society to cope using only its own resources.[1]

Using this definition, a disaster may be a natural event, such as a tornado or earthquake; a technological event, such as a blackout; a chemical event, such as a chemical spill or leak; or a violence-based event, such as terrorism or school shooting.

The unpredictable and volatile nature of disasters which vary in type and severity requires that parks and recreation agencies take an all-hazards approach to preparation. For the agency that is underprepared, a small disaster can have the effects of a larger emergency and is more likely to negatively impact children. Children affected by large-scale disasters are five times as likely to suffer from serious emotional issues that those who have not experienced a major disaster and these negative effects can linger well into their teen and adult years.[2] Being prepared to protect children can help preserve their sense of security which is at the very essence of what it means to be a child.

Protecting children in disasters requires a holistic approach to children's safety before, during and after an event. Parks and recreation professionals play many roles through this disaster cycle which are critical in helping children cope with crises and bounce back more resilient.

TYPES OF MAJOR DISASTERS
Long Duration Blackouts
Earthquakes
Fires (including Wildfires)
Floods
Tornadoes
Hurricanes
Heat Waves
Windstorms
Blizzards/Winter Storms
Tsunamis
Landslides
Volcanic Eruptions
Terrorism
Nuclear Leak/Explosion
Chemical or Biological Agents

1 UNDHA, *Disaster Management Glossary* 1992, 27; National Science and Technology Council 2005, 17; EEA, *EEA Environmental Glossary*, 2007.

2 Children's Health Fund, Columbia University. 2010. Legacy of Katrina: The Impact of a Flawed Recovery on Vulnerable Children of the Gulf Coast.

DISASTER RESPONSE

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, parks and recreation professionals often act as first responders—safeguarding those in their care, assessing the needs of local families and serving as community stronghold. Parks and recreation facilities may function as a safe family reunification point or transform into shelters, housing those who have been displaced. Facilities may also serve as an emergency operations center, hosting lead agencies as they manage the response or serving as a community distribution center. However, through the flurry of activity, it's critical that special attention be paid to the needs of children.

Disasters can strike anywhere at any time and may occur while children are in recreation programs and under the supervision of program staff. This fact emphasizes the need for programs and facilities to be designed with disaster preparation in mind, and for staff to have the skills to effectively respond to disasters and meet children's needs. Are the proper protocols in place? Are plans being effectively communicated, drilled and updated? Is everyone on the team aware of their role in a disaster? And within these plans—how will children be cared for, comforted, relocated and reunited with their families?

DISASTER RECOVERY

Parks and recreation programs, facilities and personnel are also critical for helping children cope with crises. They provide a children with a sense of stability, comfort, familiar routine and safe interactions with peers and trusted adults. Additionally, access to nature and greenspaces in parks can facilitate emotional and spiritual healing, and provide respite from constant exposure to media stories and images that may do more harm than good.

Most importantly, parks and recreation programs help children return to play and the opportunity to just be a kid again. Fostering an environment of play, positive social interactions and creativity is crucial to children's recovery, as these opportunities help children make meaning of their surroundings and circumstances. Parks and recreation programs provide the normalcy and routine that children need, so that they can express their emotions in a safe space, feel a sense control over the situation, and understand that the disaster did not destroy everything in their lives.

DISASTER EDUCATION

As community leaders for children's safety, parks and recreation agencies play a key role in supporting children and families as they plan and prepare for disasters. Less than half of American families have an emergency plan[3] even though the majority of parents are at least somewhat worried about how a disaster may affect their child.[4] Through communications, programs and special events, parks and recreation agencies can be a leader in educating families on emergency planning that best protect their children, and providing them the tools to do so.

Teaching children the basics of emergency preparedness from the start will equip them with the tools they need to stay safe and build upon their natural resilience so when a disaster strikes, they can bounce back more quickly. Engaging children in disaster education will also help them understand and appreciate that there are caring adults around who want to protect them, helping to relieve any anxiety that a child may have regarding the possibility of disaster. By committing to making preparedness a priority, parks and recreation can help the spark of a movement to raise the first generation of prepared citizens.

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3 FEMA, 2013. Individual and Community Preparedness Survey.

4 Save the Children, 2014. National Disaster Report Card on Protecting Children in Disasters.

Because of these critical roles, all parks and recreation agencies need to be equipped with the skills and tools to best protect their staff, programs, and the children and families they serve. While we cannot prevent disasters from happening, there are simple, low-cost measures every parks and recreation agency can take to help ensure the safety of children during disasters.

This guide is designed to help parks and recreation agencies prepare their programs, staff and communities to protect children before, during, and after disasters. Together we can keep kids safe and secure the future we share.

Unique Needs of Children in Disasters

When the people, places and routines children depend on are affected by upheaval—as they are with disasters—children cannot adjust on their own. Children are not just little adults. Infants, toddlers and children require special care and supplies at times of emergency. Children are also most likely to suffer long-term developmental, physical and psychological setbacks following a disaster. Preparing ahead of time to meet children's unique needs at times of disaster is critical to their protection.

The following unique needs of children need to be addressed in disaster planning and preparation to help ensure children are safe and protected from harm.

RELIANCE ON CAREGIVERS

Children are physically and emotionally dependent on their caregivers, including their coaches, teachers, leaders and babysitters. They rely on the guidance and direction of adults to keep them safe. During a disaster, all little eyes will be on adults to know how to respond, including where to go, what to do, what to take, and how to reunite with their family. If leaders, coaches and other caregivers are unprepared for a variety of disasters, children are left vulnerable, scared and at higher risk of harm.

COMMUNICATION AND IDENTIFICATION

Infants, toddlers and children with developmental disabilities may not be able to verbally identify themselves or family members. Older children may not know who their emergency contacts are or how to reach them. Each day, 69 million children in the U.S. are in schools or child care settings and could be separated from their families in the event of a disaster. All child-focused programs should be equipped with the correct ID information for each child. This is critical to ensuring quick family reunification following a disaster.

MOBILITY

Infants and toddlers are unable to walk and young children may need to hold hands for balance, and move at a slow pace. Other children may have special needs or access and functional needs and require extra help or special equipment for evacuation. Emergency plans must ensure there is a way to safely evacuate every child and necessary evacuation equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, cribs, strollers, car seats) especially if there are a limited number of adults available to assist during an evacuation. The availability of sufficient transportation is vitally important should you have to relocate.

SAFETY AND PROTECTION

Items that adults use every day can harm children. Medications, cleaning supplies, knives, plastic bags, coins, batteries and other small objects are unsafe for unattended children to be around. In the chaos of a disaster, it is important to have enough adults to care for children, ensure that dangerous substances and objects are not within reach and also provide them with the supplies that they need. This rule also applies in disaster shelters, where planners and shelter managers should consider how the shelter setup can best protect children. For example, are there family areas and family bathrooms set aside for parents or guardians with children?

PHYSICAL NEEDS

Children's bodies are smaller and less developed, putting them at greater risk of illness or harm during an emergency. For example, because children have thinner skin, take more breaths per minute, and are closer to the ground than adults, they are more susceptible to harmful chemicals or carbon monoxide poisoning from fire smoke or chemical leaks. Children also require age and size appropriate doses of medication, which should be included in disaster supplies kits.

NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

Children also have unique nutritional needs that require special emergency planning. Children require more fluids pound for pound than adults, which should be accommodated by keeping plenty of fluids in disaster supplies and ensuring children continue to hydrate even in stressful situations. Children can be picky eaters, so storing healthy and nutritious child-friendly snacks such as granola bars or fruit snacks with disaster supplies kits is advisable.

EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Children, no matter what age, are deeply affected by experiences of death, destruction, terror and the absence or powerlessness of their parents or guardians during a disaster. Their adult leaders' reactions and responses can often add an additional layer of stress. Children process these events with limited understanding, and require specialized support to develop the knowledge and healthy coping skills needed to heal and recover.

DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

A disaster may disrupt the school year or participation in other regular programs. Children may also fall behind when they struggle with long-term physiological or psychological issues following a disaster. These setbacks, without the appropriate intervention can cause children to lag behind their peers educationally and developmentally, potentially changing the course or their lives and ability to thrive.

ROUTINE AND COMFORT

Children depend on routine to help them make sense of their surroundings and feel comforted. Whether it is recreation time, snack time or story time, keeping schedules consistent following a disaster is crucial in helping children cope and recover. Children also tend to be comforted by certain items they can touch or hold such as blankets, stuffed animals or toys. It's critical that caregivers include such items in their disaster supplies kit.

LOVE

Prepare

As a nation, the U.S. is largely underprepared to protect children in emergencies. Each day 69 million are in school or child care and program settings, yet many states lack basic standards for protecting kids in these environments.[5] At home, the outlook is not much better. Less than half of American families have an emergency plan[6] even though two-thirds of parents cite being at least somewhat concerned about the risk their child faces at the prospect of a natural disaster.[7]

TO SHARE WITH FAMILIES
Disaster Checklist for Parents and Families (p. 31)
Emergency Contact Forms (p. 33)
Child ID Card Template (p. 37)

Parks and recreation agencies can be champions for children's safety in their communities by ensuring they have plans and protocols in place that meet children's needs, including having the appropriate supplies on hand, communicating the plan with all staff and families, and practicing and updating the plan. Staff can also play a crucial role in educating children in disaster preparedness and empowering families to make disaster plans through communications channels, programs and awareness-raising events. Research shows that households with school-aged children who bring home preparedness materials are 75 percent more likely to have a household plan and discuss it as a family.[8]

Preparing in advance can help children feel more safe and a sense of understanding when a disaster event happens so they are more likely to remain calm, quiet and follow instructions. Talking about disasters beforehand can also help develop children's resiliency so they can develop coping skills that will allow them to recover more quickly in the aftermath of a disaster.

5 Save the Children, 2014. National Report Card on Protecting Children in Disasters.
6 FEMA, 2013. Personal Preparedness: Findings from the 2012 FEMA National Survey.
7 Save the Children, 2014. National Report Card on Protecting Children in Disasters.
8 FEMA, 2013. Personal Preparedness: Findings from the 2012 FEMA National Survey.

Preparing Parks and Recreation Programs

Make sure your organization is armed with a strong, updated disaster plan that covers the needs of everyone in your programs and is regularly practiced. Use the best practices below to review your plan and ensure it meets the needs of children in your programs.

BEST PRACTICES
EMERGENCY PLANNING IN CHILD-FOCUSED PROGRAMMING

- **MAKE A STRONG WRITTEN PLAN.** Depending on the disaster at hand, children and staff may need to shelter in place, assemble outside the facilities, or leave the premises entirely. A disaster can render any option unusable, so well thought out alternatives should be in place. A comprehensive disaster plan: 1) Addresses the different needs of children, volunteers and staff; 2) Identifies a clear leadership structure in emergencies and informs everyone about their roles and responsibilities during a disaster; 3) Can be shared with local emergency response agencies, partners, staff, volunteers and parents/guardians; 4) Accounts for the care, evacuation and transport of children and employees with disabilities and those with access and functional needs; 5) Includes provisions for responding with limited access to electricity or technology; and 6) Provides proof of your preparedness activities to licensing and accreditation agencies.
- **MAINTAIN CURRENT HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN AND STAFF.** Up-to-date data files in portable storage devices are vital during an emergency. This information must be kept locked and secure. In case of an offsite evacuation, all children, staff members and volunteers should have current emergency contact information, emergency releases and identification badges that identify the center name and phone number in case of an offsite evacuation. Also be sure to have a child-staff roster, specifying the unique needs of each individual. Although you'll want to save this information electronically, print two sets of paper copies and store in an accessible location so at the first sign of an emergency, you will be ready to respond.
- **DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT FAMILY COMMUNICATION AND REUNIFICATION PLANS AND BACK-UP PLANS.** Families expect to be quickly notified when an emergency happens, but effective communication should also happen before and after an emergency. First, share information about your agency's disaster plan. Second, routinely update parent/guardian and emergency contact numbers. Third, plan how you will alert parents/guardians in an actual emergency. Because telephone service could be disrupted during an emergency, prepare a back-up plan, perhaps asking a local radio or television station to broadcast your program's emergency status. Or set up an auto-call or auto-text system that can reach all parents through a communication blast.
- **IDENTIFY DISASTER RESPONSE TEAM AND PROCEDURES FOR EVACUATION, SHELTERING AND LOCK DOWN.** When disaster strikes, each volunteer or staff member needs to know exactly what his or her responsibilities are. These roles should be practiced in regular drills. The disaster response team (no matter how big or small) should ensure the following critical tasks are covered: Overall response coordination; Parent/Guardian communication; Disaster supplies kit distribution; First aid provision; Child supervision; and Evacuation. When roles are set, establish an emergency warning system that will alert all staff and volunteers to an emergency situation and provide instruction on how to respond.
- **ASSEMBLE EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES.** With the proper materials, you will be able to better handle many of the issues that occur during a disaster. In addition to a first aid kit, have basic emergency equipment like a battery-operated NOAA weather radio, flashlights and phones on hand. Also assemble a disaster supplies kit with enough materials like non-perishable foods, bottled water and toilet tissues to last at least 72 hours. With these tools, you will be better prepared to communicate with emergency management

agencies and parents, provide first aid, monitor weather and disaster reports, and feed and care for children during a prolonged shelter-in-place or lock-down emergency. Ensure that emergency supplies are up-to date and stored in easy-to-carry containers in an accessible location. Develop a process where supplies and equipment are checked regularly and expired supplies are replaced.

- **INVENTORY YOUR ASSETS.** Knowing what you have will help you replace it quickly and get programs up and running quickly following a disaster. Be sure to document all of your assets, including facilities, parks, natural areas, program materials, equipment, office supplies and furniture. Create a detailed inventory including item, quantity and cost and keep two copies in your disasters supplies kit. Also, back up this information electronically.
- **MAKE MUTUAL AID AGREEMENTS.** Don't go it alone. There are other parks and recreation agencies as well as other local organizations and businesses that can provide resources and services during and following a disaster to help facilitate a recovery. Anticipate what you may need in a large-scale disaster scenario and negotiate and finalize these agreements before an emergency to ensure that you can have the human and material resources you need to respond quickly and effectively. Consider creating a state/regional mutual aid plan and agreement through state park and recreation agencies to help ensure response plans are aligned.
- **EXPERT REVIEW OF YOUR PLAN.** Have local emergency managers review your disaster plan and provide feedback. This can be an opportunity to ensure integration with community-level disaster planning.
- **PRACTICE YOUR PLAN.** Having a disaster response plan will be of little value unless you practice it. Train all staff on plan implementation, having each member play their assigned role. Create a schedule for drills that covers different types of emergencies and include all children, staff and volunteers. Drills should occur throughout the year at different times of the day and at all venues you use including schools, outside facilities and for trips. If you use school facilities, make sure you are aware of their plans and expectations in case of a disaster. Keep families informed of your emergency drills, as children may talk about it at home.
- **INCLUDE CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH ALL LEVELS OF ABILITIES IN YOUR PLANS.** Ensure that your disaster plan accounts for the care, evacuation and transport of children and employees with disabilities and those with access and functional needs.
- **PLAN FOR SPECIAL EVENTS.** Special events, because of their scale and unique settings present different challenges in case of a disaster. Involve community emergency management personnel in the planning and implementation of special event disaster protocol.
- **PROTECT PROGRAM INFORMATION.** Large-scale disasters can significantly damage parks and recreation facilities and spaces, hindering operations. Safeguarding important enrollment data, employment records and financial and insurance information can help your program recover more quickly after a disaster and help restore a sense of normalcy to the children in your care. In addition to having copies of this information, back up everything electronically.
- **UPDATE THE PLAN.** As programs, facilities, schedules and participants change, it's important to regularly revisit and update the disaster plan. Consider reviewing it every 6 months and make revisions at least once a year with the help of local emergency management and/or first responders.

When disaster strikes, children will rely on you to be the first line of response. Be safe. Don't wait. Create a disaster plan that will help you and the families you serve have peace of mind no matter what situation comes your way.

Preparing Children

Disasters are scary—for kids and for adults. But talking about disasters before they happen and teaching kids basic preparedness skills can empower them to feel secure and a sense of control in times of crisis because they know what to do and understand that adults who care for them are working to keep them safe. As parks and recreation professionals you can lead the conversations when and where it fits best into your programs. Maybe outside play was cancelled due to impending storms and you fill the time with disaster education? Maybe your summer camp has a weather or science-themed day which you can steer towards a conversation about disasters? Maybe your agency is incorporating disaster education into its core afterschool curriculum? Or maybe a disaster recently affected your town, a nearby town, or made the news? These examples are natural starting points to begin talking to children about disasters.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT DISASTERS

You don't have to be an emergency manager or a first responder to talk to children about disasters. Generally, parks and recreation staff members who regularly work in children's programming should be the ones talking to children about disaster as children are familiar with these leaders with whom they have developed a trusting and caring relationship. Also consider inviting local first responders, emergency managers or meteorologist to talk about their role in disasters and help answer children's questions.

EXPLAIN WHY. From the start, let children know what you will be doing and why. For example: "Today, we are going to talk about different types of disasters, like tornadoes, so that we can know what to do to get ready for disasters and stay safe." Repeat this throughout the program to help stay positive and on topic.

BE HONEST. Give children information that is clear, accurate and age appropriate. Don't lie. The truth is that disasters are dangerous and people could die, but don't let this be the focus of your program. Remember, you're there to help them stay safe. Don't give in-depth details or graphic examples that will confuse or disturb children. Find out what children know and understand about different disasters before responding to questions. This will help alleviate their distress and clear up confusion.

LISTEN. One of the best ways to understand what kids already know and need to know about disasters is by listening to them. Listen carefully to their questions, discussions and answers. Invite them to express their feelings in a safe atmosphere.

BE REASSURING. Children can experience stress when they do not understand what they perceive to be a dangerous situation. Let them know that disasters are scary and that it is okay to be scared when thinking about disasters. But let them know that you're talking about disasters so that we can know what to do. Let them know that during an emergency, many caring adults, including parents, teachers, parks and recreation personnel and other caregivers, will be working to keep them safe.

LIMIT GRAPHIC IMAGES. Although it's okay to show examples of different types of disasters, avoid using graphic images or videos that show destruction. For younger kids, use animated images that may be less scary. During or following a disaster in the area, limit children's exposure to news media that may scare children or confuse them as it can appear like the disaster is happening over and over again.

FOCUS ON THE LEARNING. Kids are curious and love learning new things through play, activities and reading. Rather focusing on disasters' destructive nature, focus on teaching kids what disasters are from an educational, exploratory perspective. Have children learn about the science of severe weather or give a weather report.

RECOGNIZE HELPERS. When disasters strike, let children know that there are many helpers on the scene—people like first responders, police and emergency medical services personnel who will be working to keep them safe. Use this as a lesson in compassion and teach kids the importance in helping others who may be facing a crisis.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE. If the community recently experienced a disaster, be sensitive to kids' emotional needs. You don't need to focus on a particular type of disaster or the negative impacts of a storm if you think it is going to disturb children and hinder the conversation.

IT IS OKAY TO SAY "I DON'T KNOW." Children and parents may ask questions to which you may not know the answers. Never make up an answer. It is okay to say that you don't know and then offer to find an answer for them or refer them to additional resources (e.g., local first responders or emergency management). There are also a lot of great resources and tools available from Save the Children, the American Red Cross, FEMA and others on their websites.

Preparing Families

Keeping children safe requires the collaboration of families, schools, agencies and organizations. As leaders in children's programming, parks and recreation professionals play a lead role in encouraging families to create disaster plans. Teach children the basic components of a disaster plan to share with their families or consider hosting a community safety day to help educate parents and guardians about how to protect children in disasters. Here is a simple way to teach families the basic components of a disaster plan.

MAKE A PLAN YOU CAN COUNT ON

Creating a family disaster plan doesn't have to be overwhelming. Start with the basics and build out from there.

1 KIT. Create a Disaster Supplies Kit that includes water, nonperishable food, a radio, flashlights, first aid kit, hygiene supplies, medicine, copies of important documents, blankets, kid-friendly activities and comfort items etc. Store the kit in an easily-accessible area, update its contents regularly and explain to children when and how the kit should be used. The kit should have enough supplies to last 3 to 7 days. **Discuss:** *Where are you going to store your disaster supplies kit?*

2 MEET-UP LOCATIONS. Make a family plan that includes home evacuation routes, safe rooms and two meet-up locations. One location should be nearby (such as a lamppost or street corner) and the other further away from the home (such as a relative's house or community center). Identifying meet-up locations can help your family be reunified quickly following a disaster. **Discuss:** *What are your two meet-up locations?*

3 EMERGENCY CONTACTS. Every program that cares for your children should be equipped with emergency contact information for each child's parent/guardian, a local contact and an out-of-town contact. Out-of-town contacts may be reachable if local phone lines are overwhelmed and can help monitor the situation. Help children learn different ways to communicate during an emergency and memorize important emergency phone numbers and emails. Teach older children how to text as text messages are more likely get through when phone calls cannot. **Discuss:** *Who are the three emergency contacts your children should know how to contact?*

4 EVERYONE. Ensure your emergency plan meets the needs of everyone in the family, including children, seniors and those with disabilities or access and functional needs. Consider the role your family can play in assisting elderly neighbors or those with special needs. Discuss the plan with all family members and in-home caregivers so that everyone will know what to do in an emergency. **Discuss:** *Does your plan meet the needs of everyone in the family, as well as friends, neighbors or frequent visitors?*

Save the Cl

Respond

When disaster strikes, the role of parks and recreation agencies is often transformed instantaneously, transitioning from a program provider to a community stronghold. Staff members are responsible for protecting the children in their care—leading emergency protocol, serving as a voice of reassurance and reunifying children with families as soon as it is safe to do so.

In disasters, recreation facilities themselves are often transformed into community shelters where displaced families seek safe haven. Although in these spaces children may have escaped the immediate dangers of the storm, shelters often pose additional safety threats to children who are already in a fragile state while away from home. Consequently, the set-up and operation of emergency shelters should meet specific child-safety standards to protect them from additional trauma.

TIPS FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN IN
Cold Weather (p. 39)
Earthquakes (p. 41)
Extreme Heat (p. 43)
Floods (p. 45)
Home Fires (p. 47)
Hurricanes (p. 49)
Terrorism (p. 51)
Tornadoes (p. 53)
Tsunamis (p. 55)
Wildfires (p. 57)

Each second counts in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and training parks and recreation staff to respond quickly and effectively can save children's lives and protect them from additional trauma.

Tips For Protecting Children in Disasters

Disasters are often unpredictable, intense situations, requiring program leaders to respond quickly and effectively to help keep children safe. It's normal for even the most experienced caretakers to feel overwhelmed when an emergency arises. Sirens may be blaring, building structures may be threatened, and children may be scared and disobedient. But in these cases it's important to keep calm and rely on the emergency plan.

KEEP CALM. In an emergency, all little eyes will be on their adult leader, looking for signals on how to respond to the situation and what to do next. Though panic may be a natural response, it's important to remain calm as to not further disturb the children. Instead, lead the response procedure with poise. Deliver all instructions clearly with a tone that will help reassure children that adults are there to help protect them from harm. Do not rush through emergency procedures, but be in control as to not miss a critical step or lose any children in the process.

RELY ON THE PLAN. Creating an emergency plan will help empower staff, volunteers, parents and guardians to react quickly and appropriately to an emergency and avoid confusion. The plan should be practiced regularly so that in the event of a disaster, caregivers can respond almost automatically and have confidence that they can protect the children in their care. There may be situations when the disaster at hand requires you to modify the plan as it has been practiced, but with the sound understanding of roles, communications procedures and whereabouts of disaster supply kits, responders have the training and equipment to deal with whatever situation is thrown their way.

MONITOR THE SITUATION. Emergency situations can change quickly. If possible, watch news reports or listen to radio updates to determine the location and intensity of the threat and adapt your response accordingly. A NOAA Weather Radio will update you if there is severe weather in your area. If phone service is available, communicate with an out-of-town contact to help monitor the situation.

BE PATIENT. Minutes can seem like hours during an emergency, but during a fast-changing, highly volatile situation, it is often best to wait before assuming the threat of disaster has passed. For instance, in a lock-down situation, stay in place until a first-responder or another authority says it is okay to leave. Or in a shelter-in-place emergency, listen to the radio to ensure the weather threat has passed. It's better to wait a little longer than to put children in harm's way.

REUNIFY FAMILIES. After the threat of an emergency has passed it is imperative that all children be quickly reunited with their parents/guardians, as children need the comfort of their families to help cope with these traumatic situations. Use the communication strategy outlined in the emergency plan to notify parents or guardians of the situation and when and how to pick up their child.

LEARN LESSONS. After emergency plans have been put to the test by an actual emergency, it's likely that the plan will need to be updated to address any issues encountered during the response. Discuss with parents, guardians and program staff the emergency procedures that worked and those that need improving, keeping in mind that every emergency situation will be different.

Child Safety Guidance for Shelters and Local Assistance Centers

Save the Children has learned that simple, low-cost and no-cost improvements to the design and location of emergency evacuation shelters, local assistance centers and other locations where children and families congregate before, during and after incidents can dramatically improve the safety and well-being of children and adults who utilize them. Although these sites are intended to be temporary, addressing and improving residents' quality of life is important. Below are best practices that can guide Park and Recreation agencies to address children's unique needs and promote child safety and well-being while in temporary locations.

EVACUATION AND SHELTERING

- To the greatest extent possible, keep families, neighborhoods and communities together. Supporting existing social networks contributes to safety, particularly for children.

SHELTER DORMITORY DESIGN

- Designate a clearly delineated physical area where children can play and interact with other children. It is required that the space be supervised by two or more trained, background-checked adults. Ensure that children of all abilities can use the space.
- When the area for children is located in the dormitory area, surround the designated area for children by a family sleeping area, then by single women, then single men and others with more extensive needs.
- To minimize the risk to young children and infants, who may be sleep walkers and/or at risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, provide age-appropriate sleeping items such as portable cribs.

HYGIENE AND BATHROOM SAFETY

- Women and girls should receive appropriate resources and support for menstruation and nursing. It is important that these materials are appropriate, discreet, and that women are involved in making decisions about what is provided to them.
- Designate a bathroom for children and families close in proximity to the space where children play and to the family sleeping area.
- Provide separate well-lit restroom facilities based on gender, for safety and security of users.
- Designate staff and/or law enforcement official to monitor each bathroom. Bathrooms are dangerous places for children, especially those with multiple stalls and shower facilities.
- Designate shower/bathing facilities with times for child bathing and family use and appropriate monitoring by shelter staff/security
- Provide a clean, private area where women can breast feed young infants. Encourage breastfeeding and have a lactation consultant on site when possible.
- Provide sterile materials to support newborn and young child health, such as baby basins.

- Make essential materials available for young children such as diapers (various sizes), pull-ups and wipes. Include an environmentally sound system for their disposal. Involve mothers in making decisions about what is needed and provided.
- Make available age-appropriate, nutritious food for infants, toddlers and young children.

FACILITY LAYOUT AND SAFETY

- Designate bathrooms for family use only. Ensure that these facilities are adjacent to the family designated sleeping area and children's area, are well lit and have a monitor (staff or security personnel) at all times.
- Designate reunification areas within the shelter and facilitate family reunification as needed.
- Provide lighting that allows residents to walk safely at night outside the building. When amenities such as bathrooms, laundry facilities, showers and/or other resources are located outside ensure there is proper lighting and security during all times of day and night.
- In the event that portable bathrooms are positioned outside, ensure they are as close enough to the family designated sleeping area as regulations permit. Again, ensure there is proper lighting and security during all times of day and night.
- Be attentive to resident and vehicle traffic patterns and take pre-cautionary steps to separate the areas where children congregate from daily traffic activities. Establish and enforce normal traffic regulations (stop signs, posted speed limits, bus stops, etc.)
- Monitor unused areas within the building to reduce the opportunity for illegal behavior and violence.
- Identify and report potential safety hazards for children such as electrical outlets, stairs, or exits.
- Be sure to clearly mark multiple emergency exits.
- Identify green spaces (outdoor areas) for children to play and, where possible, allow access to playground and out-door play materials. Make sure all areas are inspected for hazards.
- Identify community gathering areas where residents can congregate, interact, contribute to each other's sense of hope and lessen isolation amongst other residents as they cope with the demands of rebuilding their lives in their communities.

ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES

- Count all children and infants upon registration. Document their ages and physical, emotional or cognitive needs they may have.
- Provide clear reunification protocols for unaccompanied or separated children to facilitate family reunification.
- Ensure minimum standards for food, water, health, hygiene and access to medical care are met.
- Provide children with the opportunity to resume normal activities, such as school and child care, as soon as possible.
- Work to ensure appropriate transportation to get children from the evacuation shelter site to activities, such as recreation programs, classes, youth sports, child care, schools, after school programs, or camps.

- Arrange for children to participate in out-of-school activities such as after school programs and/or camp activities.
- When using air conditioning, control the room temperature. Infants loose body heat more easily than adults and cannot produce enough body heat by shivering.
- Provide pregnant women and new mothers with pre/post natal care and related services.
- Create systems to ensure that single parents receive the support necessary to ensure the health and hygiene of their children
- Establish a community meeting forum where residents can receive updates, identify and resolve issues, and share essential recovery information.

Recover

The effects of disaster can linger long after the storm has passed as communities clean-up, rebuild and restore services. At the heart of recovery, restoring parks and recreation programs as quickly as possible is critical to helping children get back into a routine where they can play, interact with peers and begin to cope with the crises in a safe and familiar environment

TO SHARE WITH FAMILIES

10 Tips to Help Children Cope with Disasters (p. 59)

Often, children do not have the words to express their emotions or make sense of a disaster. Program staff can play a key role in facilitating children's recovery by helping children express themselves through art, play, drama, music and other creative outlets. These are the activities that help kids just be kids again after having to deal with a very scary situation. It's also imperative that parks and recreation staff are trained recognize signs of trauma in children who may need extra psychological or emotional support.

Through the different phases of emergency response and recovery, which may cause parks and recreation professionals to work long and hard hours, it is of utmost importance that staff remember to take care of themselves. Children look to their adult leaders to know how to respond to a disaster situation. If their leaders are burnt out, outwardly angry or withdrawn, children may mimic these behaviors. Program staff should be encouraged to get enough sleep, eat healthfully and seek out additional support networks so that they can also cope effectively with a disaster that has likely upended their lives as well.

Parks and recreation professionals and their families may be directly impacted by the disaster themselves. They need to be able to balance their professional responsibilities with the needs of their families. This is where mutual aid arrangements with professionals from outside the impacted area are critical to assist in delivery of services, recovery and rebuilding.

Supporting Children in Disasters

Natural, manmade and technological disasters can have overwhelming effects on communities. Along with the physical destruction a disaster may leave, additional challenges to recovery may be invisible at first glance or remain unvoiced.

A disaster can leave the children feeling scared, insecure, sad and angry. It is normal for children to show some changes in their behavior, thoughts and feelings during and after such events. This section outlines some reactions you may see in children according to their age, as well as ways you can support them and yourself.

Parks and recreation programs can be a tangible source of normalcy and hope for children and adults whose lives have been uprooted. From Saturday soccer to afterschool programs, parks and recreation agencies provide families, children and staff with a stable, familiar environment around which to center and organize life.

The routine and regular contact with leaders, coaches and friends helps children to reestablish a sense of safety and security. Parks and recreation professionals' dedication, compassion and skills are needed most following a disaster. The information provided here is intended to help you think through new challenges you may encounter as you work to provide support and learning opportunities in a very changed environment.

A disaster can have a profound impact people of all ages and can leave us feeling powerless and uncertain about the future. Some children and families may have been exposed to extreme danger and be coping with significant losses. Others may have been uprooted and displaced from their homes and usual supports. As a community leader, you can play an important role in comforting children, and in helping them sort out their thoughts and feelings surrounding the disaster and its impacts on their families and community. In the early phases, your agency may be focused on locating and registering children, rebuilding recreational spaces that may have been damaged or finding ways to incorporate children displaced from other affected areas. New challenges will arise as your agency and community move through the phases of rebuilding and recovery.

Understanding and fully recovering from a disaster is a long process; it does not happen within a week, a month or even a few months. Paying attention to the children's psychological needs after a major disaster is essential for ensuring that they can continue to learn and develop. Create opportunities for children to understand their experiences and process their emotions.

As children return to your programs, you may notice some changes in their behavior, emotional expression and school performance. Children may be more fearful of returning and have more difficulty separating from their parents or guardians. They may be more aggressive or withdrawn, and may tend to cry or become more easily upset as a result of their experiences in the disaster. As children get back into the routine and structure of school, most will feel better in time. Children who may have suffered great losses or been exposed to danger and threats to their life or safety may require extra support. Common reactions of children and adolescents to a disaster are:

REACTIONS TO A DISASTER	
CHILDREN	ADOLESCENTS
Fearful of going to school	Preoccupation with the disaster
Fatigue from sleep difficulties or nightmares	Feeling helpless or powerless
Change in eating habits	Being judgmental and critical of adults
Difficulty concentrating and staying on task	Extreme mood swings
Poor school performance	Acting invincible
Aggressive behavior, fighting	Risk-taking behaviors (drugs, alcohol, sex)
Anxiety, crying spells, sadness and grief	Changes in sleeping or eating habits
Feeling guilty, or to blame for bad things that happened	Acting irritable and easily agitated
Withdrawal from peers	Physical aches and pains
Losing interest in usual activities	Withdrawn from friends

Take a moment to reflect on your previous experiences and the behavior you've witnessed in children following an emergency situation. What are some steps you've taken in the past to support children and what decisions have you made or actions have you taken that have made a difference in the lives of individual children?

What You Can Do for Children

Helping children cope and learn in the aftermath of a disaster requires creativity, flexibility and adaptability. You may have already taken measures to help children in your programs cope. Here are some things you can do to create an environment that helps children express their feelings and adjust to their new surroundings:

ESTABLISH SAFETY & CONTROL

- Have a supervised, safe place within your facility or site where youth and children can go to receive support or sit quietly as needed.
- Increase children's sense of control and mastery by letting them make choices that affect their day. For example, ask for children's help in planning and choosing activities.
- Be available to talk one-on-one with children; let them know you are there to listen.

SET UP ROUTINE & NORMALCY

- Maintain program schedules and routines.
- Peer support is important. Create opportunities for children to work and play together in groups or teams.
- Plan activities, rituals and celebrations for achievements, birthdays or holidays. This will help provide normalcy while creating a positive environment.
- Give children opportunities to engage in conversations of their choosing, not solely about the disaster.

NORMALIZE & VALIDATE

- Reflect on what children say and validate their feelings and experiences. Let them know that you are hearing what they are expressing by rephrasing their sentiments back to them and letting them know that they are not the only ones who feel this way.
- Discuss some of the normal thoughts and feelings they may be experiencing. Let them know that it's normal to be fearful or scared of disasters and its okay to feel angry afterwards.
- Sometimes children can be giddy (inappropriate laughing), callous or aggressive as a way of avoiding difficult emotions. Help them to be compassionate with each other and themselves.
- Reassure children, particularly younger children, that they are safe in your programs and that their leaders, parents or guardians and other adults will take care of them.

HELP CHILDREN MOVE TOWARD POSITIVE ACTION

- Help children reframe anger or despair by focusing on positive things.
- Encourage children to develop positive methods of coping with stress and fears, and help them identify which strategies fit each situation. Begin with helping them to identify what they have done in the past that helped them cope when they were scared or upset. Encourage healthy expression through creative arts or play.
- Encourage children to contribute to the recovery and rebuilding their community, and consider group volunteer projects.

HELP CHILDREN UNDERSTAND AND LEARN FROM THE DISASTER

- Teach children about natural disasters (e.g., what causes a hurricane/tornado/etc., how experts track them) and basic emergency preparedness skills to help them gain mastery over the event.
- Incorporate disaster-related information into your programs, using information and lessons from a recent disaster in your instruction.

ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY

- Use creative arts to help children express their emotions (e.g., art, drama, music, photography, writing, etc.). This can be very helpful for children who are not ready to talk about their emotions, or who culturally might not feel comfortable talking.

Help children identify the things in life that they understand better or appreciate more since the disaster. One example of this, is creating a booklet for Thanksgiving with pages that children fill with the things they are thankful for. Similar booklets could be created helping children understand their new skill, strengths and resources.

COMMUNITY PROJECT IDEAS
Fundraise for relief and recovery efforts.
Assist with community clean-up.
Plan disaster education activities for the community.
Create a play space or art space for younger children to express their feelings.
Thank rescue workers with care packages or letters.
Invite guest speakers from other disaster-affected communities to learn how they coped.
Research facts relating to the disaster and recovery.
Establish pen pals with other sites or programs.
Connect with other communities that have experienced crises to learn about their recovery.

Knowing When Children Need Extra Support

Although most children will begin to feel better and recover with good support from leaders and parents or guardians, some children may need extra help. If a child is is showing more serious problems that do not show improvement over time (three months is a good gauge), that child may need a referral for more specialized support. Keep in mind that some children may have had previous learning disabilities or emotional problems, which may be made worse by the stress of the disaster. They may need extra time, attention and care. Learn about your program's referral system for children in need of extra care and support.

WHEN TO REFER

Some problems that may indicate a child needs referral to a professional counselor are:

- Aggression and fighting
- Excessive anxiety and crying
- Seeming apathetic or numb to disaster-related events
- Excessive withdrawal
- Extreme fears that interfere with daily functioning
- Excessive hyperactivity
- Marked and prolonged changes in school performance
- Risk-taking behavior in adolescents (e.g., reckless behavior, substance abuse, self-injury)
- Any child who talks about hurting or killing themselves or others, or who tries to hurt themselves. Take children seriously if they talk to you about suicide and seek help immediately.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY AND PROTECTION

After a major disaster, it is important to pay particular attention to child safety and protection. If your facilities are located in an area that suffered damage during the disaster, be watchful of children while they are outside. Make sure that they don't play near debris or other health hazards like standing flood waters. You may find that your program environment is being visited by many strangers—construction and repair crews, deliveries of new equipment or donations, and others that you don't recognize. Be aware of these strangers and any interactions they may have with children. When children are released for the day, be sure they leave in the care of a family member or approved contact.

Following a disaster, many families may have to relocate, it may be difficult for these children and parents/guardians to know the safe areas for children to play. Find ways to help children and families know important community safety information.. Remember, as a trusted adult in the lives of the children you serve, you can play an important role in helping children who are experiencing domestic violence, abuse or neglect in their homes or communities. Use the open and trusting relationship you have with the children in your programs to explore any suspicions you may have of abuse or neglect, and make the appropriate referrals to a social worker, counselor and/or the authorities.

Taking Care of Yourself After a Disaster

FOLLOWING A DISASTER, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF and take the time to process your own feelings and losses—for your facilities and programs and in your personal life. In the face of so many changes, it is unrealistic to expect yourself and your staff to go on as if it is "business as usual." As a leader, you like to be organized, in control of your program and able to cope with any challenge. But a disaster can cause huge disruptions in your work and life. You may have lost equipment or materials or be adjusting to a new program environment, new staff and children or the rebuilding of your own home. You may find it harder to concentrate, or you might be experiencing difficult emotions in response to what has happened. To continue to be an effective leader for children, it is important to care for yourself first. Understanding and learning to be patient with your own recovery process will help you to better support children.

LIFE-ALTERING EVENTS ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO REFLECT on where we have been and where we are going, and the things that bring meaning to our lives. Take some time to think not only about the losses and changes brought by the disaster, but also the gains from the experience. Perhaps you have learned not to "sweat the small stuff" or to be more flexible. Perhaps you have gained new friendships or become closer with neighbors or co-workers. Take time to reflect, understand and come to terms with this important event in your life, and then you will be better able to help children and others to do the same.

SEEK OUT ALL OF THE PEOPLE AND RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR LIFE AND WORK. Working with your colleagues and managers to create a supportive and positive atmosphere in your programs is an important source of strength for moving forward together.

TAKE THE EXTRA TIME AND EFFORT TO BE THERE FOR EACH OTHER. Talk with colleagues about your experiences, fears and challenges, so that you can support and learn from each other. This is a good way to organize your own thoughts and reactions and prepare for addressing children's concerns and questions.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF MAY REQUIRE SOME CREATIVITY AND ADAPTATION. Some of the activities you used to do or places you used to go may no longer be accessible. Think about the things that have helped in the past, and where you can, try to put those in place today. Think of new things that might help you feel better day to day. Often it is the pile up of small stresses that make us feel overwhelmed; similarly it can be the small ways you learn to relax and stay healthy that will keep you resilient during this difficult time.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR BODY

You will feel the effects of stress in your body. When under stress it is common to feel headaches, muscle tension, stomach upset and fatigue. To take care of yourself, remember:

- Eat regular and healthy meals
- Give yourself adequate time to rest and recover when you're sick
- Get enough rest
- Exercise
- Do things that you enjoy, take time for fun and relaxation
- Take breaks from the work and stress to release and recharge

TAKING CARE OF YOUR MIND

You may find you have many things on your mind and long to-do lists. Your mind also needs care and rest. Even if just for 15 minutes, give yourself space for quiet reflection and a time away from people, phones and demands so you can refresh.

- Find activities that help you relax, such as breathing exercises, meditation, swimming, walking, stretching, yoga, prayer, listening to music or spending time in nature.
- Try to keep perspective: Recovery is a long process, but every day there are changes and improvements. Try to see the positives each day.
- Consider the extraordinary changes and challenges you have experienced and be patient with yourself.
- Focus on the small things you can do to improve the day to day, rather than putting your time and energy into things that are out of your control.
- Explore your creativity to make meaning of what has happened. Express your thoughts and feelings in new ways, such as journaling, painting, drawing, sculpting or music.
- Give yourself time for self-reflection and understanding. Practice spiritual self-care in the way that works best for you.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Try not to isolate yourself and dwell on your feelings alone. More than ever, surround yourself with the important and caring people in your life.

- Identify the people, activities, places and things that are a comfort to you, and seek them out on a regular basis.
- Stay in touch with the important people in your life and accept their support and kindness.

- Talk with others who face similar challenges to know you are not alone and that others understand. Share the lessons you've learned for coping with the new challenges in your lives.
- Talk with counselors, faith leaders or others who can provide comfort and help.

Reaching out to and helping others can help to counter your own feelings of helplessness. Small things—an encouraging word, running an errand or watching a child for someone, or being there to listen—are ways you can make a difference. Remember to be aware of your limitations too, and know when you need to focus more on caring for yourself.

OUTLETS FOR EMOTIONS

Overwhelming emotions are common following major events, big changes and ongoing stress. Take time to deal with and to express your own feelings.

- Crying. It's alright to cry and to laugh. You may find yourself crying in front of the children in your programs. Explain that you feel sad sometimes too, that it's okay to cry, and what you do to feel better. This can be an opportunity to help children to understand and manage their own sad feelings.
- Anger: Many people feel very angry after a disaster—the situation feels unfair and unjust and recovery and rebuilding can be fraught with problems. Although anger is a natural and healthy emotion, be careful of intense anger and aggression that can hurt others and cause problems at home or on the job. Find healthy and safe ways to express frustration and anger, such as taking a walk or doing some physical activity.
- Shame and Blame: After a disaster, many people think about the things they wished they had done, or done differently. In a time of crisis, you make the best decision you can with you the information you have at the moment. There was no way to know how things might turn out. Forgive yourself, let go and move forward.
- Survivor Guilt: Many people who survive disasters feel guilty that they, their families and homes survived when others lost so much. Feelings of guilt are actually a reflection of your compassion and human ability to feel others' pain.

GETTING BACK TO WORK

The return to work can be both a relief and a challenge. Work helps give a regular structure to life, and something meaningful and productive to look forward to. It can also be difficult to get back to work when your life may still be disrupted, and you may lack energy, focus and concentration. Try these things to make the return to work easier:

- Create a welcoming work environment with things that remind you of the beauty in your life. Try placing photos, fresh flowers or meaningful objects on your desk or program space.
- Have reasonable expectations for what you are able to do right now. Stay in touch with supervisors so they are aware of any challenges you are facing.
- Don't overwork—keep regular hours the best you can.
- At times when you find it hard to concentrate, try doing menial or repetitive tasks.
- Be patient and supportive with co-workers who are also under stress. Be there for each other.

BE AWARE OF "PITFALLS"

With stress and trauma often comes a great deal of pain. Dealing with the pain is an important part of self-care and recovery. However, some avenues of coping with pain can cause greater problems. Be careful of pitfalls and dangerous ways of dealing with stress:

- Unrealistic expectations of ourselves and others
- Working too much
- Dangerous or risky behaviors like driving too fast
- Drinking or self-medicating with drugs to numb the pain. Remember that alcohol can lower your mood, cause mood swings and interrupt your sleep cycle. Alcohol and drugs can strain relationships.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Continue to remind yourself that these normal reactions are to be expected during times like these. If you find that symptoms are greatly impacting your ability to function at home or at work, and if they get worse or persist for more than three months, consider talking things over with a mental health professional, such as a psychologist, social worker, or counselor. In particular, if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, a mental health professional can talk to you about ways to relieve the overwhelming stress.

- Feeling constantly on edge or in danger
- Rage, extreme irritability, or intense agitation
- Severe anxiety, worry or feelings of panic
- Severe depression marked by the inability to feel hope or pleasure; a lack of energy and motivation; feelings of worthlessness
- Abuse of alcohol, prescription drugs, and/or illegal drugs
- Repeated and intrusive memories or "flashbacks" of disaster-related events
- Emotional numbing—feeling "empty"
- Feeling extremely helpless

If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or others, it is important that you seek help for your safety and the safety of others.

Even if you don't find yourself experiencing the types of things listed above, seeking the guidance of a mental health professional might be the right thing for you to do. These are extraordinary times that call for using all of our resources for strength and recovery. Give yourself permission to access those resources, to take care of yourself. Counselors, social workers and psychologists can work together with you to identify strategies and plans for staying strong and continuing to support your friends and family through this time.

LET'S TAKE A BREATHER…

Relaxation tools help you to center and calm yourself, even on stressful days, in order to keep your mind focused and your body functioning well. Breath is the key to relaxation. Shallow breathing can leave a person feeling cold or sweaty, lightheaded and with a fast heartbeat. As you learn to breathe slowly and deeply, your muscles automatically relax each time you exhale and your mind will become clear.

When you first start to practice relaxation, you may become more aware of negative or painful sensations. However, continuing to practice relaxation in a way that is challenging and tolerable can help you feel better. Remember, you don't have to change how you're feeling or change your environment—and you probably can't.

The key to relaxation is just to be quiet and present with whatever you're feeling and thinking in the moment. Try these basic techniques during your daily schedule:

- Identify a word, sound or phrase that you can repeat to yourself while sitting quietly with your eyes closed.
- Close your eyes and focus on your breathing, giving attention to inhaling and releasing each breath.
- Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and visualize yourself in a soothing place such as a garden or beach. Use all of your senses to place yourself in the scene.
- Try progressive muscle relaxation. Systematically tense and relax different body muscles from toes to head. Feel the difference between tension and real relaxation in your body.
- Slow down your breathing and count ten breaths, from ten to one, feeling more relaxed each time you exhale.
- Stand up and stretch. Rotate your shoulders and your head.
- Take a moment to walk around the room or down the hall.

CONCLUSION

As a parks and recreation professional, many demands will be placed upon you and your staff when a disaster strikes. Be prepared to provide extra support and care for the most vulnerable in your programs: children. Help bring back routine and normalcy to their lives, let them know that it's okay to be scared and be available to talk. And in the midst of facilitating community recovery, don't forget to take care of yourself, getting the physical rest and emotional support you need to stay healthy. Remember to band together with your staff team to help and encourage each other through these difficult times. Together you can help provide the safety and sense of normalcy to a disaster-affected community so that it can recover quickly and become more resilient.

IMPORTANT SUPPORT PHONE NUMBERS	
1-800-273-TALK	National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-656-HOPE	National Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-789-2647	National Mental Health Information Center A confidential hotline to speak with trained mental health professionals who can assist with information and local referrals

DISASTER CHECKLIST

FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Save the Children®

Get Ready. Get Safe.

Do you have a plan in place to help ensure your children are safe and secure if a disaster strikes? If the worst happens, your children will look to you to know how to react and respond. Use this checklist to help prepare and keep your children safe in a disaster.

MAKE A FAMILY PLAN

Before a disaster strikes, make sure you and your family all know these details to help stay safe.

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY SHOULD DETERMINE:

- ☐ Which facilities will be used as shelters in your community in case of emergency
- ☐ A designated meet-up location if your family is separated
- ☐ A family contact outside of your area who would not be affected by a local disaster

TEACH YOUR KIDS

Your children may need to act in an emergency.

MAKE SURE THEY KNOW THE FOLLOWING:

- ☐ Basic personal information to identify themselves if separated from you
- ☐ Home phone number
- ☐ How to dial 911
- ☐ Family's meet-up locations
- ☐ How to reach the family's out-of-town contact

HAVE A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Communication systems are often unreliable during emergencies. Be sure to have a back-up plan.

- ☐ All family cell phones should have "ICE" (In Case of Emergency) programmed into their phone's contact list with all family phone numbers plus out-of-area contacts.
- ☐ Remind family members that text messages often get through in an emergency, even when a phone can't.

CREATE A GO KIT

Prepare a backpack or portable bag for each family member with essential hygiene items and contact information in case you need to leave home.

BE SURE TO INCLUDE:

- [ ] Each child's contact and medical information
- [ ] Recent photos of each child
- [ ] Comfort food and treats
- [ ] Activity items like books, puzzles and games
- [ ] Comfort items like a stuffed animal or blanket

STOCK UP AT HOME

In addition to basic survival items like water, flashlights, a battery-powered radio and extra batteries, have these kid-friendly supplies on hand.

NON-PERISHABLE FOOD

- [ ] Nursing supplies
- [ ] Formula
- [ ] Pre-packaged baby food
- [ ] Ready-to-eat canned foods and opener
- [ ] Juice pouches
- [ ] Non-perishable pasteurized milk
- [ ] Dry cereals, protein bars, fruit snacks
- [ ] Nuts and nut butters
- [ ] Vitamins

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

- [ ] Fever reducer
- [ ] Antibacterial ointment
- [ ] Rash ointment
- [ ] Each child's medications

PERSONAL HYGIENE ITEMS

- [ ] Baby wipes
- [ ] Diapers
- [ ] Nursing pads
- [ ] Feminine products

CHECK WITH YOUR CHILD CARE FACILITY

Since your children may be at a child care facility when disaster hits, make sure all caregivers have each child's most recent contact info.

Remember to ask the staff about their emergency plans. If they do not have a plan, you may want to ask them to create one.

For more information and support, visit: www.savethechildren.org/getready

EMERGENCY CONTACT FORM

Please fill out the following information. If you don't know the answer or the question doesn't apply, leave the answer blank.

CHILD'S INFORMATION

First/Last Name: _____

Nickname: _____ Birthday: _____

Home Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Parent/Guardian:

First/Last Name: _____

Work Address: _____

Work Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____

If you have any of the following, include your email address, Twitter and Facebook names

E-mail: _____ Twitter: _____ Facebook: _____

2. Parent/Guardian:

First/Last Name: _____

Work Address: _____

Work Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____

If you have any of the following, include your email address, Twitter and Facebook names

E-mail: _____ Twitter: _____ Facebook: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT FORM

RELEASE INFORMATION

You are authorized to release my child to the parents/guardians above and:

1. First/Last Name: _____

Address: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Work Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail: _____ Twitter: _____ Facebook: _____

2. First/Last Name: _____

Address: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Work Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail: _____ Twitter: _____ Facebook: _____

3. First/Last Name: _____

Address: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Work Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail: _____ Twitter: _____ Facebook: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT FORM

OUT-OF-TOWN CONTACT (in case local contacts cannot be reached)

First and Last Name: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Work Address: _____

Home Address: _____

Work Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail: _____ Twitter: _____ Facebook: _____

MEDICAL OR SPECIAL CARE INFORMATION

My child has the following medical conditions and allergies:

My child takes the following prescription medications:

My child needs the following medical treatment or care:

EMERGENCY CONTACT FORM

MY CHILD'S DOCTORS ARE

1. First/Last Name: _____

Specialty (e.g., pediatrics): _____

Address: _____

Work Phone: _____ Cell: _____

2. First/Last Name: _____

Specialty (e.g., pediatrics): _____

Address: _____

Work Phone: _____ Cell: _____

3. First/Last Name: _____

Specialty (e.g., pediatrics): _____

Address: _____

Work Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Other important information or instructions:

I grant permission for the caregiver program to provide or arrange for medical treatment and/or transportation to an evacuation site and/or medical facility for my child, identified above, during an emergency or disaster. I also grant permission for my child to be released to any of the emergency contacts I have designated on the previous page if I am unable to pick them up in an emergency.

Printed Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

CHILD ID CARD TEMPLATE

CHILD ID CARD

PLACE CHILD'S PHOTO HERE

Name:

Birth Date: _____
Eye Color: _____
Hair Color: _____
Height: _____ Weight: _____

Home Address: _____
Home Phone: _____
Medical Conditions/Allergies:
_____
_____

Parent/Guardian Information

Name: _____
Cell Phone: _____
Work Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Other Emergency Contact

Name: _____
Relationship to Child: _____
Cell Phone: _____
Work Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Save the Children®
Get Ready. Get Safe.

For more information visit:
www.savethechildren.org/GetReady

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10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN COLD WEATHER

When temperatures drop, children need extra attention to stay warm, safe and healthy. Young children are less likely to recognize when they are cold and more likely to lose body heat quickly due to their smaller size. Here are some tips to protect children when the thermometer dips:

1. **Think layers.** Put several layers of clothing on your child and make sure their head, neck and hands are covered. Dress babies and young children in one more layer than an adult would wear.

2. **Beware clothing hazards.** Scarves and hood strings can strangle smaller children so use other clothing to keep them warm.

3. **Check in on warmth.** Tell children to come inside if they get wet or if they're cold. Then keep watching them and checking in. They may prefer to continue playing outside even if they are wet or cold.

4. **Use sunscreen.** Children and adults can still get sunburn in the winter. Sun can reflect off the snow, so apply sunscreen.

5. **Install alarms.** More household fires happen during the winter so make sure you have smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in your home.

6. **Get equipped.** Children should always wear helmets when snowboarding, skiing, sledding or playing ice hockey. Any sports equipment should be professionally fitted.

7. **Teach technique.** It takes time to master fun winter activities like sledding, so make sure children know how to do the activity safely.

8. **Prevent nosebleeds.** If your child suffers from minor winter nosebleeds, use a cold air humidifier in their room. Saline nose drops can help keep their nose moist.

9. **Keep them hydrated.** In drier winter air kids lose more water through their breath. Keep them drinking and try giving them warm drinks and soup for extra appeal.

10. **Watch for danger signs.** Signs of frostbite are pale, grey or blistered skin on the fingers, ears, nose, and toes. If you think your child has frostbite bring the child indoors and put the affected area in warm (not hot) water. Signs of hypothermia are shivering, slurred speech, and unusual clumsiness. If you think your child has hypothermia call 9-1-1 immediately.

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN AN EARTHQUAKE

Earthquakes are caused by a sudden, rapid shaking of the earth caused by the breaking and shifting of rock beneath the earth's surface. They can strike suddenly, without warning and occur at any time of the year and at any time of the day or night. In the U.S., 45 states and territories are at moderate to very high risk of earthquakes. Fortunately, there are simple steps families can take to be better prepared and keep children safe when earthquakes strike.

PREPARE:

1. **Talk about earthquakes**. Spend time with your family discussing how and why earthquakes occur. Explain that an earthquake is a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
2. **Find safe spots in your home.** Identify and discuss safe spots in each room of your home so that you can go there immediately if you feel an earthquake. Safe spots are places where you can take cover, such as under a sturdy desk or table, or next to an interior wall.
3. **Practice earthquake drills.** Regularly practice with your family what you would do if an earthquake occurred. Practicing earthquake drills will help children understand what to do in case you are not with them during an earthquake.
4. **Learn your caregivers' disaster plans.** If your children's school or care provider is in an area at risk from earthquakes, find out how its emergency plan addresses earthquakes. Ask about evacuation plans and if you would be required to pick up your children from the site or from another location.
5. **Keep contact information current.** Phone numbers, addresses and relationships change. Keep your children's school or child care emergency release information up to date, so that if an earthquake strikes, you will know where your child is and who can pick them up.

DURING AN EARTHQUAKE:

6. **If inside, Drop, Cover, and Hold On**.—**Drop** to the ground and take **Cover** under something sturdy like a desk or table. With one hand **Hold On** to the object and with your other arm protect your head and neck. If you don't have anything sturdy to take cover under, crouch down next to an interior wall. Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you're sure it's safe to exit.
7. **If outside, find an open spot**. Find a clear spot away from buildings, trees, streetlights and power lines. Drop to the ground and stay there until the shaking stops.
8. **If in a vehicle, stop.** Pull over to a clear location, stop and stay there with your seatbelt fastened until the shaking stops.

FOLLOWING AN EARTHQUAKE:

9. **Involve children in recovery**. After an earthquake, include your children in clean-up activities if it is safe to do so. It is comforting to children to watch the household begin to return to normal and to have a job to do.
10. **Listen to children**. Encourage your child to express feelings of fear, anxiety or anger. Listen carefully, show understanding, and offer reassurance. Tell your child that the situation is not permanent, and provide physical reassurance through time spent together and displays of affection. Contact local faith-based organizations, voluntary organizations, or professionals for counseling if extra help is needed.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to earthquakes. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next earthquake.

For adults:

- American Red Cross: Earthquake Preparedness. http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/earthquake
- Earthquake Country Alliance: Welcome to Earthquake Country. http://www.earthquakecountry.info/
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): Earthquake. http://www.fema.gov/earthquake

For children:

- Earthquake Country Alliance: Beat the Quake! Game. http://www.dropcoverholdon.org/beatthequake/game/
- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Earthquakes. http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/earthquakes

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EXTREME HEAT

In recent years, extreme heat has caused more deaths than all other weather events, including floods. People who are at greater risk from the effects of heat include children, senior citizens and those who live in urban areas. Fortunately, there are some simple steps families can take to keep children safe in extreme heat.

1. **Do NOT leave children unsupervised in parked cars**. Even in less threatening temperatures, vehicles can rapidly heat up to dangerous temperatures. A child left inside a car is at risk for severe heat-related illnesses and/or death, even if the windows are cracked open.
2. **Seek shelter in cool areas.** Air-conditioning is the best form of protection against heat-related illness, so be sure to spend as much time in air-conditioned spaces (e.g., shopping malls, public libraries, heat-relief shelters) as possible during extreme heat waves.
3. **Stay informed**. Listen to local news and weather channels for health, safety and weather-related updates, including heat warnings, watches and advisories. Follow the guidance from local officials.
4. **Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen.** Choose lightweight, light-colored, and breathable fabrics (such as cotton), as well as broad-spectrum sunscreen (with protection from both UVA and UVB sun rays) to protect you and your child from the heat and potential sun-related skin damage. Hats and umbrellas can be used to limit exposure to harmful sun rays.
5. **Drink lots of fluids**. Remember to drink plenty of liquids, regardless of your activity level. Check your baby's diaper for concentrated (dark in color) urine, which can indicate dehydration. Fluids should be drunk before, during and after being exposed to extreme heat. Also avoid hot meals as they may increase body heat.
6. **Know how to identify heat-related illnesses.** Learn symptoms and signs of heat-related illnesses/conditions such as heat stroke, exhaustion, cramps, and severe sunburn. If children show these symptoms, seek medical assistance immediately.
7. **Get lots of rest.** Strenuous activities should be reduced, eliminated or rescheduled to the coolest time of the day. Make sure that children get lots of rest when they are active.
8. **Keep children entertained.** Children may become anxious or restless from being kept indoors. Plan ahead for indoor activities and games and limit the screen-time on televisions, phones and tablets.
9. **Reassure children.** Children may become fearful or stressed from effects of the heat, such as seeing dead animals. Remember that children take their cues from their parents and caregivers, so try to keep calm and answer their questions openly and honestly.
10. **Learn your caregivers' disaster plans**. If your child's school or care provider is in an area that may experience extreme heat, find out what its plans are for in case of extreme heat.

Extreme Heat Weather Terms:

- **Excessive Heat WATCH** means conditions are favorable for an event to meet or exceed local excessive heat warning criteria in the next 12 to 48 hours.
- **Excessive Heat WARNING** means that heat values are forecast to meet or exceed locally defined warning criteria for at least two days.
- **Excessive Heat ADVISORY** means hazardous heat conditions have begun or will begin within 36 hours and, if caution is not exercised, they could become life-threatening.

The National Weather Service issues alerts for excessive heat on a county-by-county basis. The alerts are broadcast on NOAA Weather Radio and on local radio and television stations. The conditions for an excessive heat watch, warning, and advisory may vary by location.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to extreme heat. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready.

For adults:

- American Academy of Pediatrics: Protecting Children from Heat: Information for Parents. http://www.healthychildren.org/english/safety-prevention/at-home/pages/Protecting-Children-from-Extreme-Heat-Information-for-Parents.aspx
- Department of Homeland Security: Extreme Heat. http://www.ready.gov/heat
- Department of Health and Human Services: Extreme Heat Events and Health: http://disaster.nlm.nih.gov/dimrc/extremeheat.html

For children:

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Extreme Heat. http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/extreme-heat

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN A FLOOD

Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters in the United States. As much as 90 percent of all damage from natural disasters is caused by floods. Flooding typically occurs after heavy or prolonged rainfall, or the rapid melt of snow. While the effects of floods can be devastating, there are simple steps families can take to keep their children safe.

PREPARE:

1. **Talk about floods.** Spend time with your family discussing why floods occur. Explain that flooding is a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
2. **Consider flood insurance.** Standard homeowners insurance doesn't cover flood damage. For information on flood insurance visit www.FloodSmart.gov
3. **Stay informed.** Use a NOAA Weather Radio or listen to a local station on a portable, battery-powered radio or television. Listen for and respond to flood watches and warnings. Evacuate if told to do so or if you feel unsafe.

DURING FLOODS:

4. **Follow guidance of local authorities**. Local authorities, such as elected officials and first responders, are most informed about affected areas and most knowledgeable which flooded areas to avoid.
5. **Move to higher ground.** During a flood you should move to higher ground and avoid standing, flowing, or rising water.
6. **Keep children away from dirty water**. Keep children and pets away from hazardous sites and floodwater as they are likely to be dirty, carry bacteria, and vulnerable to electric shock.
7. **Keep children clean.** Wash children's hands frequently (always before meals) and ensure they bathe after being exposed to flood waters or flood-damaged areas.

AFTER FLOODS:

8. **Ensure utilities are restored**. Before children return to flood-affected areas, ensure utilities such as electricity and plumbing are restored and living and learning spaces (e.g., homes, schools, parks facilities) are free from physical and environmental hazards.
9. **Limit children's participation in recovery.** Children and teens should not be involved in clean-up efforts but should return after the area is cleaned up. Before children return, these areas should be cleaned and disinfected, along with all toys, clothing, etc.
10. **Clean or discard contaminated toys.** Do not allow children to play with toys that have been contaminated by flood water and have not been disinfected. Materials that cannot be readily disinfected, such as stuffed animals or pillows, should be discarded.

Flood weather terms: Be familiar with the following definitions to help prepare your family for floods.

- **Flood WATCH** means a flood is possible in your area.
- **Flood WARNING** means flooding is already occurring or will occur soon in your area.
- **Flash Flood WATCH** means flash flooding is possible in your area.
- **Flash Flood WARNING** means a flash flood is occurring or will occur very soon.

Watches and warnings are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) and broadcast on NOAA Weather Radio and on local radio and television stations.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to floods. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next flood.

For adults:

- American Academy of Pediatrics: Flash Floods/ Flood Recovery. http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Children-and-Disasters/Documents/Hurricanes-ReturnofChildren.pdf
- American Red Cross: Flood Safety. http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/flood
- National Flood Insurance Program: Flood Outreach Toolkit. http://www.floodsmart.gov/toolkits/flood/index.htm

For children:

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Floods. http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/floods

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN A HOME FIRE

Each year more than 2,500 people die and 12,600 are injured in home fires in the United States. Fires and burns are one of the leading causes of death for children under the age of 15. Fortunately, most home fires are preventable and there are simple steps families can take to help keep children safe.

1. **Teach children fire safety.** Teach children how to prevent and survive a fire. Explain why fire safety is important and demonstrate safe behaviors when using fire, fire tools, and other heat sources. Explain that fire is a tool, not a toy.
2. **Install smoke alarms.** Install a smoke alarm near your kitchen, on each home level, near sleeping areas, and in each bedroom. Use the test button to check the smoke alarms every month and replace all the batteries at least once a year. Teach children what smoke alarms sound like and what to do if they hear them.
3. **Teach children about firefighters**. As the sight of a firefighter wearing a fire suit and mask can be scary to children, teach children what firefighters look like and sound like with their oxygen masks on. Take them to your local fire department to meet firefighters and learn about fire safety.
4. **Keep matches and lighters out of reach.** Store matches and lighters out of children's reach and sight, preferably in a locked cabinet. Teach children not to pick up matches or lighters they may find. Instead, they should tell an adult immediately. Only use lighters with child-lock features.
5. **Keep children away from flames and heat sources**. Never leave children unattended near operating stoves or burning candles, even for a short time.
6. **Teach children 9-1-1 (or local emergency number).** Help children understand how and when to call 9-1-1for help in emergencies. If there is a home fire, children should evacuate before calling 9-1-1. Children only need to call 9-1-1 if an adult is not able to do so.
7. **Practice fire drills.** Include children in planning and practicing home fire drills. Have fire drills at least twice a year so children can practice their primary and secondary escape routes. As fires can happen at any time, plan a fire drill at night when the children are sleeping, but warn the children ahead of time so they do not panic.
8. **Demonstrate how to escape**. Show children how they would evacuate from a room filled with smoke by crawling along the floor to the nearest exit.
9. **Get out and stay out.** If there is a fire at home, get everybody out of the building, stay out, and call for help. Don't go back into the home to get belongings.
10. **Stop-drop-and roll if on fire.** Teach children to stop-drop-and roll if their clothes are on fire. Stop, drop to the ground and cover your face with your hands. Then roll over and over or back and forth until the fire is out.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to home fire. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready.

For adults:

- American Red Cross: Home Fire Safety. http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/home-fire
- Department of Homeland Security: Home Fires. http://www.ready.gov/home-fires
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA): Safety Information for Consumers. http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information/for-consumers

For children:

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Home Fires. http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/home-fires
- National Fire Protection Association: Sparky. http://www.sparky.org/

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN A HURRICANE

Hurricanes and tropical storms are strong wind storms (known as cyclones) that form over the ocean. Tropical storms have winds of 39 to 73 miles per hour and when these winds reach 74 miles per hour or more, the storm is called a hurricane. Each year, on average, 10 tropical storms (of which six become hurricanes) develop over the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, or Gulf of Mexico. While the effects of hurricanes, which may include heavy rains, large waves, hail and wind, can be devastating to neighborhoods and homes, there are simple steps families can take protect children during hurricanes.

PREPARE:

1. **Talk about hurricanes**. Spend time with your family discussing why hurricanes occur. Explain that a hurricane is a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
2. **Know your risk**. Find out if you live in a hurricane evacuation area. Assess your risks from a storm surge, flooding or wind damage that may accompany a hurricane.
3. **Practice evacuation drills**. Practice your family evacuation plan so that, during an emergency, you can evacuate quickly and safely.
4. **Learn your caregivers' disaster plans.** If your child's school or care provider is in an area at risk from hurricanes, find out how its emergency plans address hurricanes. Ask about evacuation plans and if you would be required to pick up your children from the site or from another location.
5. **Stay informed**. Use a NOAA Weather Radio or listen to a local station on a portable, battery-powered radio or television. Be ready to act if a Hurricane Warning is issued.

DURING A HURRICANE:

6. **Evacuate if instructed to do so.** Evacuate if told to do so by local authorities or if you feel unsafe. If advised to evacuate, avoid flooded roads and watch for washed-out bridges. Local officials may close certain roads, especially near the coast, when effects of the hurricane reach the coast.
7. **Stay indoors, if not evacuated.** If you are not advised to evacuate, or are unable to do so safely, stay indoors, away from windows, skylights and doors. Continue to monitor weather reports and do not go outside until the storm has passed.

AFTER A HURRICANE:

8. **Limit media exposure.** Protect children from seeing too many sights and images of the hurricane, including those on the internet, television or newspapers.
9. **Ensure utilities are available.** Before children are returned to areas impacted by a hurricane, make sure utilities, such as electricity and plumbing, are restored and living and learning spaces (e.g., homes, schools, parks facilities) are free from physical and environmental hazards.
10. **Involve children in recovery**. After a hurricane, let children help in clean-up and recovery efforts in age-appropriate ways as this participation may increase their sense of control over the situation.

Hurricane/Tropical Storm weather terms: Be familiar with the following definitions to help prepare your family for hurricanes.

- **Hurricane/Tropical Storm WATCH** means there is a threat of hurricane/tropical storm conditions within 48 hours.
- **Hurricane/Tropical Storm WARNING** means hurricane/tropical storm conditions are expected in 36 hours or less.
- **Hurricane/tropical storm local statement,** issued every two to three hours by local National Weather Service (NWS) offices, summarizes all of the watches and warnings, evacuation information, and most immediate threats to an area.

Watches and warnings for hurricanes and tropical storms are issued by the NWS and broadcast on NOAA Weather Radio and on local radio and television stations.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to hurricanes. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next hurricane.

For adults:

- American Red Cross: Hurricane Preparedness. http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/hurricane
- National Hurricane Center: Hurricane Preparedness—Be Ready http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare/ready.php
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Parent Guidelines for Helping Children after a Hurricane. http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/parents_guidelines_talk_children_hurricanes.pdf

For children:

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Hurricanes. http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/hurricanes

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE FROM TERRORISM

Terrorists often use violence and threats to create fear among the public. Their attacks can leave people with feelings of uncertainty about the future and further attacks. Fortunately there are some simple steps families can take to help protect their children.

1. **Talk about terrorism.** Spend time with your family and talk to your children about their fears of terrorists or terrorist incidents. Explain there are always good people who try to prevent terrorism and who help after an incident. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
2. **Plan different travel routes**. Develop alternative routes to and from school, work, child care and other places to which you routinely travel. Have all drivers in your household practice them.
3. **Stay informed**. Routinely listen to a local radio or television news station. Learn your community's public warning system such as sirens or telephone call-down systems. Become familiar with how warning signals sound and what you should do if they are used.
4. **Be aware of surroundings.** If you see something suspicious report it to law-enforcement or security personnel immediately. Move or evacuate if you feel uncomfortable or if something doesn't seem right. Encourage children to tell an adult if they see something unusual or suspicious.
5. **Learn where to shelter-in-place.** Choose a household room where the family could shelter-in-place for a short time. Gather and prepare the items needed to seal the room from gas or chemicals (i.e., include duct tape, plastic sheeting in your disaster supplies kit).
6. **Learn CPR and First Aid.** Being trained how to give basic medical treatment is one of the best ways to be prepared for a range of emergencies—not only terrorism. Knowing these skills could help save a child's life.
7. **Learn caregivers' disaster plans.** Find out how school and child care emergency plans address possible terrorist incidents. Ask about evacuation plans are and if you would be required to pick up your children from the site or from another location.
8. **Identify evacuation routes**. Learn where emergency exits are located in buildings you often go to, such as workplace, school, child care facility or community center. Plan how to get out in the event of an emergency.
9. **Plan ahead**. Be prepared to do without services you normally depend on—electricity, telephones, natural gas, gasoline pumps, cash registers, ATMs, and Internet transactions. Pack essential supplies in a family disaster supplies kit and store in an easily accessible location.
10. **Limit media exposure.** After a terrorist incident, protect children from seeing too many sights and images of the incident, including those on the Internet, television or newspapers.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to a terrorist incident. Use the following resources to help ensure your family can safely respond to terrorism.

- American Academy of Pediatrics: Terrorism and Agents. http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Children-and-Disasters/Pages/Terrorism-and-Agents.aspx
- American Red Cross: Terrorism Preparedness. http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/terrorism
- Department of Homeland Security: Terrorist Hazards. http://www.ready.gov/terrorist-hazards

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN A TORNADO

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from the base of a thunderstorm to the ground. Tornadoes usually develop in warm, moist air ahead of cold fronts and have been reported in every U.S. state. While they generally occur during spring and summer, they can happen in every season and at any time of the day or night. Although tornadoes can cause a lot of damage, injuries and even death, families can take tornado-specific precautions to help protect children in these situations.

PREPARE:

1. **Talk about tornadoes.** Spend time with your family discussing why tornadoes occur. Explain that a tornado is a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
2. **Know the signs of a tornado**. Tornadoes can form quickly, striking before an official warning is issued. So watch for tornado danger signs—dark, often greenish clouds, large hail, cloud of debris, funnel cloud, or a roaring noise. Teach these signs to your children, should they have to respond without you.
3. **Learn about caregivers' disaster plans.** If your children's school or care provider is in an area that could be hit by a tornado, find out how its emergency plan addresses tornadoes. Ask what its evacuation plans are and if you would be required to pick up your children from the site or from another location.
4. **Practice tornado drills**. Practice with your family what to do in a tornado. Have everyone go to your safe place. Practicing what to do helps reduce the time it takes to respond in a real emergency.

DURING A TORNADO:

5. **Seek shelter.** People in the path of a tornado should find a shelter or a tornado-safe room. The safest place in the home is the interior part of a basement. If possible, get under something sturdy such as a heavy table. If you do not have a basement or storm cellar, consider an interior bathroom, closet, or hallway on the lowest floor. Putting as many walls as you can between you and the outside will provide additional protection.
6. **If outside, seek cover.** If you are outside, in a vehicle or live in a mobile home and need to take shelter, choose a safe place in a designated shelter or nearby sturdy building. If there is no building nearby, lie flat in a low spot and use your arms and hands to protect your head and neck.
7. **Wear a helmet for extra protection**. Families should always go to a tornado shelter or safe room first. However, as head injuries are common from tornadoes, wearing a helmet may provide additional protection. The helmets should be easily accessible and are not an alternative to seeking appropriate shelter.

FOLLOWING A TORNADO:

8. **Stay informed**. After a tornado continue listening to a NOAA weather radio or radio or television station for updates and instructions. Help people who need assistance and beware of dangers such as downed power lines or damaged buildings.
9. **Involve children in recovery.** After a tornado, include your children in clean-up activities if it is safe to do so. It is comforting to children to watch the household begin to return to normal and to have a job to do.

10. **Listen to children.** Encourage your child to express feelings of fear, anger and worry. Listen carefully, show understanding, and offer reassurance. Tell your child that the situation is not permanent, and provide physical reassurance through time spent together and displays of affection. Contact local faith-based organizations, voluntary organizations, or professionals for counseling if extra help is needed.

Tornado Weather Terms: Be familiar with the following definitions to help prepare your family for tornadoes.

- **Tornado WATCH** means that tornadoes are possible in and near the watch area. People in a watch area should review their tornado plans (Family Disaster Plan, Disaster Supplies Kit, tornado safe room), and be ready to act if a warning is issued or they suspect a tornado is approaching.
- **Tornado WARNING** means that a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Tornado warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property. People in a warning area should go immediately to their safe room. If they are in a vehicle, they should get out of the vehicle and go to shelter in a nearby sturdy building or lie flat in a low spot away from the vehicle.

Watches and warnings for tornadoes are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) and broadcast on NOAA Weather Radio and on local radio and television stations.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to tornadoes. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next tornado.

For adults:

- American Red Cross: Tornado Safety: http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/tornado
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Tornadoes. http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/tornadoes/
- Department of Homeland Security: Tornadoes. http://www.ready.gov/tornadoes

For children:

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Tornado. http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/tornado

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN A TSUNAMI

Tsunamis are large ocean waves caused by major earthquakes beneath the ocean floor or major landslides into the ocean. In the U.S., tsunamis threaten the West Coast, Hawaii and Alaska as well as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. A tsunami can occur during any season of the year and at any time, day or night. Fortunately, there are simple steps families can take to help keep children safe from a tsunami.

PREPARE:

1. **Talk about tsunamis.** Spend time with your family discussing why tsunamis occur. Explain that a tsunami is a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
2. **Identify hazard areas**. Find out if your home, school, care provider, workplace, or other frequently visited locations are in tsunami hazard areas. Also, know the height of your street above sea level and the distance of your street from the coast or other high-risk waters. Evacuation orders may be based on these numbers.
3. **Learn about caregivers' disaster plans.** If your child's school or care provider is in a tsunami zone, find out how its emergency plan addresses tsunamis. Find out what its evacuation plans are and if you would be required to pick up your children from the site or from another location.
4. **Stay informed**: Regularly listen to a local news station on a NOAA Weather Radio, a portable, battery-powered radio or television. Listen for and respond to tsunami watches and warnings. Evacuate if told to do so or if you feel unsafe.
5. **Practice evacuation drills.** Practice family evacuation plans so that, in a tsunami situation, children can evacuate quickly and safely. Plan and practice two ways out of your neighborhood, as the one route may be blocked. If possible, pick evacuation areas 100 feet (30 meters) above sea level or go as far as two miles (three kilometers) inland, away from the coastline.

DURING A TSUNAMI:

6. **Know that earthquakes can cause tsunamis.** If you feel an earthquake that lasts 20 seconds or longer when you are in a coastal area, you should Drop, Cover, and Hold on. First protect yourself from the earthquake by dropping to the ground, taking cover under something sturdy like a table, and hold on to it. When the shaking stops, gather family members and move quickly to higher ground, away from the coast.
7. **DO NOT wait for an official warning to evacuate.** After a coastal area earthquake, a tsunami may be coming within minutes. When shaking stops, evacuate, even if an official order has not yet been given or an alert siren has not sounded.
8. **Expect aftershocks.** If the earthquake was large enough it may trigger more aftershocks that may create more tsunamis.

AFTER A TSUNAMI:

9. **Involve children in recovery**. After a tsunami, include your children in clean-up activities if it is safe to do so. It is comforting to children to watch the household begin to return to normal and to have a job to do.

10. **Listen to children.** Encourage children to express feelings of fear, anger and worry. Listen carefully, show understanding and offer reassurance. Tell children that the situation is not permanent, and provide physical reassurance through time spent together and displays of affection.

Tsunami Weather Terms: Be familiar with the following definitions to help prepare your family for tsunamis.

- **Tsunami WATCH** means a dangerous tsunami has not yet been verified but could exist and may be as little as an hour away. If a tsunami watch is issued, continue listening to your NOAA weather radio or television or radio reports for updates and guidance from local officials. Locate family members and consider evacuating early if you need extra time.

- **Tsunami WARNING** means a dangerous tsunami may have been generated and could be close to your area. The warning includes predicted tsunami arrival times at selected coastal communities. If a tsunami warning is issued, continue listening to your NOAA weather radio or television or radio reports and follow instructions of local authorities. If you are in a tsunami risk area, evacuate with your disaster supplies kit to higher ground immediately. Only return when you're told by local officials it is safe to do so.

The West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center and the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center issue watches and warnings to the media and to local, state, national, and international officials. NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts tsunami information directly to the public. Local officials are responsible for sharing information about tsunamis and executing evacuation plans in case of a tsunami warning.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to tsunamis. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next tsunami.

For adults:

- American Red Cross: Tsunami Preparedness. http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/tsunami
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Tsunamis http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/tsunamis/index.asp
- Department of Homeland Security: Tsunamis. http://www.ready.gov/tsunamis

For children:

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Tsunamis. http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/tsunamis

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN A WILDFIRE

A wildfire is an uncontrolled fire often occurring in open areas like forests, fields or parks. Wildfires often begin unnoticed, but they spread quickly igniting plants, trees and homes. More than four out of five wildfires are started by people, mostly through negligent behavior such as careless use of matches. While the sight and effects of a wildfire can be scary, there are steps families can take to protect their children.

PREPARE:

1. **Talk about wildfires.** Spend time with your family discussing why wildfires occur. Explain how to prevent them and what to do if one occurs. Explain that a wildfire can be a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
2. **Know your risk.** Learn about your area's risk of wildfires, particularly if you live near forests, in rural areas, or in a dry climate. Contact your local fire department, state forestry office, or other emergency response agencies for information on fire laws and wildfire risk.
3. **Learn caregivers' disaster plans**. If your child's school or care provider is in an area at risk from wildfires, find out what its plans are for in case of a wildfire. Ask about its evacuation plans are and if you would be required to pick up your children from the site or from another location.
4. **Practice evacuation drills.** Practice your family evacuation plan so that, if told to do so, you can evacuate quickly and safely. Plan and practice two ways out of your neighborhood as one route may be blocked.

DURING A WILDFIRE:

5. **Stay informed.** If a wildfire is approaching, listen regularly to local radio or television stations for updated emergency information. Follow the instructions of local officials as they will know safest evacuation route.
6. **Have supplies ready**. If you must evacuate, wear protective clothing such as sturdy shoes, cotton or wool long pants and long-sleeved shirts and gloves. Lock your home and take your disaster supplies kit with you.
7. **Avoid smoke and fumes**. Keep children, babies and infants away from areas where there is smoke or fumes, and stay indoors if possible. Smoke produced by the wildfire may cause breathing problems or contain poisonous toxins.

AFTER A WILDFIRE:

8. **Use caution when returning to a burned area**. Get fire officials permission before returning to a burned wildfire area. Look out for hazards such as fallen wires and ash pits and be alert as fire re-ignition may be possible.
9. **Clean up safely.** Follow public health guidance on safe cleanup of fire ash and safe use of masks. Keep children away from burned sites until cleanup is complete.
10. **Limit media exposure**. Protect children from seeing too many sights and images of the wildfire, including those on the internet, television or newspapers.

Additional Resources: The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to wildfires. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next wildfire.

For adults:

- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): Wildfires. http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Children-and-Disasters/Pages/Wildfires.aspx
- American Red Cross (ARC): Wildfire Preparedness. http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/wildfire
- Department of Homeland Security: Wildfires. http://www.ready.gov/wildfires

For children:

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Wildfires. http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/wildfires

HOW TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH DISASTERS

Many parents, teachers, grandparents and caregivers are concerned about how dramatic images of disasters can affect the emotional well-being of their children and are looking for advice. To help provide guidance, Save the Children has prepared the following 10 tips. They can be used by adults to support children through any disaster. These tips are based on Save the Children's years of national and international experience in supporting children in disasters.

10 Tips from Save the Children

Save the Children recommends parents, teachers, grandparents and caregivers:

1. Limit television time. While it can be important for adults to stay informed about the disaster, television images and reports may be confusing and frightening for children. Watching too many television reports of the disaster can overwhelm children and even adults. So, limit the number of television reports about the disaster you and your children watch.

2. Listen to your children carefully. Try to find out what your child knows and understands about the disaster before responding to their questions. Children can experience stress when they do not understand dangerous experiences. Find out what your child knows about the disaster. Then, talk to your child to help him or her understand the situation and ease their concerns.

3. Give children reassurance. Tell children that adults are doing everything they can to protect and help children who have been affected by the disaster.

Save the Children urges adults to seek out and follow the guidance of Emergency Management and Public Health Officials to help ensure the safety of their children.

Also, let them know that if an emergency happens, your main concern would be their safety. Make sure they know they are being protected.

4. Be alert for significant changes in behavior. Caregivers should be alert to any significant changes in children's sleeping patterns, eating habits, and concentration levels. Also watch for wide emotional swings or frequent physical complaints. If any of these actions do happen, they will likely lessen within a short time. If they continue, however, you should seek professional help and counseling for the child.

5. Understand children's unique needs. Not every child will experience a disaster in the same way. As children develop, their intellectual, physical and emotional abilities change. Younger children will depend largely on their parents to interpret events; older children and adolescents will get information from various sources, such as friends and the media. Remember that children of any age can be affected by a disaster. Provide them all with love, understanding and support.

6. Give your children extra time and attention. Children need close, personal attention to know they are safe. Talk, play and, most importantly, listen to them. Find time to engage in special activities with children of all ages.

7. Be a model for your children. Your children will learn how to deal with these events by seeing how you respond. The amount you tell children about how you're feeling should depend on the age and maturity of the child. You may be able to disclose more to older or more mature children but remember to do so calmly.

8. Watch your own behavior. Make a point of being sensitive to those impacted by the disaster. This is an opportunity to teach your children that we all need to help each other.

9.Help your children return to a normal routine. Children usually benefit from routine activities such as set eating times, bed time, and playing with others. Parents should make sure their children's school is also returning to normal patterns and not spending a lot of time discussing the disaster.

10. Encourage your children to do volunteer work. Helping others can give children a sense of control and security and promote helping behavior. During a disaster, children and adolescents can bring about positive change by supporting those in need.

Save the Children®

NOTES

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