

# Do I need to evacuate or stay put and shelter in place?

That is the question, and the answer depends on the type of disaster. Your local radio or TV stations can offer the answer you need.

Visit our [Emergency Shelter](#) page if you need to find a shelter near you.

## Evacuate

Evacuations are more common than you might think. Fires and floods are the most frequent causes. And almost every year people along coastlines evacuate before hurricanes. Only when there's a serious threat to public safety is a mandatory evacuation ordered.

If an official government source advises you to evacuate, do so immediately.

[Evacuating Yourself and Family](#) - Get guidelines on how to evacuate your family and pets when time really matters. Learn what you should do if you need to leave quickly, and what you can do if you have a little more time to plan. (Ready.gov)

[Family Plan - Make Preparations](#) - Are you prepared to evacuate? Learn what to grab and take with you if you need to leave fast, as well as how to prepare ahead if time permits. Get tips on how to protect your home and valuables, and what supplies and papers you need to take with you. (State of Louisiana)

[Preparing Your Evacuation Routes](#) - Watch a short video that offers useful tips on how to prepare for an evacuation. You can use these in any community. Tips include things like be familiar with where you are, know the signs and what they mean, and know where you're going. (State of Washington)

## Stay Put and Shelter in Place

In some events, evacuating your home, work, or school can put you at greater risk than staying put. In these situations, you should shelter in place. The following resources can help you learn to do it safely.

[Learn How to Shelter in Place](#) - Learn steps on how to take shelter no matter where you are. There are steps included for home, school, work, and even a vehicle. For home, you can learn things like how to seal a room. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

[Fact Sheet on Shelter in Place](#) (PDF, 88 KB) - Learn what shelter-in-place means and why it may be necessary. You can also get tips on how to shelter in place at home, work, school, or in your vehicle. (American Red Cross)

[Safe Generator Use](#) - Learn things you need to know about how to use a generator safely. Get tips on how to buy a generator, how to use it at home, and why you should never use it indoors. (American Red Cross)

[Electrical Safety Precautions During Disasters](#) - Get a brochure you can print about electrical safety during and after storms and other disasters. There are sections for flooded areas, wet electrical equipment, portable generators, and downed power lines. (USA.gov)

## Gathering Up Loved Ones

Your family may not all be in one place when a disaster hits. It's important to plan ahead.

How will you get to a safe place? How you will contact each other? How you will get back together? What will you do in different situations?

The resources below can help you plan before a disaster, so you can find everyone you care about after, including your pets.

## Finding Lost Family and Friends

[Make a Plan](#) - Does everyone in your family know what to do, where to go, and who to contact in an emergency? Make a family communication plan so everyone can be prepared. (Ready.gov)

[Safe and Well](#) - After a disaster, you can let your family and friends know that you're safe. You can register yourself as "safe and well" or search to find loved ones. (American Red Cross)

[National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System \(NEFRLS\)](#) - NEFRLS helps reunite families separated by a disaster. You can register so people can find you. Those who want to find you can register to get your status. The system is only activated after disasters with mass evacuations. (FEMA)

[Contact Loved Ones](#) - Use this free emergency voicemail service to help you get in touch with family and friends. You can create a message for those you can't reach. People who can't reach you can leave a message for you. (Project Genesis)

[Next Of Kin Registry \(NOKR\)](#) - This is a free emergency contact system to help if you or a loved one is missing, injured, or has died. You can register at any time. Only emergency agencies registered with NOKR can view your information, but they can use it to contact your family when you can't. (NOKR)

## Finding and Caring for Pets

[Pet and Animal Emergency Planning](#) - Use these guidelines to help you make a plan for your pet during a disaster. You may not be able to take them to a public shelter with you, so you need to plan ahead for their care. You can also learn what to do for large animals. (Ready.gov)

[Helping Pets](#) - Disasters are traumatic for pets, too. Their behavior may change. They may get confused or even lost. Get advice about how to care for your pet or locate a missing pet after a disaster. (FEMA)

[Missing Pet Network](#) - Get [advice on looking for lost pets](#). And you can even find advice specific to cats. You can report lost or found animals, and search the listings by state. (Missing Pet Network)

## Emergency Food and Water

Access to safe food and water after a disaster is a must. The resources below can help you learn safe handling practices and how to get assistance. And much of the information is also available in PDF form. (See websites for details.)

If you need to find an emergency facility near you, be sure to tune in to your local radio or TV stations. They may be able to provide location or contact information.

[Food Assistance for Disaster Relief](#) - Learn how the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) coordinates with state, local, and voluntary organizations to:

- Provide food for shelters and other mass feeding sites.
- Distribute food packages directly to households in need in limited situations.
- Issue Disaster Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) benefits. (USDA)

[Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(D-SNAP\)](#) (PDF, 143 KB) - Get a fact sheet to learn about D-SNAP. The program offers short-term food assistance to families affected by a disaster. Contact your local [SNAP state information hotline number](#) for details. (USDA)

[Emergency Disinfection of Drinking Water](#) - Learn the steps to properly disinfect drinking water in an emergency. There are different ways you can do it depending on your situation. (Environmental Protection Agency)

[What Consumers Need to Know About Food and Water Safety](#) - Get food and water safety facts you can use in an emergency. Learn what to do during and after a power outage or flood. You can even watch a short video on food safety during power outages. (Food and Drug Administration)

[A Consumer's Guide to Food Safety](#) - This guide is full of tips on how to keep food safe, reduce the potential for food loss, and reduce the risk of foodborne illness. The guide offers information on:

- Power Outages
- Safety of Food in Containers Exposed to Flood Waters
- Removing Odors from Refrigerators and Freezers
- Refrigerator and Freezer Foods (with charts)
- Food Safety Contacts for Areas Affected by Severe Storms and Hurricanes (USDA)

[Tips for Handling Food Following a Disaster](#) - This portal can guide you to useful information you can use to be prepared in an emergency. Find links for food safety, water safety, hurricanes and floods, and fire. (USDA)

## Emergency Shelter

Finding shelter is critical in times of disaster. Shelter outside of the hazard area could include staying with family or friends, seeking a hotel room, or staying in a mass shelter. The following resources can help you find emergency shelter.

### Find a Safe Place to Go

Visit a [Disaster Recovery Center](#) (DRC) to talk with someone in person for guidance or information. To find a center near you, use the [DRC Locator](#) or text **DRC** and your **zip code** to **4FEMA (43362)**. Example: *DRC 01234*. (Standard text message rates apply.)

Search for open shelters near you by texting **SHELTER** and your **zip code** to **4FEMA (43362)**. Example: *Shelter 01234*. (Standard text message rates apply.)

[Find Open Shelters](#) - Locate the nearest shelter or find your [local Red Cross](#). (American Red Cross)

[Housing and Homeless Services](#) - Enter your zip code to find your nearest Salvation Army. (The Salvation Army)

[FEMA Housing Portal](#) - Locate rental properties identified by federal agencies if you need a place to live after a disaster. (FEMA)

[FEMA Evacuee Hotel List](#) - Find a hotel participating in the Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) Program. (Corporate Lodging Consultants)

## Emergency Medical

Medical crews may not be able to reach you quickly after a disaster. The following resources can help you care for injuries until medical help arrives.

[Health Topics](#) - Search medical references for over 950 health issues. You can read about symptoms, causes, treatments, and prevention. (U.S. National Library of Medicine)

[Adult First Aid, CPR, AED Ready Reference](#) (PDF, 660 KB) - Get a detailed guide on how to give adult first aid. Learn about CPR, choking, burns, head or neck injuries, stroke, and more. (American Red Cross)

[Pediatric First Aid, CPR, AED Ready Reference](#) (PDF, 756 KB) - Get a detailed guide on how to give child or infant first aid. You can learn about: How to check an injured or ill child, CPR, choking, using an AED, how to control bleeding, burns, poisoning, and seizures. (American Red Cross)

[Emergency Wound Care After a Natural Disaster](#) - Learn how you can care for minor wounds after a disaster. You can also learn about what wounds should get medical treatment as soon as possible, as well as things that can cause infection. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

[Traumatic Brain Injury](#) - Learn the causes and types of traumatic brain injury (TBI). You can get information by topic; learn how to prevent TBI as well as the signs and symptoms, and find data and statistics. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

[Chemical Agents: Facts About Personal Cleaning and Disposal of Contaminated Clothing](#) - Learn the reasons for decontamination and how to know if you need it. You can also find out what to do if you are exposed. To learn more, there's a link to help you find contact information for your local and state health departments. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

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