

How to Prepare for Emergencies with Young Children or Pets

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Emergencies—whether they’re severe storms, power outages, or evacuations—can happen anytime. But if you have young children or pets, preparing for those situations takes on a whole new level of urgency. These family members rely on you for everything, especially when things feel chaotic.

Here’s how to get ready *before* disaster strikes so you can keep everyone in your household safe, calm, and cared for.

The Unique Challenges of Emergencies

Young Children

Kids may not understand what’s happening, and fear or confusion can make emergencies harder for them. They also require specialized supplies like diapers, formula, and comfort items.

Pets

Pets face limitations during emergencies, such as restricted shelter access and increased anxiety. They need food, medicine, and comfort—just like people.

Preparing for Emergencies with Children

Build a Child-Specific Emergency Kit

- **Infants & Toddlers:** Diapers, wipes, rash cream, formula, baby food, bottles, pacifiers, favorite blanket/stuffed animal
- **Older Kids:** Snacks, water, extra clothes, books, toys, coloring items

Make a Family Emergency Plan

- Use child-friendly language to explain emergency procedures
- Assign responsibilities (e.g., one adult for the kids, one for logistics)
- Practice evacuation as a game to reduce fear

Keep Medical Needs in Mind

Include child-safe medications (e.g., liquid acetaminophen)

- Pack prescriptions, vaccination records, and allergy items (like EpiPens)

Comfort is Key

- Explain the situation calmly
- Keep familiar items close for a sense of security

Preparing for Emergencies with Pets

Create a Pet Emergency Kit

- Food & water bowls
- Leash, collar, and harness

- Medications and vet records
- Waste bags/litter box
- A photo of your pet in case they get lost
- Toys or blankets to reduce stress

Pet Identification

- Microchip your pet and keep ID tags updated

Evacuation Planning

- Know which shelters, hotels, or boarding options accept pets
- Keep a crate or carrier ready to go

Shelter-in-Place Prep

- Stock 2 weeks' worth of food, water, and meds
- Designate a safe, pet-friendly area in your home

Preparedness for the Whole Family

Pack Dual-Purpose Supplies

Items like flashlights, baby wipes, and blankets benefit everyone.

Assign Family Roles

Designate who's responsible for children and pets during an emergency.

Stay Informed

Sign up for emergency alerts and know evacuation routes and pet-friendly shelters in your area.

What to Do During an Emergency

- **Stay calm** — your reaction sets the tone
- **Evacuate quickly and safely** with your kits
- **Reassure children** with calm voices and routines
- **Keep pets nearby** to prevent them from running or hiding
- **Monitor health and stress:**
 - Kids: crying, clinginess, withdrawal
 - Pets: hiding, excessive panting, unusual aggression

Final Thoughts: Preparation Makes a Difference

Emergencies are unpredictable, but with the right plan in place, you can reduce chaos and protect those who count on you most.

Start today:

- ➡ Make your emergency plan
- 📦 Build your kits
- 🔔 Talk it through with your family

Your children and pets are depending on you—let's make sure you're ready.