

Emergency Preparedness



Keeping the Lights On

When the power goes out, in many parts of the country, the generators come on.

As easy as these machines can make life while the electricity grid is down, they can also pose a serious threat.

From 2011-2021, at least 770 people died in the U.S. from carbon monoxide while using portable generators. Here's how to keep your family from becoming a statistic.

CARBON MONOXIDE

Diesel and gas generators kick out more than just amps to power your home. They also produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide that can threaten your family. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that can kill before you're even aware it's there.

Generators should always be placed outside and at least 20 feet away from windows, doors and attached garages. That lessens the opportunity for carbon monoxide to build up in your home. You should also have plenty of carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home. Check them regularly and as part of your emergency preparations. If one of the alarms goes off, move outside to fresh air right away.

Remember, even if you open



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doors, windows and use fans, that will not prevent carbon monoxide build-up if you use a generator indoors. You can't smell the dangerous gas and won't know if it's building up to dangerous levels. If you're using a generator and start to feel sick, dizzy or weak, go outside away from the generator right away.

PLAYING WITH ELECTRICITY

Always follow the manufac-

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turer's directions carefully when using a generator. Keep your generator outdoors, but also dry and protected from rain and flooding. Don't touch

the generator with wet hands.

Use heavy-duty extension cords if you have to use extension cords, and make sure they are rated at least as much as the sum of the connected appliance load. The safest way to use the generator is to connect the appliances directly to the generator if you can. Make sure all the cords you're using are free from cuts or tears and that the cords are properly grounded. Consider staggering operating times for your

appliances to prevent overloading the generator.

FUEL SAFETY

Before refueling your generator, turn it off and let it cool completely to keep fuel from spilling on hot engine parts. Always store your fuel in an approved safety can, outdoors and in a protected area. Fuel shouldn't be stored near a fuel-burning appliance such as a natural gas water heater.

Earthquake Safety

Many people think that earthquakes are a Pacific coast problem, but the reality is that earthquakes can occur all over the United States, including in the entire Mississippi River valley.

In fact, in 2014, Oklahoma was home to the most earthquakes in the conterminous U.S.

PREPARING FOR AN EARTHQUAKE

The best way to stay safe during an earthquake, according to Ready.gov, is to drop, cover and hold on. Drop to your hands and knees. This position keeps you from being knocked down and reduces your chances if being hit by falling or flying objects. Next, cover your head and neck with one arm and hand. If you can, crawl under a sturdy table or desk, or next to an interior wall. Stay down on your knees, bending at the waist to protect your organs. You should practice this drill regularly.

As with all emergencies, your family should have an emergency communications plan with an out-of-state contact. Practice enacting this as well, and make sure you update it regularly. You should



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also have a supply kit with food and water for everyone, including pets, for several days. Keeping your family prepared lessens the burden on emergency responders.

In your home, secure heavy items such as bookcases, refrigerators, water heaters, televisions and other objects on the walls. Heavy, breakable objects should go on low shelves. Clear a path for at

least two safe exits to each room. Remember, this can include a window in an emergency situation.

Lastly, talk to your insurance provider and make sure you are adequately prepared in your property insurance policies.

WHEN AN EARTHQUAKE HAPPENS

It's time to drop, cover and

hold on. If you're in a car, pull over, stop and set your parking brake. If you're in bed, turn face down and cover your head and neck with a pillow. If you're caught outside, stay there and get away from buildings. If you're inside, don't run outside until the shaking stops.

After the earthquake stops, you should still expect aftershocks and be ready to drop,

cover and hold on again. If you're in a damaged building, go outside as soon as it's safe and move away from the building. If you're trapped, send a text, then bank on a pipe or wall. Use a whistle if you have one instead of shouting. If you're in a tsunami-prone area, get to higher ground as soon as you can and avoid contact with floodwaters.

Talking To Kids

Disasters of all kinds can happen anywhere and at any time. It's important to talk to your children about emergencies before one strikes. Here are some tips for kids of all ages when dealing with disaster.

KIDS

Ready.gov features games and cartoons to help kids learn about disaster preparation in an age-appropriate way. They can learn how to build their own emergency kit and how to stay safe with Pedro the Penguin. Parents can also download a variety of resources in English, Spanish, Korean and Chinese.

TEENS

Older children can help teach younger siblings and kids how to prepare for disasters and even take a leadership role in their community and school. FEMA's Youth Preparedness Council was created in 2012 to bring together youth leaders interested in supporting disaster preparedness and making a difference in their communities. It provides teens with an opportunity to present their perspectives and feedback to FEMA staff. Youth Preparedness Council members represent all 10 FEMA regions.



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Students in eighth through eleventh grades can apply to the Youth Preparedness Council can apply starting in January. The application includes a parental or guardian consent, a complete application form, letters of recommendation, lists of extracurricular activities and any other materials that can showcase your teen's capabilities.

EDUCATORS AND OTHERS

People who regularly work with children understand how important they are in all situations, even scary ones like

Try to answer their questions as honestly as you can and encourage them to identify the good things that are happening in addition to the bad ones.

emergencies. Their needs should be considered, even though it may be difficult with family homes and jobs in jeopardy. By talking to kids

and involving them in your family's emergency planning, you're empowering them to take part in the process, which can make it less scary when something does happen.

HELPING KIDS COPE

It's also important to consider children after disaster happens. Expect some kids to regress in their behavior or become extra clingy. This part of them wanting to feel safe in the wake of trauma, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says, is normal. Children may also complain of physical ailments and

may withdraw from activities and things they once enjoyed.

Give kids a chance to talk about what they've seen and felt. Don't be afraid to admit if you can't answer all of their questions and keep providing chances for them to talk and voice their feelings. Keep an eye on what your children are exposed to. Consider keeping television and other news coverage to a minimum when they're around. Try to answer their questions as honestly as you can and encourage them to identify the good things that are happening in addition to the bad ones.

Staying Safe When the Heat Is On

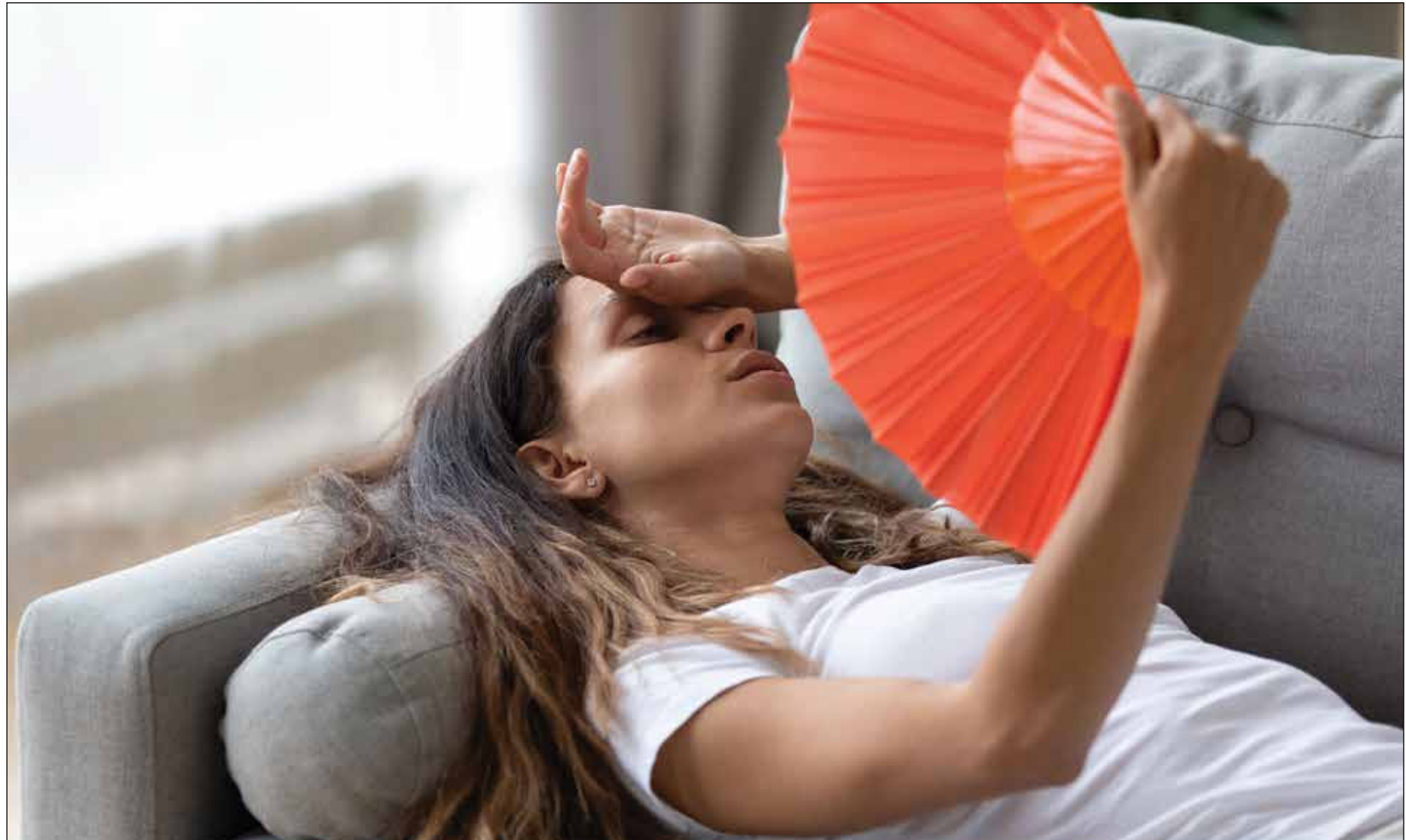
More than 600 people in the U.S. are killed by extreme heat every year, and a warming climate means more chances for heat-related deaths in the future.

Extreme heat, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says, occurs when summertime temperatures are much more hot or humid than average. Because some areas are hotter than others, what may be extreme heat in North Dakota may not be considered extreme in the desert southwest. It all depends on the average for that climate.

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

Heat exhaustion or heat stroke happen when the body is not able to properly cool itself. While the body normally cools itself off by sweating, during extreme heat events, this may not be adequate to cool yourself down. Your temperature will rise faster than your body can cool itself off, eventually causing damage to your brain and other organs.

Factors that might increase your risk of developing a heat-related illness include high humidity, obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, poor circulation, sunburn, alcohol or drug use, and mental illness. However, even young, healthy people can be



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affected if it gets hot enough.

SYMPTOMS AND WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

Some symptoms of heat-related illnesses include:

A heat rash, or a cluster of small blisters, usually in the neck, chest, groin or in the elbow creases. Treat it by staying in a cool, dry place and using a topical treatment such as baby powder to soothe the rash.

Sunburn is a painful skin condition that can include blisters on the surface of the

skin. You should stay out of the sun until the burn heals. Put cool cloths on the sunburn to soothe it, along with moisturizing lotion. Try not to break the blisters as it heals.

Heat cramps happen when you sweat a lot during exercise. It is characterized by muscle pains or spasms. Treat it by stopping your activity and moving to a cool place. Drink water or a sports drink and wait for cramps to go away before you do any more physical activity. Get medical help if your cramps last more than an hour, if you're on a low-sodium diet or if you

have heart problems.

If you're sweating heavily and have cold, pale skin, you may have heat exhaustion. Other symptoms include a fast, weak pulse; nausea or vomiting; muscle cramps; tiredness or weakness; dizziness; headache and fainting. Move to a cooler place immediately and loosen your clothes. Put cool, wet cloths on your body or take a cool bath and sip – don't gulp – water. Seek medical attention if you start throwing up, your symptoms get worse or if your symptoms last longer than an hour.

Heat stroke is the most severe heat-related illness. If you suspect that you or someone near you has heat stroke, call 911 right away. It's a medical emergency. Heat stroke is characterized by a high body temperature of more than 103 degrees; hot, red, dry or damp skin; fast, strong pulse; headache, dizziness and nausea; confusion and passing out. While you're waiting on medical help, move the person to a cooler place and try to lower their temperature with cool cloths or a cool bath. Do not give the person anything to drink.

Getting Word of An Emergency

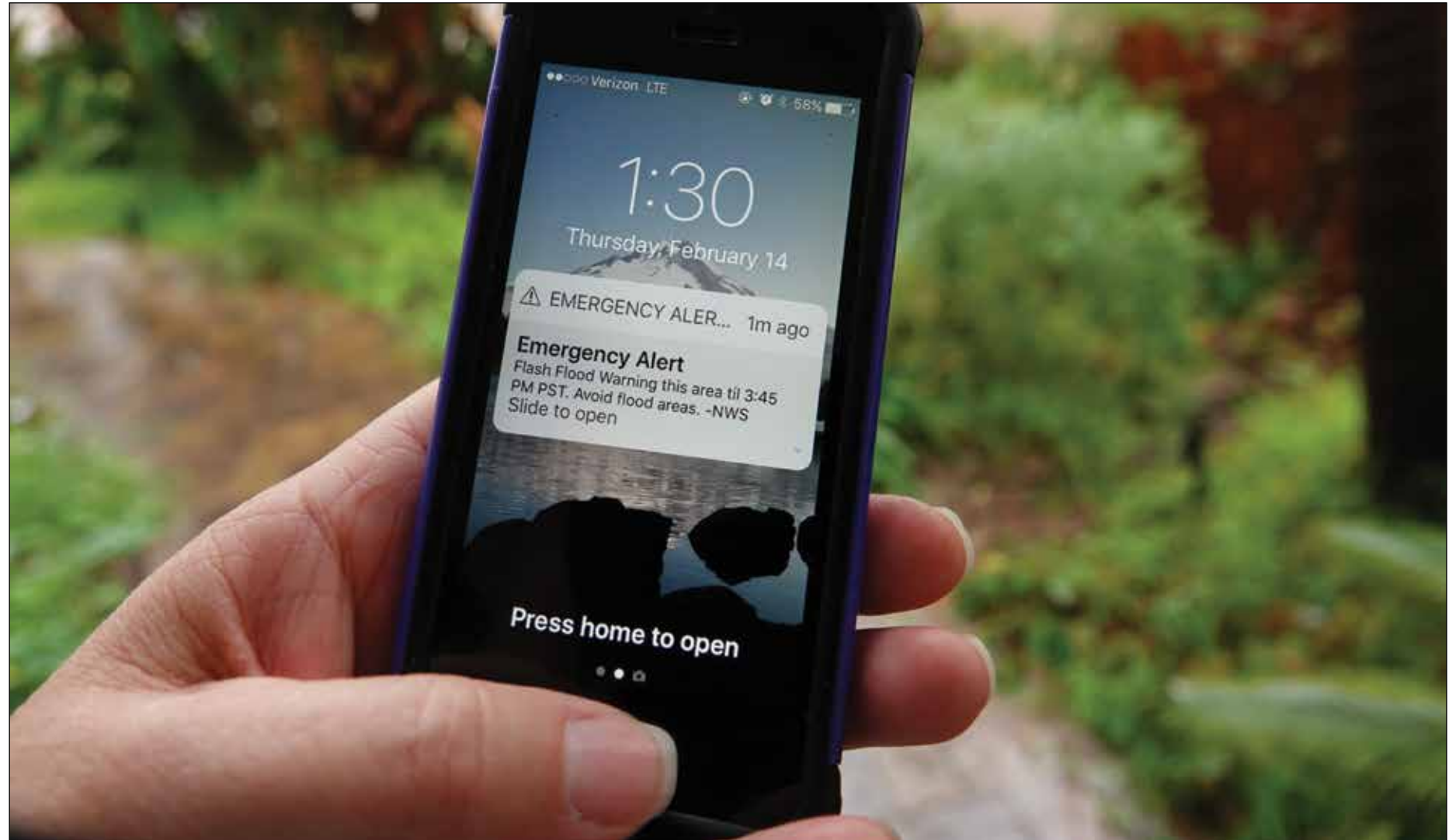
We've all been somewhere and heard the shrieking of a phone alert, the buzz of a radio or television warning, or watched a scroll move across the bottom of a screen. But where do these alerts come from and how to they get out? Here's what you need to know.

WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS

Those screaming mobile phones are from the wireless emergency alert service, which broadcasts emergency messages from federal, state, local, tribal and territorial authorities to a targeted area. These messages may be sent by public safety officials, such as your city's police department, the National Weather Service, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the president of the United States. You are not charged for WEAs and there is no need to subscribe. It's an automatic service through your wireless provider.

EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM

The EAS is a national public warning system that allows the president to address the nation



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within 10 minutes during a national emergency. For state and local emergencies, public safety officials may also use the system to deliver important information such as weather warnings, imminent threats, AMBER alerts and other incident information. These alerts are sent through broadcasters, satellite digital audio services, direct broadcast providers, cable television systems and wireless cable systems.

NOAA WEATHER RADIO

NOAA's Weather Radio All Hazards network is a nationwide network of radio stations

that broadcast continuous weather information from the nearest National Weather Service office based on your physical location. It broadcasts information such as forecasts, but also official warnings, watches and other hazard information 24 hours per day, seven days a week. It can also issue alerts during non-weather emergencies such as public safety threats.

You can purchase NOAA weather radios to go in your emergency kit. Some radios even have a setting that allows it to automatically come on if an alert is issued for your area.

ALERTING PEOPLE THAT DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH, WITH DISABILITIES AND WITH OTHER NEEDS

The federal government mandates that all Americans can be warned in an emergency, including those with disabilities and those that don't understand English. The Common Alerting Protocol, or CAP, sends multimedia attachments and links in alert messages, allowing industry partners to develop content that can be used by people with special needs.

The system also supports multiple languages, but it's up

to individual stations to determine which languages are played for alerts in their area. WEAs can support both English and Spanish, depending on the phone type and settings on that phone. FEMA continues to work with partners to support or provide direct alerting capabilities to people with Braille readers, that need sign language interpretation or that may need remote video interpreting. If you have friends or family members with special needs and you receive an emergency alert, make it part of your plan to call and check on them.

Safety Skills

You know to have a family escape plan, a communication plan and a supply kit ready. There are also some other handy skills to know in the event of an emergency, Ready.gov says. Get better prepared with these skillsets.

Learning First Aid and CPR
Taking a first aid and CPR class can be as easy as signing up through your local American Red Cross chapter. Services include CPR and AED courses, basic life support, caregiving, water safety and more. American Red Cross classes satisfy OSHA, workplace and other regulatory requirements, including some continuing education credits.



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LEARN TO USE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER

You should have at least one up-to-date fire extinguisher in your house. Everyone should know where it's kept and how to use it. The U.S. Fire Administration says to only use that extinguisher if you've been trained in its proper use and maintenance. Your local fire department can provide more information.

You should also practice good fire safety at all times, including not using a stove,

range or oven to heat your home. Keep combustible and flammable liquids away from heat sources. Never leave cooking food unattended and turn off the stove if you leave the kitchen even for a short amount of time. Keep combustible objects at least three feet from portable heaters and make sure your heaters have a thermostat control that will switch it off automatically if the heater falls over. Teach children that fire is not a toy and keep matches and lighters

out of reach. Never leave children unattended near stoves or burning candles, even for a short amount of time.

LEARN HOW TO SHUT OFF UTILITIES

Natural gas leaks and explosions can cause fires in the wake of natural disasters such as earthquakes, tornadoes and hurricanes. There are different shut-off procedures for different meters. Call your gas company to learn how to shut off gas service to your home

in case of an emergency. Make sure everyone in your family knows how to properly shut off your gas meter.

Get out immediately if you hear a blowing or hissing noise and smell gas. If you turn off the gas for any reason, only a qualified professional should turn it back on. Do not attempt to turn the gas on yourself.

The main water valve to your home can also be shut off and everyone should know where it is and how to turn it

off. Once you find the main valve, tag it for easy identification and make sure you can turn it off completely. It may be rusted open or may not close all the way. In those cases, replace it. Keep the water shut off until authorities say it's safe to drink again.

Electrical sparks can ignite natural gas and other combustibles. You can turn off your electricity at the circuit box. Always shut off the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit.

How To Shelter In Place

Shelter is a basic human right, even during an emergency. When you're asked by public safety officials to take shelter, it may mean in your home, it may be in an emergency shelter nearby or it may mean staying exactly where you are at that particular moment.

STAYING AT HOME

When you're asked to stay at home, as in height of the COVID-19 pandemic in some areas, you should remain indoors as much as possible and only leave when necessary. You can still use outdoor spaces such as patios and yards if public officials deem it safe. You can also participate in outdoor activities such as walking, jogging and other exercise if public officials say it's safe and you practice social distancing. Some essential services may also be OK, such as grocery shopping, getting gas and going to the pharmacy.

SHELTERING IN PLACE

Sheltering in place means you should stay right where you are and not go outside, whether you're at home, at work, at the gym or at an



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appointment. Use common sense and determine if there's immediate danger. If you see debris or if local authorities say the air may be contaminated, stay indoors. Remember that local authorities may not be immediately able to tell you what is going on and what to do. Pay attention to local media outlets for news and instructions.

If you're asked to seal the

room, you're trying to keep contaminated air outside. Bring your family and pets inside a sturdy building. Lock the doors, close the windows and close air vents and fire-place dampers. Turn off fans, air conditioners and forced air heating. Go to an interior room with as few windows as possible. Seal windows, doors and air vents with plastic sheeting and duct tape. Cut

the sheeting several inches wider than the openings and label each sheet for use again. Duct tape the corners first and then tape down all the edges.

MASS CARE SHELTERS

These large shelters provide services to disaster survivors. They often provide water, food, medicine and basic sanitary facilities, but it's not guaranteed that these shelters will

have the things you like or need. You should plan to take your own emergency kit with you. Bring cleaning items such as soap, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes. Be aware that many public shelters do not accept pets. Make a plan for your pets before you leave; many states now consider it a crime to leave your pets behind in an emergency.