

INDUSTRY LEADERS

By James Bifulco, Total Safety Consulting

Understanding what to do during an emergency can reduce fear, anxiety and losses

Joseph Allbaugh, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has said, "We know that disaster preparedness works. We take action now that will protect our families, reduce the impact an emergency has on our lives, and deal with it as if an incident occurs." Being prepared and understanding what to do during an emergency can reduce anxiety and losses that accompany disasters.



One of the most important steps you can take in preparation for emergencies is to de-

velop a household emergency preparedness and disaster

plan. The first step in developing the plan is to identify which types of disasters could apply to your community. In NYC we are not likely to be subject to tornadoes, however, we are certainly exposed to hurricanes, hazardous materials being stored or transported in our area and there is certainly a threat of deliberate acts of terrorism. Local emergency management offices or the local American Red Cross chapter can identify potential disasters and provide information on how to respond. Other considerations could include:

- You should know what

your employer, and if you have children in schools, what school official's emergency response plan entails.

- You should discuss with your household potential emergency situations and how to respond to each. Talk about what to do in an evacuation, plan how you would stay in contact if you were separated, identify meeting places near your home and one from your neighborhood.

- Select a friend or relative outside the area to relay information about your well being and location.

- Always identify two escape routes from your home or business.

- Post emergency numbers and teach children how to summon help.

- Know how to shut off gas, electric and other utilities at main switches.

- Receive training in first aid and CPR.

- Give consideration to neighbors who may need special assistance, such as the elderly.

- Make arrangements for pets. Pets are not allowed in public shelters.

- A disaster supply kit with essential supplies, such as water, first aid supplies and a flashlight, should be kept and ready to go in case you have to leave your home because of disaster. All household members should know where the kit is stored. You should have a disaster supply kit at work in case you have to evacuate. A car kit of emergency supplies should be kept in your car at all times and should include emergency flares and jumper cables.

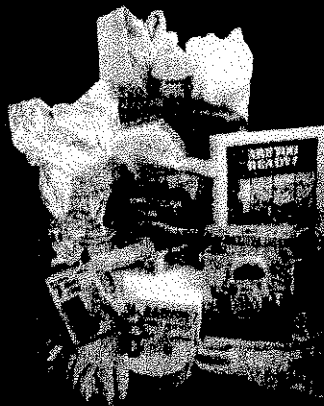
I do not believe that we should dwell on the thought of disasters, however, they are a realistic part of our life and deserve consideration. My experiences have taught me that any plan is better than no plan, and that a well thought out plan can accomplish something as simple as peace of mind and as important as making the difference between life and death.

Much of the information provided in this article has been extracted from the FEMA Publication "ARE YOU READY? A Guide to Citizen Preparedness". I strongly recommend this publication to everyone. It includes specific information on various types of emergencies and has an in depth discussion on disaster supplies kits and what should be included. A free copy of the publication can be downloaded from the FEMA website at www.fema.gov/library.

James Bifulco is managing safety and loss control consultant for Total Safety Consulting (TSC) in New York, N.Y.

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Of course, the staff of SSU hope that you never find it necessary to use any of the supplies provided in these kits. However, being prepared and understanding what to do in an emergency will reduce fear, anxiety, and hopefully prevent losses that can accompany disaster.

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