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The Neighborhood Files

Are You Prepared?

September is National Preparedness Month, and here's what you need to know to be prepared for
an emergency in Chevy Chase.

By **Laura L Thornton** | **Email the author** | September 8, 2011

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September is **National Preparedness Month**, and with **hurricanes**, **floods**, **snow storms** and even an **earthquake** in recent Chevy Chase history, it's a good idea to re-tool emergency kits—or to make one up from scratch.

Potential incidents that could cause emergencies in Chevy Chase include extremely hot or cold temperatures, thunderstorms, hurricanes, flooding, fires, utility outages and earthquakes, says Todd Jasper, associate director in the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division of **Man-Machine Systems Assessment (MSA), Inc.**, a government services consultant.

Also, traffic accidents, medical emergencies, pandemic or epidemic illnesses (such as H1N1) and radiation incidents could affect Chevy Chase, adds Jasper, who helps federal, state and local governmental departments and agencies prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

(While Washington, DC, residents must consider emergencies caused by civil disturbances or protests, Chevy Chase is not generally impacted by such events, Jasper adds.)

"All individuals should dedicate some time and resources to preparing for a disaster or disruption," Jasper says.

The website **www.ready.gov** is a good source of information on how to get prepared for an emergency.

To be prepared, Jasper recommends that Chevy Chase residents (and people who work in Chevy Chase) do the following:

- Sign up for **Montgomery County Alerts**.
- Have an emergency kit at home, in the car and in the office with supplies for at least 72 hours. The kits should include:
  - Flashlights or chemical glow sticks. (Jasper recommends against using candles, as they can pose a fire risk.) "LED flashlights are very bright and last the longest on a single battery. Make sure to include a couple of extra batteries in a plastic bag," Jasper says.
  - A battery-powered radio. Low-cost, **hand-crank radios** with American Red Cross branding are helpful. A weather radio with Specific Alert Message Encoding is also useful, Jasper says, because it can be set to turn on if there is a weather alert for your area, and it will audibly broadcast the alert. Some models designed for the hearing impaired will include visual warnings as well, Jasper adds.
  - At least three days' worth of non-perishable food and sealed water. Jasper cautions not to store water in old milk cartons, as bacteria could lurk in the corners of even the best-cleaned cartons. Be sure to have a can opener ready if canned goods are included in the kit.
  - Extra medication for at least 72 hours. (Many pharmacies and insurance plans allow individuals to receive a slightly larger supply of medicine if it's used for emergency kits, Jasper says.) Also, extra eye glasses are good to have in emergency kits, especially if you normally wear contact lenses.
  - Blankets—the cheapest and most efficient are usually the Mylar foil blankets.
  - A first-aid kit (which can be as cheap as $10).
  - Cash (in case ATMs are not working and credit cards are not being accepted).
  - Extra eye glasses (if applicable)
  - Comfortable walking shoes (in case pedestrian evacuation is required).
  - Pet food and medications for the four-legged members of the family.

Jasper advises senior citizens to create a support network including caregivers, family members, neighbors and (if applicable) the landlord.

In times of emergency, caregivers may not be able to reach senior citizens, so a network of people on whom to call can come in handy. In Chevy Chase, the group **Chevy Chase At Home** provides a network with younger residents assisting older neighbors.

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