

# PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

## West Windsor Health Department

serving the communities of West Windsor ■ Robbinsville ■ Hightstown

### EMERGENCY STORM PREPAREDNESS

Although we cannot prevent storm related emergencies, there are many things we can do to be better prepared as individuals, families and communities. This newsletter provides guidelines to help you and your family prepare for storm related emergency situations.

#### THUNDERSTORMS ■ LIGHTNING ■ HAIL

When you notice darkening clouds in the sky accompanied with sudden wind shifts, a thunderstorm may be approaching. If the National Weather Service and local authorities have issued a watch or warning, heed their instructions on what to do and whether you need to take cover.

- A **severe thunderstorm WATCH** means conditions are right for dangerous weather. A “watch” means be ready for what the weather could do so you can act quickly.
- A **severe thunderstorm WARNING** is issued when a severe thunderstorm has been observed by spotters or indicated on radar. A warning means a severe thunderstorm is already occurring, and is a danger to life and property in the storm’s path.

#### OUTDOOR STORM SAFETY

When thunderstorms are likely, postpone outdoor activities and avoid going outdoors if possible. If you are caught outdoors in a thunderstorm, follow these tips to stay safe until the storm passes:

- If you are in an open area, find a low area such as a ditch or ravine. Be alert for flash floods.
- If you are in a forested area, find shelter in a low area, such as under a thick growth of small trees.
- If you are in a car, keep the windows closed.



- If you are on open water, get to land immediately and seek shelter.
- If you are outdoors and feel your hair stand on end (an indication that lightning is about to strike), do not lie flat on the ground as your fully extended body provides a larger surface to conduct electricity. Instead, squat low to the ground and place your hands over your ears and your head between your knees to be the smallest target possible and minimize contact with the ground.
- Stay away from anything made of metal - bicycles, golf clubs or carts, motorcycles, tractors and farm equipment.
- Stay away from natural lightning rods, such as a tall tree in an open field, and avoid hilltops, the beach or boats on open water.

#### HAIL

- Hail can pose a significant danger during a thunderstorm. Hail can be as small as the size of a pea, or as large as a softball. Because it falls from the sky, it can reach extremely high speeds as it barrels toward earth and damage anything in its path.
- If you see or hear hail hitting the ground during a thunderstorm, remain inside if you are already indoors, or quickly find shelter if you are outdoors.

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## INDOOR SAFETY

If you're indoors when thunderstorms are imminent or occurring in your area, stay inside and follow these tips to secure your home and property:

- Shutter windows and secure outside doors. Close your window blinds, shades or curtains and keep a safe distance from them.
- Secure any objects outside your home that could blow away or cause damage.
- Stay away from faucets, sinks, bathtubs and showers. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity.
- Unplug electrical appliances such as televisions, computers and corded phones, and turn off air conditioners. Power surges that occur as the result of lightning can cause severe damage to plugged-in electronics and appliances.

- Avoid using a corded (landline) telephone during a thunderstorm. Cell/mobile phones are safe to use.
- Keep pets inside the house, on a leash or in a crate or carrier.
- Have a battery powered radio or NOAA Weather Radio so you can receive weather alerts and storm updates if you lose power.

## *Keep Food and Water Safe after a Natural Disaster or Power Outage*

### DRINKING WATER

- You will need 2-3 gallons of safe drinking water per person, per day for drinking, cooking, personal hygiene and cleaning. Plan on extra water for your pets.
- Safe water can be bottled, boiled, or treated water. Your health department can make specific recommendations for boiling or treating water in your area.
- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice or baby formula.



### FOOD

Food may not be safe to eat during and after an emergency. Identify and throw away food that may not be safe to eat, including:

- Food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water
- Food with an unusual odor, color or texture
- Perishable foods that have been above 40° F for 2 hours or more
- Canned foods that are bulging, opened or appear damaged
- You can refreeze or cook thawed food that contains ice crystals or is 40° F or below

## WEST WINDSOR HEALTH DEPARTMENT

serving the communities of  
West Windsor ■ Robbinsville ■ Hightstown

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**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

(609) 936-8400

[www.westwindsornj.org](http://www.westwindsornj.org)

Emergency information and notifications  
[www.hightstownborough.com](http://www.hightstownborough.com)

## Keep Food and Water Safe (continued)

- Discard all food containers with screw caps, crimped caps, twist caps, snap open, and home canned foods that have come into contact with floodwater.
- If sealed cans have come in contact with flood or storm water, remove the labels, wash the cans and then dip them in a solution of ¼ cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water. Re-label the cans with a marker.

## STORE FOOD SAFELY

- While the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible
- Add bagged or block ice to your refrigerator if the electricity is expected to be off longer than 4 hours.

## Feeding Infants and Young Children

- Breastfed infants should continue breast-feeding. For formula fed infants, use ready-to-feed formula. If this is not possible, use bottled water to prepare powdered or concentrated formula. If bottled water is not available, use boiled water.
- Wash your hands before preparing formula and before feeding an infant. You can use alcohol based hand sanitizer for washing your hands if clean water supply is limited.

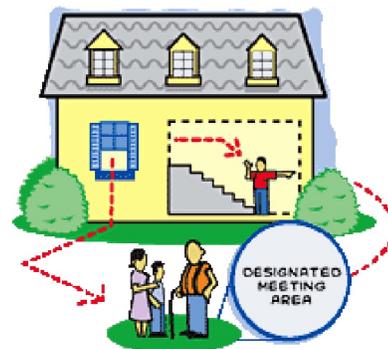
## FAMILY DISASTER PLAN



Making a Family Disaster Plan will help your family stay calm in an emergency. The plan should include each family member's task(s) during an emergency, where supplies are kept, how

family members will let one another know where they are going if they are evacuated and where everyone will meet when the disaster is over. Go to [www.ready.gov/make-a-plan](http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan) for more information.

Family members are not always together when an emergency occurs, but your family can get back together if you have a plan. Choose emergency contacts that everyone knows and can easily reach. Do not forget to let the contacts know that members of your family may call them in an emergency.



Enter emergency telephone numbers on cell phones, keep a list near home phones and put a copy in your Family Emergency Supply Kit. You can use an online data back-up service to store emergency information electronically so that you will always have access to important information.

## DISCUSS WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY:

- The dangers of storms and other severe weather, fire and other emergencies and how to respond to each disaster
- When to call 911, police and fire
- How to turn off the water, gas and electricity at main switches
- How to use fire extinguishers and where they are kept in the house
- Identify two escape routes from each room
- Determine the safest spots in your home for each type of disaster

## PREPARE FAMILY MEMBERS:

- Have the whole family take a basic first aid and CPR class and practice together.
- Conduct emergency evacuation drills and review emergency plans every 6 months.
- Review emergency contact information with young children.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors monthly; change the batteries twice a year.
- Test and recharge fire extinguisher(s).

## GENERATORS

In an emergency, portable generators offer lifesaving benefits when outages affect your home or business. They can safely power important electrical equipment such as portable heating units, computers, water pumps, refrigerators and lighting. However, their use can also be very hazardous. If you plan on using a generator, it is essential to take precautions for your safety and the safety of those working to restore power.



- Always read the manufacturer's operating instructions before running a generator.
- Never use a generator inside your home, garage or other enclosed areas. Engines emit carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas. Fatal fumes can build up that can't be adequately removed by a fan or opening doors and windows.
- Only use your generator outdoors, away from open windows, vents or doors.
- Use a battery powered carbon monoxide detector where you're running a generator.
- Gasoline and its vapors are extremely flammable. Allow the generator engine to cool at least 2 minutes before refueling and always use fresh gasoline.
- Maintain your generator according to the manufacturer's maintenance schedule.
- Never operate the generator near combustible materials.
- If you have to use extension cords, be sure they are "grounded" and rated for the intended application. Coiled cords can get extremely hot - always uncoil cords and lay them flat in open locations.
- Never plug a generator directly into a home outlet. If you are connecting a generator into your home electrical system, have a qualified electrician install a Power Transfer Switch.

- Generators produce powerful voltage - never operate under wet conditions. Protect your generator from exposure to rain and snow.

## EMERGENCY SUPPLY KITS

Assemble emergency supplies ahead of time and store in easy-to-carry waterproof container or backpacks in case you need to evacuate.

- Water and non-perishable food: peanut butter, crackers, dry cereal, bottled or canned food; manual can opener
- First aid kit and instruction manual
- Prescription and over-the-counter medications; special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members
- Battery powered or crank radio, clock, flashlights, lantern and a supply of extra batteries
- Change of clothing, footwear and rain gear, blanket or sleeping bag and towels
- An extra set of car keys, credit card, cash or traveler's checks
- Extra toilet paper and paper towels; plastic garbage bags
- Basic repair tools; small fire extinguisher
- Important family documents: medical and insurance papers, passports, bank and credit card account numbers, family and household records; ID to put on all children
- Spare tire, tire repair kit and pump; booster cables, flares and small shovel
- Fully charged electronic devices, backup batteries and chargers
- Pet supplies and vaccination records

