



# Disaster readiness · response · recovery

## Correct Potential Hazards Before a Disaster

During and right after a disaster, any household item that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire becomes a home hazard. To minimize possible danger, inspect your home now to find and correct potential hazards.

### Identifying Hazards

#### **Check for electrical hazards**

- Replace frayed or cracked extension and appliance cords, loose prongs, and plugs.
- Make sure there is only one plug per outlet. Avoid using cube-taps or overloading outlets. If you must use an extension cord, use a cord that's rated for the electrical load and no longer than is really needed.
- Remove electrical cords that run under rugs or over nails, heaters, or pipes.
- Cover exposed outlets and wiring.
- Repair or replace appliances that overheat, short out, smoke, or spark.

#### **Check for chemical hazards**

- Store flammable liquids like gasoline, acetone, and lacquer thinner in approved safety cans in a storage area located away from the home. Place containers in a well-ventilated

area and close the lids tightly. Secure the containers to prevent spills.

- If flammable materials must be stored in the home, use a storage can with an Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) approved label. Move materials away from heat sources, open flames, gas appliances, and children.
- Keep combustible liquids like paint thinner, kerosene, charcoal lighter fluid, and turpentine away from heat sources.
- Store oily waste and polishing cloths in covered metal cans.
- Instruct family members not to use gasoline or other flammable fluids for starting fires or cleaning indoors.

#### **Check for fire hazards**

- Clear out old cloths, papers, mattresses, broken furniture, and other combustible materials.
- Move clothes, curtains, cloths, and paper goods away from electrical equipment, gas appliances, or flammable materials.
- Remove dried grass cuttings, tree trimmings, and weeds from the property.

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- Clean and repair chimneys, flue pipes, vent connectors, and gas vents.
- Keep heaters and candles away from curtains and furniture.
- Keep portable heaters on level surfaces, away from high traffic areas. Purchase portable heaters equipped with automatic shut-off switches, and don't use them with extension cords.

## Safety Equipment

### ***Check fire safety equipment***

- Install at least one smoke detector on each level of the home, especially near the bedrooms. Test detectors every month and change batteries at least once a year.
- Keep at least one fire extinguisher (ABC-type) on hand. Maintain and recharge according to manufacturer's instructions. Show all family members where it's kept and make sure they know how to use it.

## Secure Items

### ***Check items that can shift or fall***

- Anchor water heater, large appliances, bookcases, tall or heavy furniture, shelves, mirrors, and pictures to wall studs.
- Place large or heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Install clips, latches, or other locking devices on cabinet doors.
- Provide strong support and flexible connections on gas appliances, including the water heater.
- Hang heavy items, such as pictures and mirrors, away from beds and places where people sit.
- Repair any deep cracks in ceilings or foundations.

## Utilities

### ***Check your utilities***

- Locate the main electric fuse or circuit breaker box, water

service shut-off, and natural gas main shut-off.

- Contact local utility companies for instructions on how to turn off the utilities. Teach family members when and how to turn off utilities.
- Clear the area around shut-off switches for easy access.

## Gas and water

- Attach shut-off wrench or specialty tool to a pipe or other location close by the gas and water shut-off valves.
- Paint shut-off valves with white or fluorescent paint to increase visibility.

## Home Safety

Plan how to escape from your home in the event of an emergency. Identify at least two exits from each room. Clear doors, hallways, and stairs of obstructions. Conduct emergency drills. Practice daytime and nighttime escapes, and pick a safe meeting place outside the home.



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