

CREATING A FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The American Red Cross urges all Americans to plan ahead for the possibility of becoming separated from family and friends during times of crisis. Disasters can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. Knowing what to do in case household members are separated in a disaster can prevent some of the confusion and stress you, your family members, and close friends will experience if they know you are safe.

Keep It Simple: The best plan is one that everyone can understand and follow.



Pick two places to meet:

1. A place outside your home in case of sudden emergency, like a fire.
2. A place outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home or are asked to leave your neighborhood.

Families are strongly encouraged to develop different methods of communicating during emergency situations and share plans beforehand with all those who would be worried about their welfare. Options for remaining in contact with family and friends if a disaster strikes include the following:



Pick two out of town contacts:

1. A designated **primary** friend or family member who is unlikely to be affected by the same disaster event.
2. A designated **alternate** friend or family member who is unlikely to be affected by the same disaster event.

Both adults and children should know the primary and alternate contacts' names, addresses, and home and cell telephone numbers. This information should be carried with them. An American Red Cross Emergency Contact Card is available as an Adobe pdf document on our "Get Prepared" page for you to use.

Make sure that adults and children know how to tell the contact where they are, how to reach them, and what happened or to leave this information as a *brief* message on an answering machine.

Keep your Emergency Contact Cards and Communication Plan readable and up to date by checking them at least once a year. A good tip is to review your Emergency Contact Cards and Communication Plan when

you change your clock and smoke detector batteries to daylight savings time during Fall and Spring.



Use of the Red Cross *Safe and Well* website (<https://disastersafe.redcross.org>) should become an integral *part* of a Family Communication Plan. The *Safe and Well* website is an internet based tool that allows those directly affected by a disaster to let their loved ones know of their wellbeing. The website is accessible at all times on our Chapter's homepage and at www.redcross.org,

How does the *Safe and Well* website work? Via the internet, people within the disaster affected area are able to post standard "safe and well" messages. Concerned family members who know the person's phone number or a complete home address can search for the messages posted by those who self register. The website complies with all privacy and child protection laws. Because of these concerns, no location information will be publicly displayed on this website. For more information, visit the *Safe and Well* website.

Other Methods Of Communicating To Friends And Family Members Are:



E-mail notification via a family distribution list.



Use of US Postal Service (www.usps.gov) change of address when it becomes necessary to leave home for an extended period of time, thus ensuring that mail will be redirected to a current address.