

The West Virginia Municipal League would like to share critical emergency contact information to our municipal members who are attempting to survive flood conditions or assist neighboring communities who are being impacted. The West Virginia Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services contact information is:

DHSEM Main Number

304-558-5380 (24 hours)

From the DHSEM website, here are just a few things to think about during and after a disaster. There are several helpful links contained in this information.

Emergency Shelters

If local authorities ask you to leave your home, they have a good reason to make this request, and you should follow their instructions. Your life and those of your family are more important than property. Keep these simple tips in mind:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and sturdy shoes so you can be protected as much as possible. Dress warmly in winter.
- Lock your home. Take your Family Emergency Supplies Kit.
- Use travel routes that local authorities tell you to use. Don't take shortcuts, because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous.
- Continue to listen to the Emergency Alert System radio station.

If you're sure you have time, shut off water and electricity before leaving if instructed to do so. Leave natural gas services ON unless local officials advise you otherwise. You may need gas for heating and cooking later, and only a professional can restore gas service in your home once it's been turned off. In an emergency situation it could take weeks for a professional to respond.

Post a note telling others when you left, who is with you and where you are going. Call your family contact to tell them where you are going, when you expect to arrive and who is with you.

Remember to evacuate your pets too. Continue reading to see more help regarding pets.

Check on your neighbors according to prearranged plans, especially those living alone, the elderly or disabled persons.

For more information visit the [National Shelter System](#) and the [Red Cross](#).

Basic First Aid

It is important in preparing for any emergency to know how to give first aid. If medical help is not immediately available, use the first aid booklet in your first aid kit (available from the Red Cross or at stores). If you do not have a first aid booklet, the information below may be helpful.

If you encounter someone who is injured, apply these emergency Check-Call-Care action steps:

- Check the scene to make sure it is safe for you to approach. Be alert for fallen power lines. Then check the victim for unconsciousness and life-threatening conditions. Someone who has a life-threatening condition, such as not breathing or severe bleeding, requires immediate care by trained responders and may require treatment by medical professionals.
- Call for help.
- Care for someone who is hurt.

Control bleeding

Cover the wound with a dressing, and press firmly against the wound (direct pressure). Elevate the injured area above the level of the heart if you do not suspect that the victim has a broken bone. Cover the dressing with a bandage. If the bleeding does not stop, apply additional dressings and bandages, and use a pressure point to squeeze the artery against the bone. Provide care for shock.

Care for shock

Keep the victim from getting chilled or overheated. Elevate the legs about 12 inches (if broken bones are not suspected). Do not give food or drink to the victim.

Burns

Reduce pain by gently cooling the burn. Pour large amounts of water over the burned area. Cover the burn with dry, clean dressings or cloth.

Muscles, bones and joint injuries

Rest the injured part. Apply ice or a cold pack to control swelling and reduce pain. Avoid any movement or activity that causes pain. If you must move the victim because the scene is becoming unsafe, try to immobilize the injured part to keep it from shifting.

Poisoning

Call the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) and communicate what was swallowed and how much. Follow the directions given exactly.

Reduce any care risks

The risk of getting a disease while giving first aid is extremely rare. However, to reduce the risk even further:

- Avoid direct contact with blood and other body fluids.
- Use protective equipment, such as disposable gloves and breathing barriers like cloth handkerchiefs.
- Whenever possible, thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water immediately after giving care.

Shelter in Place

If you are advised by local officials to “shelter in place,” they mean for you to remain inside your home, workplace or school and protect yourself there. This would most likely happen in case of tornado, flood conditions, chemical or radiation accident or attack. Depending on the reason for sheltering:

- Go inside your home or the nearest building.
- Close all windows and doors, and turn off all ventilation systems.
- Get your Emergency Supplies Kit, and make sure your radio works.
- In case of a tornado, take refuge below ground, if possible.
- In the case of a chemical or radiation threat, if possible, take shelter in an interior room without windows that is above ground level. An above ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air, and may seep into basements even if the windows are closed. Using duct tape, plastic sheeting or damp towels, seal all cracks around the door, any windows and any vents into the room.
- Don't use the phone, except for emergency messages.
- Turn on your radio or television to an emergency alert station. Keep listening until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas that are at greatest risk in your community.

At Home in an Emergency

During an emergency, you might be cut off from food, water and electricity for several days or more. If power is out, food stores may be closed and your water supply may not work. Here are some suggestions to follow:

Water: If a disaster catches you without a supply of clean water, you can use ice cubes and the water in your hot-water tank or pipes. You can also use clean water from the reservoir (back) tank of your toilet (not the bowl). If it is safe to go outside, you can also purify water from streams or rivers, rainwater, ponds and lakes,

natural springs and snow by boiling (for 5 minutes), distilling or disinfection. To purify water with bleach, use 10 drops of bleach per gallon of water. Use only regular household liquid bleach containing only 5.25% sodium hypochlorite.

Food: During and right after an emergency, it will be important to keep up your strength by eating at least one well-balanced meal each day. Take vitamin, mineral and/or protein supplements.

If the electricity goes off: First, check to see if your neighbors have power. The problem may be in your home. If they also have lost power, check with the power company to see when power might come back on. Turn off or unplug all major appliances. When appliances, such as refrigerators are left on, they could overload electric lines when power is turned back on, causing a second outage. Use the phone only when absolutely necessary. If the only problem is downed lines, your cell phone or car phone will work.

Frozen plumbing: Plumbing can freeze when power is lost during cold weather periods. You can turn off the water supply at the main intake pipe, drain your system and leave a faucet open to avoid air lock. Be ready to go to a shelter if warmth and protection are needed during a long power outage.

Medical: If you or anyone you know come in contact with a biological or chemical agent, a special cleansing procedure and medical attention may be needed. Listen to the advice broadcast on Emergency Alert Stations. During a disaster, emergency services may be overwhelmed, so only call 911 about life-threatening emergencies.

Taking Care of Pets

Emergency planning should include pets. *Be aware that Red Cross disaster shelters cannot accept pets because of health and safety regulations and other considerations. Service animals that assist people with disabilities are the only animals allowed in Red Cross shelters.* If your family must go to a shelter or other site away from home, do not leave your pets at home. Instead, create a pet emergency plan in advance.

You may not be home when an evacuation order comes. Find out if a trusted neighbor would be willing to take your pets and meet you at a prearranged location. This person should be comfortable with your pets, know where your animals are likely to be and have a key to your home.

Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets and restrictions on number and size. Ask if "no pet" policies could be waived in an emergency. Or, ask local animal shelters if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets in a disaster. However, animal shelters may be overburdened caring for the animals they already have as well as those displaced by a disaster. *Keep a list of "pet friendly" places, including phone numbers, with other emergency information and supplies.*

Keep a pet emergency supplies kit with your emergency evacuation kit. Include a carrier box, immunization record, muzzles or leashes, pet food and supplies. Have an ID photo available in case they stray. Make sure all dogs and cats are wearing collars and securely fastened up-to-date identification. Attach the phone number

and address of your temporary shelter, if you know it, or of a friend or relative.

Watch a [pet preparedness video](#) created by Dr. Cynthia Otto, a Critical Care Associate Professor, at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine.

Find out more about creating a disaster plan for your pets by visiting any of the following links:

[Ready.gov](#)

[ASPCA](#)

[Humane Society](#)

AFTER A DISASTER

Returning Home

Before entering your home, walk carefully around the outside. Check for loose power lines, gas leaks and structural damage. If you are concerned about safety, call an inspector or structural engineer to have your residence tested.

When you return home, check for damage. Watch for loose boards, slippery floors, broken glass and other hazards. Use a flashlight. Do not light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches if you suspect damage. Check for fires, fire hazards and other household dangers. Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows and get everyone outside quickly. Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline and other flammable liquids immediately. To learn more, go to <http://www.ready.gov/returning-home>

It may appear that your home is damaged beyond repair. Don't lose hope. You may save many of your belongings. It may be possible to clean out and dry out your home. Many faith-based and volunteer organizations around the state help families in need after a disaster. [Click here](#) to find out more.

Cleaning Up

During an emergency, household chemicals can spill or leak creating potentially serious hazards. Take precautions to keep children and pets away. Be careful cleaning up hazardous substances. Don't combine chemicals or dump them down drains or toilets.

If your basement is flooded you will undoubtedly feel a sense of urgency to get the water out fast. If the ground outside is still waterlogged, emptying the basement quickly can lead to structural damage, collapsed walls or a buckled floor. Instead, gradually pump the water out over a period of several days.

Germs and mold become major hazards after a flood. Keep lots of bleach handy to sterilize water and hard surfaces. Remember to protect yourself, wear rubber boots and gloves, keep a window open and use

unscented bleach. Never mix bleach with ammonia or other cleaners, the chemical reaction is toxic. Bleach can be used to clean mold off hard surfaces, however, mold laden cloth and other hard-to-clean items (like carpet) will need to be removed from the home.

To learn more about what to do before, during and after any type of disaster, go to <http://www.ready.gov/be-informed>

Your Finances

Recovering from a disaster can seem financially overwhelming. Take things one step at a time.

Call your insurance agent right away to file a claim. Take pictures or video of any damage and water in your house. Save damaged items. This will make filing your claim easier. If you are required to dispose of a damaged item, document it on a list and keep a swatch of material or other sample of the item. This will help show the insurance adjuster what has been lost.

Notify your creditors, bank and employer. Be sure they have updated contact information in case you cannot stay in your home. Explain your situation and try to negotiate a payment arrangement that does not create an undue burden. [Click here](#) to register for assistance if you are a victim of a federally declared disaster.