PREP Guide

Personal Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Guide

A handbook for overseas post personnel and their families to prepare for crises, react in emergencies, and begin recovery

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> *"The Department's highest priority is the protection of employees, family members, and American citizens living, working, and visiting overseas… It is critical that all personnel are familiar with their respective roles and responsibilities and that your mission actively develops its crisis response capability. Participating in regular crisis training is mandatory for all posts."*
>
> – Under Secretary for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman and Under Secretary for Management Patrick F. Kennedy (12 STATE 76129)

Thank you for taking the first step in preparing for an unexpected crisis or emergency by reading this resource, the **Personal Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Guide**, and sharing it with your household. The U.S. State Department takes very seriously the safety of its employees and other U.S. government employees under Chief of Mission authority and therefore prepared the PREP Guide to communicate some best practices. The PREP Guide is intended to convey baseline emergency preparedness information that may be augmented or supplanted by post-specific information or procedures. In our chosen line of work, we can never know when this information will be used; we can only be assured by our level of personal preparedness that if that time comes, our State Department community has the right tools to manage and survive whatever event transpires. Please visit crisis.state.gov on the Department intranet for more resources and helpful information.

Build A Kit

A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items you and your household may need in the event of an emergency, and is sometimes referred to as a "go bag." You will need to assemble your kit, or "go bag," well in advance of an emergency as you will probably not have time to search or shop for supplies during and immediately after a disaster.

You may need to survive on your own after an emergency. This means having your own food, water and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least 72 hours. You could get help in hours or it might take days.

Additionally, basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment and telephones may be cut off for days or even a week, or longer. Your supplies kit should contain items to help you manage during these outages.

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Basic Disaster Supplies Kit

A basic emergency supply kit could include the following recommended items—

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation.
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio with a horn or siren and extra batteries.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- First aid kit.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter -in-place.
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- Manual can opener for food.
- Local maps.
- Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger.
- E&E (Emergency & Evacuation) Radio, if it is offered at your post.

Additional Emergency Supplies

Once you have gathered the supplies for a basic emergency kit, you may want to consider adding the following items—

- Prescription medications and glasses.
- Infant formula and diapers.
- Pet food and extra water for your pet.
- Cash or traveler's checks and change.
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container. Emergency reference material such as a first aid book.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person. Consider additional bedding if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. Consider additional clothing if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper – when diluted, nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Fire extinguisher.
- Matches in a waterproof container.
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items.
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels and plastic utensils.
- Paper and pencil.
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children.

First Aid Kit

In any emergency a family member or you yourself may suffer an injury. If you have these basic first aid supplies you are better prepared to help your loved ones when they are hurt.

Knowing how to treat minor injuries can make a difference in an emergency. You may consider taking a first aid class, but simply having the following things can help you stop bleeding, prevent infection and assist in decontamination—

- Two pairs of Latex or other sterile gloves if you are allergic to Latex.
- Sterile dressings to stop bleeding.
- Cleansing agent/soap and antibiotic towelettes.
- Antibiotic ointment.
- Burn ointment.
- Adhesive bandages in a variety of sizes.
- Eye wash solution to flush the eyes or as general decontaminant.
- Thermometer.
- Prescription medications you take every day such as insulin, heart medicine and asthma inhalers. You should periodically rotate medicines to account for expiration dates.
- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring equipment and supplies.

Non-prescription drugs—

- Aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever.
- Anti-diarrhea medication.
- Antacid.
- Laxative.

Other first aid supplies—

- Scissors.
- Tweezers.
- Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant.

Supplies for Unique Needs

Remember the unique needs of your family members, including growing children, when making your emergency supply kit and family emergency plan.

For Baby —

- Formula
- Diapers
- Bottles
- Powdered milk
- Medications
- Moist towelettes

For Adults —

- Denture needs
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Extra eye glasses

Ask your doctor about storing prescription medications such as heart and high blood pressure medication, insulin and other prescription drugs.

If you live in a cold climate, you must think about warmth. It is possible that you will not have heat. Think about your clothing and bedding supplies. Be sure to include one complete change of clothing and shoes per person, including:

- Jacket or coat
- Long pants
- Long sleeve shirt

Make A Plan

Your family may not be together when a disaster strikes so it is important to plan in advance: how you will get to a safe place; how you will contact one another; how you will get back together; and what you will do in different situations.

You should also inquire about emergency plans at places where your family spends time: work, daycare and school, faith organizations, sports events and commuting. If no plans exist, consider volunteering to help create one. Consider talking with your colleagues, neighbors and members of faith or civic organizations about how you can work together in the event of an emergency. You will be better prepared to safely reunite your family and loved ones during an emergency if you think ahead and communicate with others in advance.

Considerations for Individuals with Access & Functional Needs

Each person's needs and abilities are unique, but every individual can take important steps to prepare for all kinds of emergencies and put plans in place. By evaluating your own personal needs and making an emergency plan, you can be better prepared for any situation.

A commitment to planning today will help you prepare for any emergency situation.

- Consider how a disaster might affect your individual needs.
- Plan to make it on your own, at least for a period of time. It's possible that you will not have access to a medical facility or even a drugstore.
- Identify what kind of resources you use on a daily basis and what you might do if they are limited or not available.
- Build a kit with your unique consideration in mind. What do you need to maintain your health, safety and independence?

If you or someone close to you has a disability or other access or functional need, you may have to take additional steps to protect yourself and your family.

Find out about individual assistance that may be available in your community. Check with your post for guidance on working with local emergency services, the local fire department, other agencies or non-profit groups. Tell them of your individual needs or those of a family member and find out what assistance, help or services can be provided.

Who are Individuals with Access & Functional Needs?

- Those who are deaf or hard of hearing may need to make special arrangements to receive emergency warnings.
- People without vehicles may need to make arrangements for transportation.
- People with special dietary needs should take precautions to have an adequate emergency food supply.

Infants & Young Children

Remember the unique needs of your family members when making your emergency supply kit and family emergency plan.

Try to make emergency planning fun for young children. Gather your family members together for a quick family meeting, maybe over a pizza or before watching your favorite movie. Talk about what you will do in an emergency and make a list of your family's solutions. Find more planning information at www.ready.gov/kids.

Seniors

There are also measures older U.S. citizens can take to start preparing for emergencies before they happen.

Seniors should keep specialized items ready, including extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, food for service animals and any other items you might need. Keep a list of the type and model numbers of the medical devices you require. Be sure to make provisions for medications that require refrigeration. Make arrangements for any assistance to get to a shelter.

For more information, read Ready.gov's **Preparing Makes Sense For Older Americans** or visit the Red Cross website at www.redcross.org.

Caring for Animals

The likelihood that you and your animals will survive an emergency such as a fire or flood, tornado or terrorist attack depends largely on emergency planning done today. Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling an animal emergency supply kit and developing a pet care buddy system, are the same for any emergency. Whether you decide to stay put in an emergency or evacuate to a safer location, you will need to make plans in advance for your pets. Keep in mind that what's best for you is typically what's best for your animals.

If you evacuate your home, **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND!** Pets most likely cannot survive on their own and if by some remote chance they do, you may not be able to find them when you return.

Consider your evacuation plan. If you or your family members depart using commercial transportation, strongly consider taking your pets. If you wait until the U.S. government charters transports, they may not be able to accommodate pets. If pets can board the transport, there may be difficulty bringing them into the designated Safe Haven location. Traveling with pets often requires very specific veterinary records and pets may be quarantined for extended periods of time.

If you go to a public shelter, it is important to understand that animals may not be allowed inside. Plan in advance for shelter alternatives that will work for both you and your pets; consider loved ones or friends outside of your immediate area who would be willing to host you and your pets in an emergency.

Make a back-up emergency plan in case you can't care for your animals yourself. Develop a buddy system with neighbors, friends and relatives to make sure that someone is available to care for or evacuate your pets if you are unable to do so. Be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to make it on your own for at least three days, maybe longer.

For additional information, visit the humane society at www.humanesociety.org/issues/animal_rescue/tips/pets-disaster.html

Hurricanes, Typhoons, and Cyclones

Hurricanes, typhoons, and cyclones are all the same weather phenomenon; we just use different names for these storms depending on their location. In the Atlantic and Northeast Pacific, the term "hurricane" is used, in the Northwest Pacific it is called a "typhoon", and in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean it is called a "cyclone." These storms can cause catastrophic damage from coastlines to areas several hundred miles inland. They can produce winds exceeding 155 miles per hour as well as tornadoes and microbursts. They can create storm surges along the coast and cause extensive damage from heavy rainfall. Floods and flying debris from the excessive winds are often the deadly and destructive results of these weather events. Excessive rain can trigger flooding and landslides.

Before

A Hurricane, Typhoon, or Cyclone

To prepare, you should take the following measures:

- Make plans to secure your property. Be prepared to board up windows with 5/8" marine plywood, cut to fit and ready to install. Tape does not prevent windows from breaking.
- Be sure trees and shrubs around your home are well trimmed.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Consider preparing a safe room.

During

A Hurricane, Typhoon, or Cyclone

If a hurricane, typhoon, or cyclone is likely in your area, you should:

- Continually monitor the radio or TV for information.
- Secure your home, close storm shutters, and secure outdoor objects or bring them indoors.
- Turn the refrigerator thermostat to its coldest setting and keep its doors closed.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Avoid using the phone, except for serious emergencies.
- Ensure an adequate supply of water. Fill a bathtub or other large containers with water.

You should evacuate under the following conditions:

- If you are directed to do so.
- If you live in a high-rise building— winds are stronger at higher elevations.
- If you live on the coast, on a floodplain, near a river, or on an inland waterway.
- If you feel you are in danger.

Continued ▶

During a Hurricane, Typhoon, or Cyclone Supplies (Continued)

If you are unable to evacuate, go to your safe room. If you do not have one, follow these guidelines:

- Stay indoors and away from windows and glass doors.
- Close all interior doors—secure and brace external doors.
- Keep curtains and blinds closed. Do not be fooled if there is a lull; it could be the eye of the storm - winds will pick up again.
- Take refuge in a small interior room, closet, or hallway on the lowest level.
- Lie on the floor under a table or another sturdy object.

After

A Hurricane, Typhoon, or Cyclone

- Continue listening to the local news for the latest updates.
- Stay alert for extended rainfall and subsequent flooding even after storm has ended.
- If you evacuated, return home only when local officials say it is safe or you have told to do so by U.S. government officials. If the guidance of local officials is different than that of the U.S. government, follow the guidance of the U.S. government.
- Drive only if necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed out bridges. Stay off the streets. If you must go out watch for fallen objects; downed electrical wires; and weakened walls, bridges, roads, and sidewalks.
- Keep away from loose or dangling power lines and report them immediately.
- Walk carefully around the outside your home and check for loose power lines, gas leaks and structural damage before entering.
- Stay out of any building if you smell gas or floodwaters remain around the building.
- Use battery-powered flashlights in the dark. Do NOT use candles. Note: The flashlight should be turned on outside before entering - the battery may produce a spark that could ignite leaking gas, if present.
- Watch your pets closely and keep them under your direct control. Watch out for wild animals, especially poisonous snakes. Use a stick to poke through debris.
- Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you are sure it's not contaminated.
- Check refrigerated food for spoilage. If in doubt, throw it out.
- Wear protective clothing and be cautious when cleaning up to avoid injury.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- **NEVER** use a generator inside homes, garages, sheds, or similar areas, even when using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation.

Earthquake

Earthquakes have damaged posts in Osaka, Japan; Kingston, Jamaica; Guatemala City, Guatemala; Mexico City, Mexico; and San Salvador, El Salvador. Each post has a different level of earthquake risk and the Office of Foreign Building Operations (OBO) works with numerous seismologists to determine the risk of each post. For specific information on the earthquake risk for your post and more information regarding earthquake preparedness, consult the **Earthquake Preparedness at U.S. Foreign Service Posts** guide from OBO available on the State Department intranet at http://obo.state.gov/pede/Documents/Earthquake/earthquake.pdf.

Although there are no guarantees of safety during an earthquake, identifying potential hazards ahead of time can save lives and significantly reduce injuries and property damage.

Before

An Earthquake

The following are things you can do to protect yourself, your family and your property in the event of an earthquake—

- Make sure shelves are fastened securely to walls.
- Place large or heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Store breakable items such as bottled foods, glass, and china in low, closed cabinets with latches.
- Fasten heavy items such as pictures and mirrors securely to walls and away from beds, couches and anywhere people sit.
- Brace overhead light fixtures and top heavy objects.
- Store weed killers, pesticides, and flammable products securely in closed cabinets with latches and on bottom shelves.
- Locate safe spots in each room under a sturdy table or against an inside wall. Reinforce this information by moving to these places during each drill.
- Hold earthquake drills with your family members: Drop, cover and hold on.

Know the Terms

Familiarize yourself with these terms to help identify an earthquake hazard—

Aftershock – An earthquake of similar or lesser intensity that follows the main earthquake.

Earthquake – A sudden slipping or movement of a portion of the earth's crust, accompanied and followed by a series of vibrations.

Epicenter – The place on the earth's surface directly above the point on the fault where the earthquake rupture began.

Fault – The fracture across which displacement has occurred during an earthquake. The slippage may range from less than an inch to more than 10 yards in a severe earthquake.

Magnitude – The amount of energy released during an earthquake, which is computed from the amplitude of the seismic waves. A magnitude of 7.0 on the Richter Scale indicates an extremely strong earthquake. Each whole number on the scale represents an increase of about 30 times more energy released than the previous whole number represents. Therefore, an earthquake measuring 6.0 is about 30 times more powerful than one measuring 5.0.

During

An Earthquake

Drop, Cover and Hold On.

If Indoors

- **DROP** to the ground; take **COVER** by getting under a sturdy table or other piece of furniture; and **HOLD ON** until the shaking stops.
- Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as lighting fixtures or furniture.
- Stay in bed if you are there when the earthquake strikes. Hold on and protect your head with a pillow, unless you are under a heavy light fixture that could fall. In that case, move to the nearest safe place.
- Do not use a doorway except if you know it is a strongly supported, load-bearing doorway and it is close to you.
- Stay inside until the shaking stops and it is safe to go outside. Do not exit a building during the shaking. Research has shown that most injuries occur when people inside buildings attempt to move to a different location inside the building or try to leave.
- **DO NOT** use the elevators.

If Outdoors

- Stay there.
- Move away from buildings, streetlights, and utility wires.
- Once in the open, stay there until the shaking stops. The greatest danger exists directly outside buildings, at exits and alongside exterior walls. Many of the 120 fatalities from the 1933 Long Beach earthquake occurred when people ran outside of buildings only to be killed by falling debris from collapsing walls.

If in a Moving Vehicle

- Stop as quickly as safety permits and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses, and utility wires.
- Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges, or ramps that might have been damaged by the earthquake.

If Trapped Under Debris

- Do not light a match.
- Do not move about or kick up dust.
- Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or clothing.
- Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can locate you. Use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

After

An Earthquake

- Expect aftershocks. These are usually less violent than the main quake but can be strong enough to do additional damage and can occur weeks, or even months after.
- Help injured or trapped persons. Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance such as infants, the elderly and people with access and functional needs. Give first aid where appropriate. Do not move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help.
- Look for and extinguish small fires. Fire is the most common hazard after an earthquake.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio or television for the latest emergency information.
- Be aware of possible tsunamis if you live in coastal areas and stay away from the beach. If a local tsunami warning system exists and authorities issue a warning, assume that a series of dangerous waves is on the way.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- Stay away from damaged areas. Return home only when local authorities or U.S. government officials say it is safe. If there is a conflict between the guidance of local authorities and U.S. government officials, follow the U.S. government guidance.
- Be careful when driving after an earthquake and anticipate traffic light outages.
- Open cabinets cautiously. Beware of objects that can fall off shelves.
- Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately. Leave the area if you smell gas or fumes from other chemicals.
- Inspect utilities—
  - **Check for gas leaks.** If you smell gas or hear blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.
  - **Look for electrical system damage.** If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, stop and call a professional.
  - **Check for sewage and water line damage.** If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and contact a professional. Avoid using water from the tap if your water pipes are damaged. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.

Tsunami

Tsunamis (pronounced soo-ná-mees), also known as seismic sea waves (mistakenly called "tidal waves"), are a series of enormous waves created by an underwater disturbance such as an earthquake, landslide, volcanic eruption, or meteorite. A tsunami can move hundreds of miles per hour in the open ocean and smash into land with waves as high as 100 feet or more.

From the area where the tsunami originates, waves travel outward in all directions. Once the wave approaches the shore, it builds in height. The topography of the coastline and the ocean floor will influence the size of the wave. There may be more than one wave and the succeeding one may be larger than the one before. That is why a small tsunami at one beach can be a giant wave a few miles away.

Earthquake-induced movement of the ocean floor most often generates tsunamis. If a major earthquake or landslide occurs close to shore, the first wave in a series could reach the beach in a few minutes, even before a warning has been issued. Areas are at greater risk if they are less than 25 feet above sea level and within a mile of the shoreline. Drowning is the most common cause of death associated with a tsunami. Other hazards include flooding, contamination of drinking water, and fires from gas lines or ruptured tanks.

Before

A Tsunami

The following are things you can do to protect yourself, your family and your property from the effects of a tsunami—

- Determine if your location has a tsunami warning system. Make sure you are familiar with local community's warning systems and disaster plans, including evacuation routes.
- Know the height of your street above sea level and the distance of your street from the coast or other high-risk waters. Evacuation orders may be based on these numbers.
- Familiarize yourself with local tsunami evacuation protocols, if they exist. You may be able to safely evacuate to the third floor and higher in reinforced concrete hotel structures.
- If an earthquake occurs and you are in a coastal area, be aware that a tsunami may occur and be prepared to seek higher ground. Stay aware of local tsunami warning systems and guidance if it exists.

During

A Tsunami

- If local tsunami warning and evacuation system exists, follow the orders of local authorities and evacuate immediately if told to do so. Take your animals with you.
- Move inland to higher ground immediately. Pick areas 100 feet (30 meters) above sea level or go as far as 2 miles (3 kilometers) inland, away from the coastline. If you cannot get this high or far, go as high or far as you can. Every foot inland or upward may make a difference.
- Stay away from the beach. Never go down to the beach to watch a tsunami come in. If you can see the wave you are too close to escape it. **CAUTION** - If there is noticeable recession in water away from the shoreline this is nature's tsunami warning and it should be heeded. You should move away immediately.
- Save yourself - not your possessions.
- Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance - infants, elderly people, and individuals with access or functional needs.

After

A Tsunami

- Return home only after local authorities or U.S. government officials tell you it is safe.
  - A tsunami is a series of waves that may continue for hours. Do not assume that after one wave the danger is over. The next wave may be larger than the first one.
  - If there is a conflict between the guidance of local authorities and U.S. government officials, follow the guidance issued by the U.S. government.
- Avoid disaster areas. Your presence might interfere with emergency response operations and put you at further risk from the residual effects of floods.
- Stay away from debris in the water; it may pose a safety hazard to people or pets.
- Check yourself for injuries and get first aid as needed before helping injured or trapped persons.
- If someone needs to be rescued, call local emergency services with the right equipment to help. Many people have been killed or injured trying to rescue others.
- Help people who require special assistance—infants, elderly people, those without transportation, people with access and functional needs and large families who may need additional help in an emergency situation.
- Stay out of any building that has water around it. Tsunami water can cause floors to crack or walls to collapse.
- Use caution when re-entering buildings or homes. Tsunami-driven floodwater may have damaged buildings where you least expect it. Carefully watch every step you take.
- To avoid injury, wear protective clothing and be cautious when cleaning up.

Flood

Floods are one of the most common hazards in the world. Flood effects can be local, impacting a neighborhood or community, or very large, affecting entire river basins and multiple states.

However, all floods are not alike. Some floods develop slowly, sometimes over a period of days. But flash floods can develop quickly, sometimes in just a few minutes and without any visible signs of rain. Flash floods often have a dangerous wall of roaring water that carries rocks, mud, and other debris and can sweep away most things in its path. Overland flooding occurs outside a defined river or stream, such as when a levee is breached, but still can be destructive. Flooding can also occur when a dam breaks, producing effects similar to flash floods.

Be aware of flood hazards no matter where you live. Even very small streams, gullies, creeks, culverts, dry streambeds, or low-lying ground that appears harmless in dry weather can flood. Every country is at risk from this hazard.

Before

A Flood

Be aware of the Causes of Flooding

Storms – Hurricanes, typhoons, cyclones, and tropical storms pack a triple punch: high winds, soaking rain, and flying debris. They can cause storm surges to coastal areas, as well as create heavy rainfall which in turn causes flooding hundreds of miles inland. When hurricanes weaken into tropical storms, they generate rainfall and flooding that can be especially damaging since the rain collects in one place. In 2001, Tropical Storm Allison produced more than 30 inches of rainfall in Houston in just a few days, flooding over 70,000 houses and destroying 2,744 homes.

Spring Thaw – During the spring, frozen land prevents melting snow or rainfall from seeping into the ground. Each cubic foot of compacted snow contains gallons of water and once the snow melts, it can result in the overflow of streams, rivers, and lakes.

Heavy Rains – Many areas of the globe are at heightened risk for flooding due to heavy rains. Excessive amounts of rainfall can happen throughout the year, putting your property at risk.

Levees & Dams – Levees are designed to protect hold back a certain level of water. However, levees can and do fail; and when they fail, they can fail catastrophically. Weakening of levees over time, or as a result of weather events exceeding the levee's level of support, can cause the levee to be overtopped or breached, thus increasing the chance for flooding.

Flash Floods – Flash floods are one of the most dangerous weather-related killers since they can roll boulders, tear out trees, and destroy buildings and bridges. A flash flood is a rapid flooding of low-lying areas in less than six hours, which is caused by intense rainfall from a thunderstorm or several thunderstorms.

New Development – Construction and development can change the natural drainage and create brand new flood risks. That's because new buildings, parking lots, and roads mean less land to absorb excess precipitation from heavy rains, hurricanes, and tropical storms.

Continued ▶

Before a Flood (Continued)

What would you do if your property were flooded? Are you prepared?

Even if you feel you live in a community with a low risk of flooding, remember that anywhere it rains, it can flood. Just because you haven't experienced a flood in the past, doesn't mean you won't in the future. Flood risk isn't just based on history; it's also based on a number of factors including rainfall, topography, flood-control measures, river-flow and tidal-surge data, and changes due to new construction and development.

During

A Flood

- Look for information on the local radio, television, or announcements from your post.
- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of stream, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without typical warnings such as rain clouds or heavy rain.

If you must prepare to evacuate, you should do the following—

- Secure your home. If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture. Move essential items to an upper floor.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

If you have to leave your home, remember these evacuation tips—

- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be swept away quickly.
- Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams, rivers or creeks, particularly during threatening conditions.

The following are important points to remember when driving in flood conditions—

- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars causing loss of control and possible stalling.
- A foot of water will float many vehicles.
- Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles (SUV's).
- Do not attempt to drive through a flooded road. The depth of water is not always obvious. The road bed may be washed out under the water, and you could be stranded or trapped.
- Do not drive around a barricade. Barricades are there for your protection. Turn around and go the other way.
- Be especially cautious driving at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers.

After

A Flood

- Use local alerts and warning systems or guidance from your post to get information and expert informed advice as soon as available.
- Avoid moving water.
- Stay away from damaged areas unless your assistance has been specifically requested by local authorities or U.S. government officials.
- Emergency workers will be assisting people in flooded areas. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way.
- Play it safe. Additional flooding or flash floods can occur. Listen for local warnings and information. If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, get out immediately and climb to higher ground.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.
- Roads may still be closed because they have been damaged or are covered by water. Barricades have been placed for your protection. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, go another way.
- If you must walk or drive in areas that have been flooded—
  - Stay on firm ground. Moving water only 6 inches deep can sweep you off your feet. Standing water may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
  - Flooding may have caused familiar places to change. Floodwaters often erode roads and walkways. Flood debris may hide animals and broken bottles, and it's also slippery. Avoid walking or driving through it.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
- Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations.
- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewage.
- Look for guidance from your post to learn whether the community's water supply is safe.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwaters can contain sewage and chemicals.

Landslide

Landslides can occur in nearly any environment and can be caused by a variety of factors including earthquakes, storms, volcanic eruptions, fire and by human modification of land. Landslides can occur quickly, often with little notice and the best way to prepare is to stay informed about changes in and around your home that could signal that a landslide is likely to occur.

Before

A Landslide

The following are things you can do to protect yourself, your family and your property from the effects of a landslide or debris flow —

- Become familiar with the land around you.
- Learn whether debris flows have occurred in your area by contacting local officials.
  - Slopes where debris flows have occurred in the past are likely to experience them in the future.

Recognize Landslide Warning Signs

- Changes occur in your landscape such as patterns of storm-water drainage on slopes (especially the places where runoff water converges) land movement, small slides, flows, or progressively leaning trees.
- Doors or windows stick or jam for the first time.
- New cracks appear in plaster, tile, brick, or foundations.
- Outside walls, walks, or stairs begin pulling away from the building.
- Slowly developing, widening cracks appear on the ground or on paved areas such as streets or driveways.
- Underground utility lines break.
- Bulging ground appears at the base of a slope.
- Water breaks through the ground surface in new locations.
- Fences, retaining walls, utility poles, or trees tilt or move.
- A faint rumbling sound that increases in volume is noticeable as the landslide nears.
- The ground slopes downward in one direction and may begin shifting in that direction under your feet.
- Unusual sounds, such as trees cracking or boulders knocking together, might indicate moving debris.
- Collapsed pavement, mud, fallen rocks, and other indications of possible debris flow can be seen when driving (embankments along roadsides are particularly susceptible to landslides).

During

A Landslide

- During a severe storm, stay alert and awake. Many deaths from landslides occur while people are sleeping.
- Listen to local news stations on a battery-powered radio for warnings of heavy rainfall.
- Listen for unusual sounds that might indicate moving debris, such as trees cracking or boulders knocking together.
- Move away from the path of a landslide or debris flow as quickly as possible. The danger from a mudflow increases near stream channels and with prolonged heavy rains. Mudflows can move faster than you can walk or run. Look upstream before crossing a bridge and do not cross the bridge if a mudflow is approaching.
- Avoid river valleys and low-lying areas.
- If you are near a stream or channel, be alert for any sudden increase or decrease in water flow and notice whether the water changes from clear to muddy. Such changes may mean there is debris flow activity upstream so be prepared to move quickly.
- Curl into a tight ball and protect your head if escape is not possible.

After

A Landslide

- Stay away from the slide area. There may be danger of additional slides.
- Listen to local radio, television stations, or guidance from your post for the latest emergency information.
- Watch for flooding, which may occur after a landslide or debris flow. Floods sometimes follow landslides and debris flows because they may both be started by the same event.
- Check for injured and trapped persons near the slide, without entering the direct slide area. Direct rescuers to their locations.
- Look for and report broken utility lines and damaged roadways and railways to appropriate authorities. Reporting potential hazards will get the utilities turned off as quickly as possible, preventing further hazard and injury.
- Check the building foundation, chimney, and surrounding land for damage. Damage to foundations, chimneys, or surrounding land may help you assess the safety of the area.

Fire

To protect yourself, it is important to understand the basic characteristics of fire. Fire spreads quickly; there is no time to gather valuables or make a phone call. In just two minutes, a fire can become life-threatening. In five minutes, a residence can be completely engulfed in flames.

Heat and smoke from fire can be more dangerous than the flames. Inhaling the super-hot air can sear your lungs. Fire produces poisonous gases that make you disoriented and drowsy. Instead of being awakened by a fire, you may fall into a deeper sleep. Asphyxiation is the leading cause of fire deaths, exceeding burns by a three-to-one ratio.

Before

A Fire

In the event of a fire, remember that every second counts, so you and your family must always be prepared. Escape plans help you get out of your home quickly.

Twice each year, practice your home fire escape plan. Some tips to consider when preparing this plan include—

- Find two ways to get out of each room.
- If the primary way is blocked by fire or smoke, you will need a second way out. A secondary route might be a window onto a neighboring roof or a collapsible ladder for escape from upper story windows.
- Make sure that windows are not stuck, screens can be taken out quickly, and that security bars can be properly opened.
- Practice feeling your way out of the house in the dark or with your eyes closed.
- Make sure everyone in the family understands and practices how to properly operate and open locked or barred doors and windows.
- Teach children not to hide from firefighters.

Home Smoke Alarms

A properly installed and maintained smoke alarm is the only thing in your home that can alert you and your family to a fire 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A working smoke alarm significantly increases your chances of surviving a deadly home fire.

- Test batteries monthly.
- Replace batteries in battery-powered and hard-wired smoke alarms at least once a year (except non-replaceable 10-year lithium batteries).
- Never disable a smoke alarm while cooking – it can be a deadly mistake. Open a window or door and press the "hush" button, wave a towel at the alarm to clear the air, or move the entire alarm several feet away from the location.

During

A Fire

- If you are the one who discovers the fire, close the doors in the immediate area to help slow the fire from spreading.
- If you are in a building with a fire alarm, immediately activate the alarm to notify others. Call the fire department or other available emergency services as soon as you have time.
- If you are in a building with a fire extinguisher and you feel comfortable using the extinguisher:
  - Locate the nearest fire extinguisher and follow the instructions listed on the device to activate the extinguisher.
    - Never attempt to extinguish the fire alone. Ensure someone is with you.
    - Point the extinguisher toward the base of the fire and remember to not let the fire get between you and the exit.
    - Sweep the nozzle back and forth at the base of the fire.
    - If the fire cannot be extinguished using one extinguisher then evacuate the building.
    - Only attempt to use the extinguisher if you believe you can stop the fire; if it is too large or spreading too quickly then immediately evacuate the building.
- If you hear a smoke alarm sound, get out fast. You may have only seconds to escape safely.
- If you must evacuate through smoke, crawl low under the smoke to your exit - heavy smoke and poisonous gases collect first along the ceiling.
- If there is smoke blocking your door or first way out, use your second way out.
- Before opening a door, feel the doorknob and door. If either is hot, leave the door closed and use your second way out.
- If there is smoke coming around the door, leave the door closed and use your second way out.
- If you open a door, open it slowly. Be ready to shut it quickly if heavy smoke or fire is present.
- If you can't get to someone needing assistance, leave the home and call the local fire department. Tell the emergency operator where the person is located.
- If pets are trapped inside your home, tell firefighters right away.
- If you can't get out, close the door and cover vents and cracks around doors with cloth or tape to keep smoke out. Call your fire department. Say where you are and signal for help at the window with a light-colored cloth or a flashlight.
- If your clothes catch fire, stop, drop, and roll – stop immediately, drop to the ground, and cover your face with your hands. Roll over and over or back and forth until the fire is out. If you or someone else cannot stop, drop, and roll, smother the flames with a blanket or towel. Use cool water to treat the burn immediately for 3 to 5 minutes. Cover with a clean, dry cloth. Get medical help right away.

After

A Fire

- If the fire occurred in your residence, check with officials to make sure your residence is safe to enter before you return.
- Be watchful of any structural damage caused by the fire.
- The fire department should see that utilities are either safe to use or are disconnected before they leave the site.
  - **DO NOT** attempt to reconnect utilities yourself.
  - Contact a professional for guidance.

For more information on fire protection measure, including how to report a fire and additional fire safety guides, visit the **Overseas Building Operations, Office of Fire Protection website** available from the Department of State intranet at http://obo.m.state.sbu/ops/fir/default.aspx

Inside a U.S. Government Building

In addition to the above guidance, there are a few pieces of special instruction that must be followed for fires that occur while at U.S. government official facilities. Make sure to follow the steps outlined below for any fire at U.S. government official facilities.

Alarms

- Take the alarm seriously and prepare for evacuation.
- If you are a U.S. government employee, safeguard all classified and sensitive material.
- Close the windows to your office/space.
- Exit the room and close the door behind you.
- Report to the designated assembly area and check in with the floor warden.
- Assist others.
- Listen for announcements directing you to use specific evacuation routes and assembly areas.

Explosion

Explosive devices can be highly portable, using vehicles and humans as a means of transport. They are also easily detonated from remote locations or by suicide bombers. Conventional bombs have been used to damage and destroy financial, political, social, and religious institutions. Attacks have occurred in public places and on city streets with thousands of people around the world injured and killed.

Nevertheless, there are things you can do to prepare for the unexpected. Preparing for such events will reduce the stress that you may feel now, and later, should another emergency arise.

Before

A Bomb or Explosion

Bomb Threats

If you receive a telephoned bomb threat, you should do the following—

- Get as much information from the caller as possible. Try to ask the following questions:
  - When is it going to explode?
  - Where is it right now?
  - What does it look like?
  - What kind of bomb is it?
  - What will cause it to explode?
  - Did you place the bomb?
- Keep the caller on the line and record everything that is said.
  - If possible, use a tape recorder or other means to record the threatening call.
- Notify Post 1 and the Regional Security Officer immediately.
- Complete the Bomb Threat Report Card.

If You Find a Suspicious Item

- Do not touch the item.
- Do not change the environment (i.e. turning on or off lights, opening windows, etc.).
- Back away from the item.
- Prevent others from approaching the item.
- Notify security personnel that a suspicious item has been found and give a complete description of the item.

Packages and Letters

Be wary of suspicious packages and letters. They can contain explosives, chemical or biological agents. Be particularly cautious at your place of employment.

Some typical characteristics which ought to trigger suspicion include parcels that—

- Are unexpected or from someone unfamiliar to you.
- Have no return address or a return address that can't be verified as legitimate.
- Are marked with restrictive endorsements such as "Personal," "Confidential," or "Do not X-ray."
- Have protruding wires or aluminum foil, strange odors or stains.
- Show a city or state in the postmark that doesn't match the return address.
- Are of unusual weight given their size or are lopsided or oddly shaped.

Continued ▶

Before a Bomb or Explosion (Continued)

Some typical characteristics which ought to trigger suspicion include parcels that—

- Are marked with threatening language.
- Have inappropriate or unusual labeling.
- Have misspellings of common words.
- Are not addressed to a specific person.
- Are addressed to someone no longer with your organization or are otherwise outdated.
- Have incorrect titles or titles without a name.

During

A Bomb or Explosion

- Get under a sturdy table or desk if things are falling around you.
- The explosion may be part of an attack, be aware that there may be secondary threats. Before you leave the building be cognizant of additional threats and listen for guidance to remain where you are.
- Do not use elevators.
- Move away from sidewalks or streets to be used by emergency officials or others still exiting the building.
- If you are trapped in debris, use a flashlight, if possible, to signal your location to rescuers.
- Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can hear where you are.
- If possible, use a whistle to signal rescuers.
- Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause a person to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.
- Avoid unnecessary movement so you don't kick up dust.
- Cover your nose and mouth with anything you have on hand. (Dense-weave cotton material can act as a good filter. Try to breathe through the material.)

After

A Bomb or Explosion

- There may be a significant numbers of casualties and/or damage to buildings and infrastructure.
- Heavy law enforcement involvement follows a terrorist attack due to the event's criminal nature.
- You and your family or household may have to evacuate an area, avoiding roads blocked for your safety.
- Make sure you notify Post 1 and your loved ones that you have survived, they may be looking for you and unaware of your status.

Inside a U.S. Government Building

In addition to the above guidance, there are a few pieces of special instruction that must be followed for events that occur at a U.S. government facility.

Alarms

If you hear an alarm (hi-lo, European siren tone) while inside a U.S. government facility, remember to take the following actions—

- Immediately take a position of cover.
- Move away from the windows.
- Stay low.
- If possible, crawl to interior corridors or offices.
- Stay in this position until otherwise notified.
- If there is a detonation following the alarm:
  - Remain in your covered location as you listen for either an "all clear" signal or signs of additional attacks.
  - Assist others and/or take note of locations where they may be trapped.
  - If directed to evacuate the building, go to the pre-designated assembly area.
  - Check in with your floor warden and wait for further instruction.

If you are an embassy employee and a bomb search is under way, make sure you take the following actions—

- If directed, instruct visitors to gather belongings and then escort them off post grounds.
- Search your area of responsibility using the bomb search card.
- If no suspicious items are found, provide the search results to the floor warden.
- Search additional areas as the floor warden directs. Refer any inquiries to the post spokesperson.

If you are an embassy employee and there has been an explosion in your post—

- Secure all classified and sensitive materials, as long as you are safe to do so.

CBRN – Chemical, Biological Radiological, and Nuclear Incidents

Whether it is accidental release or an intentional attack, the release of chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) material has great potential to cause harm to an unprepared or unprotected population. A better understanding of CBRN incidents, and the hazards involved, will help protect you and your family when and if it is needed.

Chemical – The release of a toxic chemical in the form of a gas, liquid, or solid.

Biological – The release of bacteria, toxins, viruses. Many of these agents must be inhaled, enter through a cut in the skin, or be ingested to make you sick.

Radiological – The release of radioactive material from either a nuclear power station incident, a radiological dispersal device (dirty bomb) or a powerful radiological source.

Nuclear – A nuclear detonation that creates intense light and heat, destructive pressure wave, and the potential for radioactive contamination in the air, water, and ground surfaces.

Recognizing a CBRN Incident

You may not receive prior warning of a CBRN incident or attack, so pay close attention to indicators that may appear suddenly or seem out of place, such as powders, liquids, or strange smells, outside or within a building, with or without an immediate effect on people. Because some agents are odorless and colorless a CBRN incident may not be immediately apparent. Dependent on the type of release, CBRN agents may contaminate surfaces, structures, food and water supplies. The information below will assist you in making a preliminary assessment of possible CBRN exposure.

- **Chemical Incident –** Indicated by the rapid onset (minutes to hours) of symptoms that may include runny nose, nausea, difficulty breathing, rashes, blisters, seizure, and other patterns of illness inconsistent with a natural disease. Observable signs of dispersion may include unusual liquid sprays or vapors, oily droplets on surfaces, dead insects and animals, low-lying clouds or fog unrelated to weather, unexplained odors, or multiple people exhibiting similar symptoms.
- **Biological Incident –** Indicated by the gradual onset (hours to days) of symptoms that may include fever, chills, fatigue, coughing, and other non-specific initial symptoms. Observable signs of dispersion may include an abandoned spray device, unscheduled or unusual spraying with people wearing breathing protection, unusual numbers of sick or dying people or animals. Biological agents may not have an odor or color and can be in liquid or solid (powder) form.
- **Radiological/Nuclear Incident –** Onset of symptoms following a radiological incident may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, redness of skin, blistering, fatigue, hair loss, and other illnesses. Symptoms may take days, weeks, or longer to manifest. There may be no signs that an incident has taken place as radiation is odorless and invisible. Signs that a nuclear incident has taken place may include a significant blast with intense light and heat and a damaging pressure wave.

During

A CBRN Incident

Protection of the respiratory system, evacuation (if possible) and decontamination are the most important defensive actions to take following a CBRN incident. Once an incident has been recognized, put on an emergency escape mask or, if lacking a mask, cover your nose and mouth with a folded handkerchief (or available fabric material) and evacuate the area. If CBRN exposure is suspected, seek decontamination and medical attention as soon as possible.

Continued ▶

During a CBRN Incident (Continued)

Here are a few items to remember—

- **Time;** reduce the time you are exposed to a CBRN agent by evacuating the area quickly.
- **Distance;** move away from the area to increase you distance from the hazard.
- **Shielding;** shield your body by maneuvering or placing objects between you and the hazard.
- If possible, move upwind and uphill from the incident area.
- If you must remain inside, seek an interior room on a higher floor as many chemicals are heavier than air and will stay closer to the ground.
  - If inside due to a radioactive material release, seek an interior room on the lowest level.
- Ensure windows and exterior doors are closed and ventilations systems are shut down (unless equipped with a full chemical/biological filtration system).
- If in a vehicle, shut off air intake vents and close windows.

Decontamination

Decontamination is the process of physical removal and or neutralization of CBRN agents from the body to stop or reduce further exposure and subsequent harm. In addition, decontamination is necessary to protect emergency responders, medical personnel, and other unexposed personnel.

Basic decontamination measures —

- Decontaminate as soon as possible after evacuation to maximize effectiveness.
- Use soap and water to clean exposed areas (hands, then face).
- Remove contaminated clothing and place it into plastic bags and seal.
- Shower or clean entire body using soap and water.

Shelter-in-Place

If chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants are released into the air outside, you may receive instructions to shelter-in-place. This is to minimize your exposure, whether at home, work, or elsewhere. Some general guidelines follow, but always begin with protecting your respiratory system.

Choosing a room—

- If taking shelter from a chemical release, seek an interior room on a higher floor or a pre-designated area (without windows or with few windows) as many agents are heavier than air.
- If a radioactive material is released, seek an interior room on the lowest level or underground.
- Choose a room with access to a bathroom and preferably containing a telephone.
- Avoid rooms with window or through wall air conditioners as they are more difficult to seal.

Sealing a room—

- Lock doors and close windows, air vents, and fireplace dampers. Also close shades, blinds, or curtains if there is potential danger from explosion.
- Turn off ventilation systems (unless equipped with a full chemical/biological filtration system).
- Cover all windows, doors, and air vents with plastic sheeting (ideally 2-6 mils) and duct tape.

Civil Disorder

Civil disorder can be a dangerous event that may begin peacefully and rapidly become chaotic. Civil disorders may evolve from many situations such as a general strike, an anniversary of a highly emotional or controversial incident, major holidays, demonstrations, coups d'état , or any other politically inspired activity. Civil disorder is very dangerous regardless of whether the incident involves U.S. citizens or interests.

Before

Civil Disorder

- Stay informed. Pay close attention to local television and radio broadcasts and articles in local newspapers. In addition, listen for warnings and alerts issued by local governments, police, or civil protection agencies.
- If you know that a protest or demonstration is going to occur at a certain place or time, or you are aware that an incident affecting health and safety has occurred, make every effort to avoid the affected area.
- Plan alternate routes to work, school, or any other destination that you might frequent.
- Should an episode of unrest or any incident cause a disruption to electrical, water, or sanitation services, you should have enough food and water to sustain you and your family for at least three days.
- In cases of local unrest, have an emergency kit, or "go bag," ready for each member of the family for evacuation on short notice.
- For emergencies, keep on hand an appropriate amount of money and/or traveler's checks.
- Consolidate important personal records and documents for easy access and transportation. Keep passports and necessary visas up to date.

If you receive notification of a planned or ongoing civil disorder, try to obtain as much information as possible. Here are some questions to answer —

- When will the even take place?
- Where will the event take place?
- How large is it expected to be?
- What is the reason, goal, or objective?
- How long is it expected to last?

If not all of this information is available, report as much as possible to the post RSO as quickly as possible rather than spending time attempting to gain more details.

During

Civil Disorder

If you do find yourself caught in the middle of a situation of civil unrest, remember to—

- Stay away from the windows. If possible, relocate to a room that offers the greatest degree of safety from outside gunfire.
- When necessary, seek added protection by lying on the floor behind a durable piece of furniture.
- Stay aware of locations of emergency egress in the event of a forced evacuation, have your emergency kit ready to go.
- If you are in the open or on the street, seek cover and remain close to the ground.
- Stay in contact with the embassy and monitor local media station for news updates.

Hostage Taking and Kidnapping

In every country in the world, there exists the threat of a situation that includes the holding of people against their will, whether the kidnapping of an individual person, the hijacking of an airplane, or a hostage standoff involving a large group of people with a structured list of demands. The State Department regularly posts Travel Warning and Travel Alerts with information about country specific threats to U.S. citizens, make sure you regularly check State.gov for advisories in your country. Additionally, the RSO or other designated officer at the embassy or consulate can provide country specific information on the following—

- The nature, if any, of the general threat in your country.
- Specific areas of the cities or countryside that are considered dangerous for U.S. citizens.
- Inform you of any recent incidents involving the targeting of U.S. citizens.

In addition to any information that the embassy RSO is able to provide, the following are some general security suggestions that should be considered when traveling or residing in an area that may be at risk of hostage taking or kidnapping:

- Be aware of your surroundings. Be alert to activities or situations that are abnormal.
- To the extent possible, avoid establishing a pattern in routes and times of your movements. Kidnappers generally keep victims under surveillance for substantial periods of time (several days to several months) to discover travel patterns and arrange a suitable time and place for the kidnapping. Unpredictability is one of your best weapons.
- Avoid traveling alone. Try to travel with a group of people, there is safety in numbers.
- If possible, travel in a convoy, particularly while traveling long distances.
- When possible, travel only on busy, well-traveled thoroughfares staying away from isolated back-country roads. Avoid dangerous areas of the city.
- Keep all your doors locked when driving.
- Avoid actions that might identify you as a U.S. citizen or someone who is wealthy.
- Make sure that both you and your family know to report any incident immediately to the RSO and do not talk to the media. Talking the media without consulting with the RSO can have a negative impact on the situation.

Carjacking

All drivers (male or female, young or old) may be targeted for a carjacking. To keep yourself safe here are a few items to remember—

- Carjackers often use diversion to conceal their attack (e.g., asking for the time, begging, washing car windows, selling newspapers).
- New cars and luxury or sports-utility vehicles are major targets of carjackers.
- Carjacking occurs primarily at night but also happens during the day.
- Gas stations, parking garages, and a victim's home are all desirable "seizure" locations, as are places where one might park a car and leave the motor running.
- If you believe another car has been following you, and the driver "bumps" into you at a light or a traffic sign, particularly if the suspect vehicle is occupied by two or more men, do not get out of your vehicle. Drive to the Embassy, Marine House, or a police station or other safe location and report the incident.

Receiving a Threat

Here is some information you should always follow if you receive a threat to yourself or information regarding the holding of one or more people against their will—

- Immediately contact the embassy and report the threat to the RSO.
- If possible, use a tape recorder or other means to record any threatening phone calls.
- Obtain as much information as possible: Who, Where, When, How.
- Preserve any written communications as evidence.

Being Taken Hostage

There are no one set of rules to follow if you are kidnapped or taken hostage, but if you ever find yourself being kidnapped or taken hostage regardless of the means or method, here are some important things to remember—

- Only you can decide if you should fight back, run, or comply. You must make a judgment based upon your individual abilities and the situation at hand.
  - If you do not have extensive training and an ability to defend yourself then passive cooperation may be your best defense.
  - While first being taken captive, if feasible, scream and move about to draw attention to yourself. Try to involve others and ask someone to call the authorities.
- Under all circumstances attempt to stay calm and be alert to situations that you can exploit to your advantage. Remember that the primary objective of your family and the U.S. government will be to secure your safe return as quickly as possible.
- Leave evidence of your presence in each location. Examples include strands of hair, fingerprints, blood, bits of fingernails, etc.
- If asked to produce evidence of proof of life, such as a photo or a video, it is advisable to do so as it confirms the individual's continued survival to family and aids in the negotiation process.
- Remember it is essential to avoid internal conflicts within the group and maintain a unified approach with the captors.
- Make a mental note of all movements, including time in transit, direction, distances, speeds, landmarks along the way, special odors, and distinctive sounds like bells, construction, voices, etc.
- Whenever possible, take mental note of the characteristics of your abductors, their habits, surroundings, speech, mannerisms, and what contacts they make.
- Generally, you cannot expect to have a good opportunity to escape. No attempt to escape should be made unless it has been carefully calculated to ensure the best possible odds for success.
- Avoid making provocative remarks to your abductors. As noted, they may be unstable individuals who react irrationally.
- Request special medicines or medical attention immediately if you have a disease or physical condition that requires treatment.
- Try to establish a rapport with your captors. Many people who have been held captive in the past have had success in attempting to build a relationship with their captors for the sake of better treatment and favors.

Continued ▶

Being Taken Hostage (Continued)

- Captors may be seeking information to be used against the United States or of your fellow hostages. Do not discuss classified or sensitive information with your fellow hostages. You should be guided by the knowledge that whatever you say may be used to mislead or punish colleagues and that your actions may result in reprisals.

Avoiding Capture or Attempting Escape

The decision to try avoiding capture or attempting escape is one only you can make. Fellow hostages could be jeopardized. Before attempting such actions, there are factors to consider.

To have any chance of success, you should—

- Be in excellent physical condition and mentally prepared to react before the terrorists consolidate their position.
- Have a plan in mind, and possibly have been trained in special driving tactics or other survival skills.
- Take terrorists by surprise and you may survive. (If their organization has a poor track record of hostage safety, it may be worth the risk.)

Rescue

The termination of any terrorist incident is extremely tense. If an assault force makes a rescue attempt—

- Remain calm and get low to the ground and out of the way.
- Make no sudden moves. You could be mistaken for a terrorist and risk being shot.
- Even in a voluntary release or surrender by the terrorists, tensions are charged and tempers are volatile. Precise instructions will be given to the hostages, either by the captors or by the police.
- Follow instructions explicitly. You may be asked to exit with hands in the air, and you may be searched by the rescue team. You may experience rough treatment until you are identified and the situation has been stabilized.

Active Shooter

Active Shooter events can happen in any community at any time. Because active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with active shooter situations.

RUN – HIDE - FIGHT

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. Remember that visitors are likely to follow the lead of employees and managers during an active shooter incident. In short, the immediate actions are RUN, HIDE, or FIGHT; further details on these actions are provided below.

RUN

- If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Be sure to:
- Have an escape route and plan in mind.
- Evacuate immediately and leave your belongings behind.
- Help others escape, if possible.
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be.
- Keep your hands visible.
- Follow the instructions of any police officers.
- Do not attempt to move wounded people.
- Call Post 1 or RSO when you are safe.

HIDE

If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you. Make sure to silence your cell phone before hiding and text the RSO your location if you are safe to do so. Take some time now to examine your surroundings to determine where would be good place to hide, or a good place to avoid.

Your hiding place should—

- Be out of the active shooter's view.
- Provide concealment and as much protection as possible in case shots are fired in your direction (e.g., an office with a closed door).
- Not trap you or restrict your options for movement.
- Lock the door to prevent the active shooter from entering your hiding place.
- Blockade the door with heavy furniture.

If active shooter is nearby—

- Silence your cell phone and/or pager.
- Turn off any source of noise (e.g., radios, televisions).
- Hide behind large items (e.g., cabinets, desks).
- Remain quiet if evacuation is not possible.
- Remain calm.
- If you can, alert the police to the active shooter's location. If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen.

FIGHT

If you cannot run and cannot hide, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter. Act as aggressively as possible. Use whatever improvised weapons you can. Commit to your actions and incapacitate the shooter as quickly as possible.

Drawdown and Evacuation

Every day U.S. government employees and family members live with the possibility of a sudden departure from an overseas post – in response to political unrest, natural disaster, a death in the family, divorce, a family member in crisis, or a medical emergency. Occasionally, you may need to shelter-in-place at your home or in the embassy or consulate for a few days rather than leave the country. Personal, political, family, and medical emergencies are more complicated when they happen overseas; being prepared will help you cope.

Some evacuations are brief; others last up to six months. Depending on the event that leads to an evacuation, you may travel to a nearby country to safehaven or you may return directly to the U.S. No matter how calm things are at your post, you should not be lulled into thinking that "it can't happen here."

There are two kinds of evacuations: authorized departure and ordered departure. Both are requested by the Chief of Mission (COM) and approved by the Under Secretary for Management. Under an authorized departure, eligible family members and/or post employees may leave post in advance of normal rotation. Under an ordered departure, all eligible family members and U.S. government employees under Chief of Mission authority not on post's "drawdown" list must leave post. There is no difference between authorized and ordered departure in terms of the benefits or allowances provided to those evacuated.

Having a personal preparedness plan will help you, or you and your family, be ready to leave quickly with many arrangements in place. Whatever your reason for a sudden departure from post, the Family Liaison Office (FLO) is available to provide guidance and support along the way. FLO will maintain contact with U.S. government evacuees and continue to keep the post community informed with information throughout the evacuation period. Visit the **FLO website** at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1991.htm for more information about evacuation planning and procedures during and immediately following an evacuation.

Before

A Drawdown and Evacuation

Being prepared for an evacuation begins before your departure to your new location. Being familiar with the host country and the local language is crucial to preparing for an overseas tour and coping with a possible crisis at post. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) offers distance learning and classroom-based courses that employees and family members may take.

FSI's Transition Center also has a wealth of information to share, including post-specific information. Visit the FSI website for an overview (www.state.gov/m/fsi). For example, consider attending FSI's Security Overseas Seminar (SOS) when you are in Washington, D.C., or reviewing FSI's online resource, Overseas Crisis Readiness, which is free and available online 365 days a year at www.state.gov/overseascrisisreadiness.

You can also prepare by developing a plan for communicating with your family and friends back home. Discuss with your immediate and extended family how they should contact you in case of an emergency at post. Provide your family or friends with emergency telephone numbers for the Department of State's Operations Center (202-647-1512) and Human Resources contacts from your agency. All Department of State employees should keep an up-to-date locator card in the Employee Services Center (located at Main State).

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Before a Drawdown and Evacuation (Continued)

Organize Your Personal Affairs

In order to be properly prepared for an unexpected departure from post you should have your legal and medical affairs in order. Ask trusted friends, family members, and financial professionals to help you with preparations before you arrive at post. You should consider having a meeting with your bank or financial advisor, insurance representative, and family attorney to discuss the need to—

- Execute a Power of Attorney for each adult family member; have several originals and copies made.
- Establish individual credit cards for emergencies. Employees should consider acquiring a government travel card to cover travel-related expenses of the employee and family members during an evacuation.
- Make sure you have a credit limit or access to at least $20,000 in the event you initially need to cover costs associated with a sudden departure from post. It may take several weeks to receive voucher reimbursements.
- Get an automated teller machine (ATM) card for your bank account that can be used worldwide. Make sure your spouse/partner knows the personal identification number (PIN). Consider the risks in the country where assigned associated with the use of ATM, check, and debit cards that pull funds directly from your bank account.
- Create online automatic banking (whenever possible), including direct deposit of paychecks and bill payments.
- Purchase medical evacuation insurance for Members of Household.
- Purchase personal property insurance for your storage and your household effects (HHE), making sure it provides adequate coverage for all events including flooding and acts of war.

What to Hand Carry/Pack

Part of being prepared for an unexpected departure from post involves making sure you bring the right things with you, and also leave the right things behind.

- Decide what to take to post and what to put into storage. Consider storing items that can't be replaced, including sentimental photos. Keep a photo inventory of all your possessions going to post, as well as those going into storage, including valuables such as artwork and jewelry.
- Update all personal address lists and store them on a thumb drive or CD, or upload to a cloud site.
- Hand-carry employment documents for adult family members including resumes, references, and SF-50 personnel actions. Keep duplicates in the U.S. and on a cloud site.
- Bring school records, report cards, test scores, current samples of work, and Individual Education Plans (IEP) for special needs children.
- Pack some seasonal clothing, winter and summer, regardless of post.

When You Arrive at Post

When you arrive at post, attend a briefing by the Regional Security Officer (RSO) and the Community Liaison Office (CLO) coordinator to learn about personal preparedness specific to your new location.

Before a Drawdown and Evacuation (Continued)

If you have children in local schools, check the school's emergency evacuation plan. Choose a trusted colleague or friend at post and give that person a current power of attorney for medical or other emergencies in the event you need him/her to care for your children unexpectedly. You also should have a plan for pets. The U.S. government does not evacuate pets. Make advance arrangements for their care.

Sheltering-in-Place

Be prepared to shelter-in-place for up to 72 hours by creating an emergency kit for you and your family. The kit should include: food, clothing, water, medication, cash, supplies and important documents in case you need to shelter-in-place in the event of an emergency. Families with children may want to include small toys/ games in the kit, as they will provide some comfort and entertainment during a stressful time. Plan to update your emergency kit every six months to ensure that all food, water and medication are fresh (not expired), all clothing fits, credit cards are up-to-date and batteries are charged. Place these items in a waterproof container that is easy to carry, such as a waterproof duffle bag or a large backpack. For more information on building a emergency kit, see chapter 1.

Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency. Aim to have a hard-wired telephone in the rooms where you plan to shelter-in-place. Take your radio, 72-hour emergency kit, or "go bag," with you when you shelter-in-place. Listen to radio stations and the embassy issued radio until you are told all is safe or given further instructions for an evacuation.

During

A Drawdown and Evacuation

If evacuation becomes a reality, you will follow the emergency evacuation plan for your post. You will receive your evacuation travel orders. Before proceeding to your evacuation point, you may want to do a few last-minute checks to see if everything is in order. Put checkbooks, bankbooks, credit cards, and as much cash as you think you may need for a few days in a secure (but easily accessible) place. Ensure that passports and visas to enter the U.S. for non-U.S. citizen family members are in order. Arrange for pick-up or forwarding of mail and plan for the care of household and domestic employees. Don't forget about your pets. Since you may not be traveling directly to the U.S., be prepared for an interim stopover.

If you are able to travel via commercial aircraft, you may not have any baggage restrictions; however, if the flight is on a DOS charter plane then you may be restricted to one checked bag and one carry-on. Make your carry-on your "go bag" with all your important documents (including a CD and/or thumb drive with scanned copies, just in case). Don't forget to pack prescriptions, toys, wipes, water, snacks, cash, any necessary chargers, and several changes of clothes, as well as something to read. Think about whether you might be evacuating to a place with a different climate, or where the climate might change in the near future.

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During a Drawdown and Evacuation (Continued)

Important Documents and Reference Information—

- Passport information: passport number and date of issue
- Visa information for non-U.S. citizen family members for entry into the U.S.
- U.S. driver's license number
- Social Security number
- Bank account numbers
- Credit card numbers
- Insurance policy numbers
- Car registration, title, serial number and car insurance
- Current prescriptions, including eyeglasses and contact lenses

Copy these documents to bring to post (leave the originals in a safe deposit box)—

- Copy of will(s)
- Power of attorney (one of the originals)
- Birth and marriage certificates
- Naturalization papers
- Deeds
- Mortgage documents
- Stocks and bonds (or leave with broker in case you want to sell)
- Insurance papers: life, car, house, medical, and household effects (HHE)

Emergency Contact Information

Suggested emergency contact information

Home

Address: _____

_____ Telephone #:_____

Name: _____ Telephone #:_____

Name: _____ Telephone #:_____

Name: _____ Telephone #:_____

Day Care

Name: _____ Telephone #:_____

School

Name: _____ Telephone #:_____

Hospital

Name: _____ Telephone #:_____

Address: _____

Post One

Telephone #:_____

Local Contacts

Police Telephone #: _____ Fire Telephone #:_____

Local Neighbor/Contact: _____ Telephone #:_____

Stateside Contacts

Next of Kin Contact: _____ Telephone #:_____

U.S. Lawyer/Attorney: _____ Telephone #:_____

U.S. Doctor: _____ Telephone #:_____

State Department Operations Center 202-647-1512