

## **The Reality of Disaster and the Importance of Community**

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**Emergency Plans in Real Life - I know you have your own plans in place. Please let me humbly tell you what I've learned.**

- Don't plan on a phone tree as phones and electricity go down
- Cell phones went down
- Know who is home alone
- Know who is out of town with loved ones at home with no car
- Know who is ill and will only leave the home kicking and screaming
- Inform those stubborn people - you know who they are - they must leave when told
- Husbands - don't try to stay and protect the house
- Wives - don't try to get all the mementos
- To think you can stay and protect your home with a hose is not realistic and you WILL NOT survive. Picture spitting into a volcano. The monster coming is worse than you can imagine.
- Know who is deaf and who will not hear the police coming through with a loud speaker
- Have a community of shared keys so at least two or three of your neighbors can get into your locked house in an emergency in case they can't wake you.
- Have a go bag - at your back door. Do not think you will have a brain when you are in panic mode. You must be prepared to just grab the bag and go.
- You may have to sleep in your car. Keep a pillow and blanket in your car.
- Keep your car full of gas at all times. Don't go below 1/2 tank. Don't expect to be able to stop for gas.
- If you are at work and you hear your home is in danger and you have loved ones or pets at home, DO NOT expect to be able to get home to them. You will NOT be allowed.
- Have a plan - a neighbor who might open the door so the pets can get out. Do not ask your neighbor to save your animals or to spend

time trying to catch them. Opening the door is all they will have time for.

- Share the commitment that you will each get the other's family out if needed.
- Discuss a person you might call out of the area who can be the person who knows where all family members are. My sister, my niece, her husband and I were unable to talk to each other via cell phone as the lines were wonky. My nephew in Canada was actually able to keep track of the fire and us. His phone was able to call our phones. He let each of us know where the others were. Again, don't expect cell service. Many cell towers went up in smoke.
- Make sure that the manager of your park has current cell numbers for all residents. The sheriff's office will call in a few days to try to locate everyone. We did not know for four days that everyone had made it out.
- Think ahead of the places you might go if the road south is closed. Where would you go if the road north was closed. Don't plan on staying in a hotel. Chances are they'll be full. Know where you are going. Draw directions if you must. I had neighbors who grew up in the Rogue Valley and could not remember how to get to Grants Pass. I spent six hours trying to find the house of my niece's husband's grandparents in Rogue River. I spent the night in my car with my animals as animals were not welcome. Plan ahead.

### **What you need in your Go Bag:**

The non-perishable things can stay in your car. Like a blanket and pillow. But many things need to stay in your go-bag in a designated cupboard in your home. Easy to grab. A no brainer, because you won't have a brain.

- Water
- energy bars (something that will keep)
- cat food and bowl
- dog food and bowl
- Leash, collar, poo bags
- Pan and cat litter

- A week's worth of your medications.
- Make a copy of important papers and put them in a file in your go bag.
  - Copy of all ownership papers, deeds, registration, etc.
  - Copies of all utility bills, credit card bills, cell phone bill, etc. You'll need account numbers and customer service numbers.
  - A list of the automatic payments you make
  - A list of the payments you make manually
  - Bank information, phone number, account
  - Instructions for dog and cat in case you have to board them, and a copy of their vaccinations would be helpful.
  - Copies of important medical records
  - Copies of all insurance policies with contact info.
  - Passport
  - Greencards
  - Social Security Card
- Get an address book.
  - Write computer log- ins, passwords
  - Phone number of top ten people including doctor, pharmacy, neighbors. Your family. Your church. Add hotel numbers.
- Where you end up, there may not be cell phone service. Do not rely on your cell for phone numbers. Phone books are hard to find. If there is no internet you can't look up numbers.
- Keep a phone charger in your car.
- Clothes - three outfits -underwear, socks, shoes, pjs.
- Believe me when I say it is so difficult to only have the clothes on your back. You will not have the energy, focus, desire to go shopping. And if it's a huge disaster, many things will be sold out. I wore the same pants and top for most of the first three weeks (washing them in the evening) but it was the only thing I had left from my life.
- Get toiletries at the dollar store (toothbrush/paste, deodorant, shampoo, conditioner, first aid kit, hair brush, facial cleansing wipes. Hand sanitizer, pain killer, tums).

- Flashlight
- Dollar store reading glasses
- A puzzle book

**Finally,**

**If you only remember one thing from my talk, I want you to remember this: Don't spend time grabbing things. I want you to hear your children's voices in your head yelling "get out now, get out, get out" Everything can be replaced, but you cannot be replaced. Don't freeze. Just go.**

Weeks later when I apologized to my daughter for not grabbing her baby pictures, she said, "Oh, Mom, I would rather have you than the baby pictures."