HOW TO MAKE A FAMILY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLAN

Write down everyone's contact information on paper, pick an out-of-town contact and meeting places near home and out of town, learn the emergency plans at your kids' schools and your workplaces, and practice texting each other. Ready.gov has a free fillable form to build the plan.

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Ready.gov's reason for a plan is simple: "You may not be together when disaster strikes, so it's important to know how you'll reconnect if separated". Its planning guide adds that communication networks, such as mobile phones and computers, could be unreliable during disasters, and electricity could be disrupted. A plan written down ahead of time works when phones do not. Ready.gov's fillable form builds one for you, and says the information you enter is not saved, stored, or shared by any government agency.

START WITH FIVE QUESTIONS

Ready.gov's first step is to sit down with your household and answer five questions:

1. How will I receive emergency alerts and warnings?
2. What is my shelter plan?
3. What is my evacuation route?
4. What is my family or household communication plan?
5. Do I need to update my emergency preparedness kit?

For a nuclear emergency, the first three have their own guides: emergency radio and alerts, shelter in place, and evacuation routes. This page covers the fourth.

WRITE CONTACT INFORMATION ON PAPER

Ready.gov's communication plan has three steps: collect, share, and practice.

Collect. Make a paper copy of contact information for your household and for important people and offices, such as doctors, medical facilities, schools, and service providers. Ready.gov explains why paper matters: it helps you reconnect "in case you don't have your mobile device or computer with

you or if the battery runs down." Also write down numbers for emergency services, utilities, medical providers, veterinarians, and insurance companies.

If someone in your household is Deaf or hard of hearing, or has a speech disability and uses relay services, Ready.gov says to include how to connect through relay services on a landline, mobile device, or computer.

CHOOSE AN OUT-OF-TOWN CONTACT

Pick one person who lives outside your community or state to act as a central point of contact. Ready.gov's reason: "In a disaster, it may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town because local phone lines can be jammed". Ready.gov's radiation guidance says the same for nuclear emergencies: identify an out-of-state contact who you can inform of your whereabouts and safety.

Everyone in the household texts or calls that person, and that person passes the news along.

PLAN TO TEXT, NOT CALL

Ready.gov: "If you are using a mobile phone, a text message may get through when a phone call will not," because a text needs far less bandwidth than a call, and texts may save and send automatically when capacity returns. CDC gives the same advice for radiation emergencies: try to use text messages if possible. FEMA's nuclear planning guidance expects cell towers to be overloaded and tells planners to encourage texting over calling.

Ready.gov suggests short messages like "I'm OK. At library," and also recommends:

- Store at least one contact under the name "In Case of Emergency" or "ICE" in every phone.
- Make a group list in every phone of the people you would need to reach.
- Make sure everyone, including your out-of-town contact, knows how to text, or knows another way to communicate.

PICK YOUR MEETING PLACES

Ready.gov asks for safe, familiar places where your family can go for protection or to reunite, accessible to everyone in the household:

- **Indoor:** where everyone goes for protection at home. For a nuclear emergency, that is your shelter spot: a basement or the middle of the building, as covered in shelter in place.

- **In your neighborhood:** where you meet if you have to leave the house, such as a mailbox at the end of the driveway or a neighbor's house.
- **Outside your neighborhood:** where you meet if you cannot get home, such as a library, community center, house of worship, or a friend's home.
- **Outside your town or city:** where you reunite if you cannot get home and your community is told to evacuate. This could be a relative's or friend's home. Make sure everyone knows the address and how to get there.

WARNING

After a nuclear explosion, do not leave a safe shelter to reach a meeting place. Federal guidance is to get inside, stay inside, and stay tuned, and to move only when officials say it is safe or tell you to evacuate. Meeting places are for after that. See the first 72 hours.

KIDS AT SCHOOL AND ADULTS AT WORK

A disaster can happen during school or work hours. Ready.gov says you need to know their emergency response plans and how to stay informed. Its guidance:

- Learn the emergency plans at each school, childcare provider, caregiver, and workplace. Ready.gov's form has space for each one's address, hotline number, and pick-up details.
- Talk through these plans with your children, and tell them who could pick them up in an emergency.
- Make sure household members with phones are signed up for alerts from their school, workplace, and local government.
- Children without phones should know to follow instructions from a responsible adult, such as a teacher or principal.
- Make sure everyone, including children, knows how and when to call 911: only for a life-threatening emergency.

PLAN FOR PETS

Ready.gov: "If local officials ask you to evacuate, that means your pet should evacuate too", and "if you leave your pets behind, they may end up lost, injured or worse." Its guidance:

- Know that many public shelters and hotels do not allow pets inside, and plan ahead for a safe place to take them.
- Arrange with neighbors, friends, or relatives for someone to care for or evacuate your pets if you cannot.

- Have your pet microchipped, and keep your address and phone number up to date.
- Pack several days of food and water, extra medicine, a backup leash, collar, and ID tag, and a picture of you and your pet together.

PLAN FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ready.gov's guidance for people with disabilities:

- Create a support network of people who can help in a disaster, tell them where your supplies are, and consider giving a trusted member a key.
- Plan how you will communicate with others if your equipment is not working.
- For medical equipment that needs electricity, ask your doctor or health care provider how to keep it running during an outage. Ready.gov says you can also ask your power provider to put you on a list for priority power restoration.
- Get an extra battery for a power wheelchair or other battery-operated assistive device if you can.
- Keep model information for your equipment and note where it came from (Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance).
- Plan for accessible transportation for evacuation.
- Ask your local emergency management office about local programs, such as voluntary registries.

Ready.gov also says to consider each person's age, dietary needs, medical needs, languages spoken, and service animals when you assess your household's needs.

SHARE IT AND PRACTICE IT

Ready.gov says to give every household member a copy to carry in a wallet, backpack, or purse, and to post a copy in a central place at home, such as the refrigerator. Then practice:

PRACTICE CHECKLIST

PRACTICE

- [ ] Everyone sends a text to the out-of-town contact and a group text to the household list
- [ ] Agree on who sends out the meeting place information
- [ ] Gather everyone at the indoor and neighborhood meeting places
- [ ] Talk through how each person would reach the out-of-neighborhood and out-of-town places
- [ ] Ask everyone to recite key phone numbers from memory, then check the paper copy

KEEP IT CURRENT

- [ ] Review, update, and practice the plan at least once a year
- [ ] Update it whenever any of your information changes
- [ ] Print new copies for everyone after each update

NEXT STEPS

- Pack what you would take if told to leave: Evacuation go bag
- Set up alerts before you need them: Emergency radio and alerts
- Decide whether to stay or go: Evacuate or shelter

TRACK	Nuclear emergency
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COMPILED FROM THESE SOURCES

1. Ready.gov, Make a Plan
2. Ready.gov, Make a Family Emergency Plan (form)
3. Ready.gov, Create Your Family Emergency Communication Plan (PDF)
4. Ready.gov, Radiation Emergencies (Nuclear Explosion)
5. Ready.gov, Pets and Animals
6. Ready.gov, People with Disabilities

7. CDC, What to Do: Stay Tuned

8. FEMA, Planning Guidance for Response to a Nuclear Detonation, Third Edition (2022)

Every safety claim on this sheet links to its primary source.