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A massive section collapsed from the four-lane I-5 freeway in the 1994 Northridge Earthquake.



Photo: Robert A. Eplett/OES CA | courtesy of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

Be Safe!

September is National Preparedness Month

- [Download your Family Disaster Plan card.](#)
- [Check your Emergency Preparedness List.](#)

(Sept. 14, 2005) With images of Hurricane Katrina and the southeast Asia tsunami still fresh in our minds, it's important to remember that September is National Preparedness Month.

This month, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the American Red Cross are urging all Americans to take simple steps to become better prepared for emergencies.

Both agencies have web sites with lots of information on emergency preparedness and advice on making survival kits, evacuation planning and emergency evacuation.

Here are 10 tips from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services that will help you and your family prepare for any of the emergencies – earthquake, fire, flooding, landslides – that are common to Southern California.

1. Identify Your Risk

Do you live near a flood plain, an earthquake fault, or in a high fire danger area? Are you prepared for a human-made disaster? For more information contact your local Office of Emergency Services.

2. Create a Family Disaster Plan

Your family needs a plan that tells everyone where to meet if you have to evacuate, who you've identified as an out-of-state family contact, how to get emergency information in your community and how to take care of your family pets.

Each family member should carry a Family Disaster Plan card listing the local Office of Emergency Services phone number, an emergency meeting place outside your home, a meeting place outside your neighborhood, and the name and phone numbers, both daytime and evening, of a family contact.

3. Practice Your Disaster Plan

Start by having family members meet at a designated spot outside your home. Know how to respond in the event of any disaster — whether to stay indoors, or whether to evacuate your neighborhood. Know the proper evacuation procedures and routes.

4. Build Disaster Supply Kits For Your Home and Car

Put together a kit of emergency supplies that will allow you and your family to survive for at least three days in the event of an emergency. The Red Cross web site has a complete list of recommended supplies.

5. Prepare Your Children

Talk to your kids about the risks and what your family will do if disaster strikes.

6. Don't Forget Those With Special Needs

Infants, seniors and those with special needs must not be forgotten.

7. Learn CPR and First Aid

Contact your local chapter of the American Red Cross for training in basic first aid and CPR. Your training could save the life of a loved one or neighbor following a disaster.

8. Eliminate Hazards in Your Home and The Workplace

You must secure the contents of your home or office to reduce hazards, especially during an earthquake or an explosion.

9. Understand Post 9/11 Risks

Disaster preparedness must now account for man-made disasters as well as natural ones. Knowing what to do during an emergency is an important part of being prepared and may make all the difference when seconds count.

10. Get Involved, Volunteer, Bear Responsibility

Donate blood, join a local Community Emergency Response Team, educate your neighbor, or volunteer with your local American Red Cross.

Emergency Preparedness Checklist

Complete this checklist to ensure that you and your family are prepared for emergencies.

- Post emergency numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.)
- Teach children how and when to call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services number.
- Show each family member how and when to turn off water, gas and electricity at main switches.
- Check whether you have adequate insurance coverage.
- Teach each family member how to use a fire extinguisher and show them where it's kept.
- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.
- Conduct a home hazard hunt.
- Stock emergency supplies and assemble a disaster supplies kit.
- Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR course.
- Determine the best escape routes from your home, including two ways out of each room.
- Find the safe spots in your home for each type of disaster.
- Test smoke detectors monthly and change batteries at least yearly.
- Learn how to help any elderly or disabled persons in your family.
- Decide how to care for your pets in an emergency.