

Being prepared for an emergency is something that crosses all our minds. Emergencies arise in many forms and taking the time to complete a few easy steps can make a major difference in a stressful event. We would like to share a few examples and practical steps you, your family, and even your business, can take to prepare for an emergency. We will provide links to several federal agency websites throughout this article. In the next article we will follow up with information on steps to take after a major emergency.

### Natural Disasters

While Congressman Loudermilk's district is not located on the coast, we still encounter severe storms and an occasional hurricane. The first resource we recommend is the [FEMA App](#). This app helps direct people to regional shelters and receive alerts for our area. From preparing, evacuation, and filing claims, you will find this app an excellent resource.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) website [Ready.gov](#) provides practical information to help prepare people for many events. From flooding to home fires and power outages this website offers helpful tips for building [Basic Disaster Supplies Kit](#) and a list of [Additional Emergency Supplies](#).

### Environmental/Technological Emergencies

In recent years environmental events like train wrecks and chemical spills have caused potential exposure to hazardous materials. [Ready.gov](#) shares information on making a [Family Emergency Plan](#) and how to [safely shelter in place](#). For individuals and businesses, your local government can provide additional guidance. *"Many communities have Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) responsible for collecting information about chemicals and hazardous materials in the community and planning for accidents. These materials are available to the public upon request. Contact your [local emergency management office](#) for more information on LEPCs."* [Ready.gov](#)

For businesses, [OSHA](#) provides information on how to create an Emergency Action Plan. The [Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool](#) webpage has printable checklists that walk a business through emergency scenarios, evacuations procedures, and employee training.

### Tech Ready/Cybersecurity

We live in a world that relies on technical devices. In an emergency, phones can become overloaded and unreliable. During large emergency events, DHS recommends using text messages. *"Mobile networks can become overwhelmed during emergencies, making it hard to make and get phone calls. Text messages require less bandwidth, which means they are able to be transmitted more reliably during situations when many people are trying*

to use their mobile phones at the same time.” [Ready.gov](#) Be sure your emergency kit includes charging cords.

The one step we all know how to take but rarely do is to back-up our computer files, including photos, logins/passwords, banking information, and medical lists such as needed medications. Having access to backed-up information on a USB drive can be a life saver in an emergency.

In addition to the situations discussed above, civil unrest, transportation and utility failures, and medical emergencies can all lead to stressful moments in our lives. It is so beneficial to create a plan that you, your family, and even your employees know.

A staff member’s family experienced a natural disaster in 2013, and found that phones quickly became overloaded and communication was nearly impossible. Not being able to communicate with your loved ones is not a comfortable feeling. Your mind can fill with so many questions and concerns that you have never had to think about before. It can be overwhelming; however, are we ever totally prepared? No, that is not possible, but we can take simple steps and make plans now to help us manage difficult times if we are faced with a life altering emergency.

Next week we will discuss resources available to assist when navigating life after a natural disaster.

Free resources: “Order free preparedness materials from [FEMA’s online ordering platform](#). These materials can be shipped directly to you at no cost.”

If you have questions or need assistance with a federal agency, please feel free to call Congressman Loudermilk’s office at (770) 429-1776. We look forward to serving you, should you need our assistance.