



Emergencies and Safety

Emergencies are unexpected events that can cause harm to people and property. They can happen to anyone at any time. Plan ahead to keep yourself and your family safe. This section tells you how you can prepare for emergencies and how to get help when they happen.

Emergency Help: Call 911

In the United States, you can call 911 on any telephone to get emergency help. Call 911 to:

- Report a fire.
- Report a crime in progress.
- Call an ambulance for emergency medical help.
- Report suspicious activities, such as screams, calls for help, or gunshots.

What Happens When I Call 911?

- Calls to 911 are usually answered within 12 seconds. You may be put on hold. Do not hang up! When the operator answers, there will be silence on the phone for several seconds. Do not hang up. Wait for the operator to speak.
- If you do not speak English, tell the operator what language you speak. An interpreter should come on the line.



- The 911 operator will ask you questions to find out what and where the emergency is. Keep calm and answer these questions. Try to stay on the phone with the operator until you answer all questions.

When Not to Call 911

Call 911 for serious, life-threatening emergencies only. Calling 911 for the wrong reason may keep someone else from getting the help they need. Do not call 911 to:

- Ask for directions.
- Ask for information about public services.
- Find out if someone is in jail.

- Report situations that are not emergencies.
- Ask for information about animal control.
- Talk to a police officer about something that is not an emergency.

If you have a question for the police, call the non-emergency number for the police department listed in the blue pages of your phone book.

LAW ENFORCEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES



In the U.S., there are federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies that protect the public. In your community, law enforcement officers are the police or sheriff. Find out the phone number of the police station nearest you and keep it next to your telephone. Remember that police officers are there to protect you and your family from harm. Do not be afraid to report a crime, especially if you are the victim. Some criminals take advantage of immigrants because they think you will not report the crime to the police. If you are stopped by a police officer:

- Don't be afraid. Be polite and cooperative.
- Tell the officer if you do not speak English.
- If you are in a car, don't get out of the car until the officer tells you to.
- Keep your hands where the officer can see them. Don't reach into your pockets or into other areas of the car.

Keeping Your Home and Family Safe

Get ready before emergencies happen. Here are some things you can do to be safe:

- Be sure your doors have good locks and keep them locked at all times. Don't give your door keys to strangers. Be careful about opening your door to strangers. Ask who they are and what they want before you open the door.
- Smoke alarms make a loud noise when there is smoke in your house or apartment. Make sure you have smoke alarms on the ceiling near bedrooms and on each floor of your house. Replace the batteries in your smoke alarm twice a year. Check the alarm once each month to make sure it works.
- Find out where the nearest hospital and police and fire stations are located. Keep these important phone

numbers (police station, fire department, and doctor) near your phone, where you can easily find them.

- Find the main valves for gas, electricity, and water in your home. Be sure you know how to turn them off by hand.
- Prepare a disaster kit that includes a flashlight, portable radio, extra batteries, blankets, a first-aid kit, and enough canned or packaged food and bottled water to last for 3 days. Also include trash bags, toilet paper, and pet food, if needed. Keep all these things in one place that is easy to find.



- Practice with your family how to get out of your house in case of a fire or other emergency. Make sure your children know what the smoke alarm sounds like and what to do if they hear it. Plan a place to meet your family if you have to leave your home. Choose one spot outside your home and another spot outside your neighborhood, in case you can't return home. Ask a friend or family member living in another

area to be the main person your family will call if you are separated in an emergency. Make sure everyone knows to call this person and has his or her phone number.

- Ask about emergency plans at your children's school. Be sure your child knows what to do. Ask where you can go to meet your child in an emergency.

WHAT YOU CAN DO



To help keep your neighborhood safe, get to know your neighbors. Talk with them about how to handle an emergency in your area. If you have neighbors with disabilities, see if they need special help.

Many neighborhoods have a Neighborhood Watch. The Neighborhood Watch is a group of people from the neighborhood. They take turns walking the streets at night to discourage criminal activity. If there is a Neighborhood Watch in your area, you can volunteer to participate. If you want to get a Neighborhood Watch started, call your local police department for help. Visit <http://www.usaonwatch.org> for more information.

When you help others to be safe, you help your community and nation. You can get more involved in your community through your local Citizen Corps Council. Visit <http://www.citizencorps.gov> for more information.

First Aid

Learn how to help someone in certain emergency situations, such as bleeding or choking. This is called “first aid.” You can take a first aid training class through your local Red Cross. Call your local Red Cross office or the National Safety Council to ask about classes in your area. Find more information at <http://www.redcross.org> or <http://www.nsc.org>.



Keep a first aid kit at home, at work, and in your car. A first aid kit has items you can use for small injuries or for pain, such as bandages, antiseptic wipes, pain medicine, instant ice packs, and gloves. You can buy a good first aid kit at your local drugstore.

Poison Control

Many things in your home can be poisonous if they are swallowed. These can include cleaning products, medicine, paint, alcohol, cosmetics, and even some plants. Keep these things away from young children.



If someone swallows a poisonous substance, call the Poison Control Center right away at 1-800-222-1222. You can get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Have the poisonous substance with you when you call. Tell the operator what it is. If you do not speak English, tell the operator so an interpreter can help you. Calls to the Poison Control Center are confidential and free.

Homeland Security Advisory System for Terrorist Attacks

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has a system to help people understand the risk of a possible terrorist attack. The system uses different colors to show different levels of danger. These are:

- **Red.** Severe condition. There is a severe risk of terrorist attacks. An attack has already happened or is about to happen.
- **Orange.** High condition. There is a high risk of terrorist attacks. No specific targets are known.
- **Yellow.** Elevated condition. There is a significant risk of terrorist attacks. No specific targets are known.
- **Blue.** Guarded condition. There is a general risk of terrorist attacks. No specific threats or targets are known.
- **Green.** Low condition. There is a low risk of terrorist attacks.

If a Terrorist Attack Happens

The U.S. government can use the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to provide information to the country in an emergency. The President of the United States can use this system to provide immediate information to the public when an emergency happens. State and local governments may also use the EAS to provide emergency information to the public in their area. If an emergency happens, listen to radio or television in your area for information about how to protect yourself and your family.



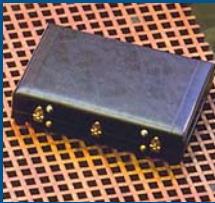
▶ **TIP:** If a terrorist attack happens, listen to what local authorities tell you to do. Listen to radio and television for instructions. Have a television or radio in your home that works on batteries in case electricity in your area is temporarily lost.

Don't Be Afraid, Be Ready

DHS is helping Americans learn about possible dangers, so they can be ready to react during a terrorist attack or natural disaster. DHS provides information to help you make your family, your home, and your community safer from the dangers of crime, terrorism, and disasters of all kinds. Call 1-800-BE-READY for printed information or visit the DHS website at <http://www.ready.gov>.

You can also get a [Citizen's Guide](#) with tips on how to make your family, your home, and your community safer. You can get this guide from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by calling 1-800-480-2520. You can also get materials from the Citizen Corps website at http://www.citizencorps.gov/ready/cc_pubs.shtm.

WHAT YOU CAN DO



Federal and state officials are asking all people living in the U.S. to help fight terrorism. Be aware of your surroundings, especially when you travel on public buses, trains, and airplanes. If you see a suspicious item that has been left behind, such as a briefcase, backpack, or paper bag, report it immediately to the nearest police officer or other authority. Do not open or remove the item yourself!