

## Section 3 - Disaster Preparedness

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### School Preparedness Supplies and Student Emergency Comfort Kits

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If a disaster strikes while the children are at school, will your school be prepared to care for them? If the children need to remain at school for several days, are you prepared?

Many schools have requested parent participation in preparedness. Each child has been asked to make a comfort kit at home that he can leave at school from September through June. Schools should also have some preparedness items to assure the safety of all students, faculty and staff. It is important to provide guidelines to parents on what to include in the backpack, and to let the parents know what items the school has provided.

If funding is a problem, work with the PTA. The safety of the children is paramount, so emergency preparedness items deserve serious consideration in the PTA school gift budget. The local government may be able to assist the school district in developing a cache of basic supplies to be augmented by local efforts. The district should make emergency preparedness a priority, as well.

#### School Emergency Supplies

The following is a list of basic emergency preparedness supplies that every school should have.

1. **Water.** Strap the water heaters. The water in a water heater will provide 40 gallons of potable water, or a one quart ration for 160 people for one day. Water can be stored in specially designed containers that assure potability for one year or more. Water can also be purchased in foil pouches with a guaranteed five year shelf life. Some schools have had students bring gallon containers of bottled water, but these must be protected from light, and storage may pose a problem.
2. **First Aid Supplies.** Traditional first aid supplies may not be adequate for the types of injuries experienced in an earthquake. Some vendors have designed kits specifically for earthquake-related injuries. Be sure that these kits include splints, ace bandages or stretch gauze, absorbent bandaging (including surgical grade), gauze sponges, triangular bandages, safety pins, scissors, eye cups and tweezers. The most common injuries in an earthquake are crush injuries, broken bones, severe cuts and gashes, and eye injuries from dust and debris. Adhesives deteriorate over time, and heat accelerates this process. Several stretchers should be stored around the building.
3. **Rescue Supplies.** The Search and Rescue Team at your school will need hard hats and dust masks. They should wear goggles and work gloves when moving debris. They need flashlights, crow bars, a short ax, pliers, wire cutters, hammers and duct tape. Batteries are available with a ten year shelf life. Light sticks are a benefit because they can be left with injured people when they are discovered. The light is a "security" measure for the injured person, and it makes it easier for the stretcher team to find them in a darkened room.
4. **Principal's Supplies.** The principal should have a foot locker stocked with emergency response supplies. These should include a bull horn, a whistle, an up-to-date list of students, faculty and staff, a supply of student release forms, rope, tarpaulin and cord, a lantern, a roll of plastic sheeting.

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5. **Classroom Supplies.** Every classroom should have a flashlight and a battery-operated portable radio. Alternatively, a flashlight-radio combination with a magneto and crank provides light and communication without batteries.
6. **Sanitation.** If toilets cannot be flushed, an alternative will be needed. Heavy-duty plastic bags with strong twist ties can be used to line toilets. Include pine oil to mitigate odor, extra toilet tissue, and a light source for the rest room, preferably a lantern.

### Student Backpack Supplies

1. **Food.** After an emergency, food is important for its psychological benefit. When making a child's emergency backpack, consider the psychological value of food rather than worrying about balanced meals. Select foods that the child enjoys. Purchase packaging that is "flip-top" or "tear open." Avoid foods high in sugar, such as candy, and foods that cause thirst, as liquids will be in short supply. Select beverages that taste acceptable at room temperature. Avoid carbonated or sparkling drinks. Be sure that the child enjoys eating everything that is included in the pack.
2. **Clothing.** Include a sweater or jacket, a cap or sun visor, and a change of clothing, including under clothes and socks. A jogging suit is a good choice because it is comfortable to sleep in. Avoid including tight clothing or anything with loose decorations.
3. **Medical Items.** No medical items should be stored in backpacks. Children with special concerns should be registered with the school nurse or principal. Parents and physician should complete district-required paperwork to leave medication with the appropriate site administrator. It is the parent's responsibility to rotate medication supplies to keep them fresh. Only medications needed for life-threatening conditions should be administered under emergency conditions, e.g. insulin. Psychoacting drugs should only be administered if the physician will sign a statement that they are needed, e.g. Ritalin.
4. **Psychological Care Items.** A blanket, stuffed toy or similar security item should be included for every child in the elementary school. Older children should make their own choices of security items. A photo of the family together at a happy time will help the child feel more secure while he "waits" for parents to arrive at school, especially if he has to wait several days. Parents should include a list of the following phone numbers: day time numbers for each parent, numbers and addresses for any other close relatives living in the area, numbers and address of the family's designated out-of-state contact person. Be sure that every family has completed the student release permission form.

### Emergency Supply Storage

Modern schools seldom have adequate space for storing the needed emergency supplies. Consider asking the PTA to purchase a storage shed for your property. It is a good idea to have the emergency preparedness items away from the building. Alternatively, a used sea-going cargo container may be purchased for under \$3,000 at most ports and many railroad yards. A local business might donate a storage container that they no longer need.