

10 Steps in Preparing for a Disaster

1. Prepare your own family for a disaster: Staff members can not be expected to perform their duties when they are worried about the well-being of their own families. Have you been through the Illinois CES Disaster Preparedness Program or the American Red Cross Family Protection Program? Do you have a plan in place for your own family's security?

2. Prepare your own office for a disaster: Does your CES office have a weather radio that can receive special weather warnings from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)? Do you have evacuation plans for tornadoes, earthquakes, and fires? Does the office have a smoke alarm, a fire extinguisher, and a carbon monoxide detector? Does the office have a first aid kit, a flashlight, blankets, water, food, etc., in case someone gets stranded there during a winter storm? Does anyone in the office know CPR? Does anyone know where the nearest hospital is located and what number to dial for an ambulance, etc.?

3. Know the hazards that are present in your area of the state: Illinois has had 23 Presidential Declarations in the last 26 years. The hazards that Illinois is exposed to are varied. Every county in Illinois has experienced a tornado sometime in the last 50 years, and nearly three-quarters of the state has faced "major" flooding in the last 25 years. Illinois has several earthquake faults including the infamous New Madrid fault. Anyone can learn more about the hazards that are present in a particular area by contacting the local Emergency Services Disaster Agency (ESDA) representative, American Red Cross representative, or by going through the state sponsored Family Protection Program.

4. Know the disaster related players in your area of the state: There are several important players. Of primary concern to CES staff is getting to know the county ESDA coordinator. The Illinois CES and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) have signed a memorandum of agreement encouraging local unit leaders and local ESDA coordinators to work together. Other important players are the Illinois Association of Regional Councils (ILARC) and the American Red Cross. Memoranda of Agreement have been signed with ILARC and are pending with the American Red Cross - again encouraging local unit leaders to work with local staff members from these organizations. Do local authorities know to share disaster information with their local CES office so that you can help spread information? Do they know how CES can contribute to disaster preparedness and recovery efforts?

5. Know about state CES disaster efforts and how they can help you: Did you know that there is a Cooperative Extension Disaster Readiness Task Force made up of unit leaders, educators, specialists, regional directors, administrators, and professors interested in disaster preparedness from across campus? Did you know that this group has worked to forge state relationships with important disaster agencies, developed new fact sheets, developed a World Wide Web page on the Internet, and developed training

opportunities for CES staff on disaster preparedness? Did you know that CES is a member of the Illinois Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (IL VOAD) group and a member of the Illinois Disaster Education and Action Committee (IDEA)? There is a disaster task force distribution list available on the IDEA system. CES staff can ask the task force questions via this medium and get quick responses.

6. Know about CES resources that are available for disaster preparedness and recovery efforts: Do you know about the kinds of information and programs that are available and how you can access these them? Do you know where your copy of 24 disaster fact sheets (issued March 1995) are? Have you tried to access the Disaster Resources Web Site?

7. Develop a Disaster Operating Plan for your office: How will you function and what will you do during an emergency (especially on a weekend)? What kinds of programmatic efforts would you make if your community faces a disaster? Who would you contact for assistance? How would your office function during a power outage? How would you coordinate your activities with other agencies or organizations involved in disaster recovery efforts?

8. Be an active member of your local USDA emergency team: A responsibility of CES is to work with other USDA agencies as a team at the local level. Do you meet regularly with your local USDA emergency team?

9. Know how to find out more about state and federal disaster programs: There are a multitude of state and federal programs designed specifically for disasters such as the National Flood Insurance Program and Disaster Unemployment Insurance. There are also state agencies such as the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Insurance that spring into action when a disaster is declared. The Disaster Task Force on campus can help you identify programs that may be of use to you and your community.

10. Know how local policies and legislation effect your community's ability to prepare, respond, and recover from a disaster: Is your community a "participating community" with the National Flood Insurance Program (did you know that your community must be a participating community in order for consumers to be able to purchase flood insurance)? Is your community able to receive warning signals from the National Oceanographic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (29 counties in Illinois are unable to receive these signals)? Does your county board support a full-time ESDA coordinator?