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## Make Sure Your Family Is Prepared

Take the following three steps to ensure proper precautions are taken in case of emergencies or natural disasters:

### 1 Step One - Be aware of the hazards that may affect you.

In Iowa we know we will have tornadoes, floods, thunderstorms, hail, blizzards, and ice storms.

Pay attention to the news. Local radio and television stations provide up-to-date information during an emergency. You can sign up for Twitter or Facebook updates to come directly to your mobile phone.

Investing in a NOAA Weather Radio is a great way to receive weather and other emergency alerts, and it can be programmed so you only receive alerts for your county.

### 2 Step Two - Make an emergency plan.

Because you and your family may not be together when an emergency happens, knowing what to do, where you will go, and how to get in touch with each other is important.

So, sit down as a family. Plan for those who have special needs, such as elderly relatives or family members and even neighbors who are dependent on life-sustaining or health-related equipment such as a ventilator or respirator. They may need help in the event of an evacuation or a severe weather event.

Since most shelters don't accept pets, don't forget to make plans for them.

### 3 Step Three - Make an emergency supply kit.

During an emergency there are items you and your family will need. You will want to plan for both an evacuation of your home and sheltering in place.

Build an emergency supply kit by packing a bag with items such as water and food, medication, a first aid kit, a flashlight, batteries, a radio, copies of important documents such as insurance policies and driver's licenses, and blankets for sleeping.

More information about these three simple steps can be found at HSEMD's preparedness Web site [www.BeReady.iowa.gov](http://www.BeReady.iowa.gov)

## Mother's Day Safety Check



On Mother's Day, kids sometimes sneak into the kitchen to whip up a surprise breakfast for Mom. It's always a treat to wake up to the smell of breakfast cooking—eggs, bacon, and, of course, toast. And the smiles more than make up for the disaster zone normally left in the wake.

It's great to see how excited they about

cooking something special for the family. You'll rest easy knowing you've made the kitchen as safe as possible for the experiments (and mountain of dishes) to come.

Every month, check all appliance cords. One thing to watch for: a cord too close to the toaster may melt. Since an average of 3,600 home fires each year start with toasters and toaster ovens, it's best not to take chances.

Install special outlets in the kitchen and bathrooms (anywhere near water, really) called ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). If a problem occurs—an appliance overheating or a wayward coffee maker tipping into the sink—power is shut off. A red test button should remind you to check these outlets monthly.

Even cold appliances pose a safety risk—refrigerators are responsible for about a thousand fires annually. Every three months, take off the small panel at the base of the fridge and vacuum away dust and debris. Not only does this help prevent fires, it makes the fridge more efficient. Get your kids to help and teach them how to take care of their own kitchens some day.

A third of all home fires start in the kitchen, but every room could hold potential danger. May isn't only a time to honor mothers—it's also National Electrical Safety Month. Please take the time this month to check your home for electrical hazards. Spending a few minutes to check for problems can make all the difference when you're faced with a potentially unsafe situation. To learn more, take a home safety tour at [virtualhome.esfi.org](http://virtualhome.esfi.org). There's also a wealth of safety knowledge available at [SafetyatHome.com](http://SafetyatHome.com) and [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

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