

GRAB BAG/S

In an emergency situation you might need to get out fast! It's important that you and your family have all the things that you might need in one place ready to go.

Your 'grab bag' should be easy to carry and stored (preferably upstairs) where you can easily find it. Mark it's location on your Household Plan AND leave it there!

Large waterproof dry-bags are cheap and easy to obtain – they can also be dragged through water in the event of a flood.

Here are suggestions for what you may wish to put in it if you need to leave your home.



A 4-step guide to preparing a Household Emergency Plan

Never say "That won't happen to me"
Life has a funny way of proving us wrong

ITEMS TO STORE IN YOUR GRAB BAG

Essential medication or repeat prescription / hearing aid batteries

Children's small toys

Consider back-up candles in a suitable safe container (with matches)

Emergency Plan and Contact Sheet

Important Document copies

Small amount of cash (bank cash dispensers may not work in local emergencies)

Essential hygiene items

Set of spare keys

Wind up Radio (or combination radio/torch)

2 x LED Torches / head-light

Whistle (to attract attention)

Spare sets of clothing if you have room and enough hands to carry them

First Aid Kit

Antibacterial hand gel

Snack bars, chocolate / bottled water

Printed map of local area

Stuff in regular use you might like to add – but ONLY if you have time!

Credit/debit cards

Mobile phone/s plus chargers

Short term current medications

Have wellington boots handy in case you need to leave the house

Dog lead & biscuits etc

Portable hard-drive

Laptop & Charger

iPod / MP3 Player + charger and headphones

Children's favourite toys, games for the family, cards.

Small camera

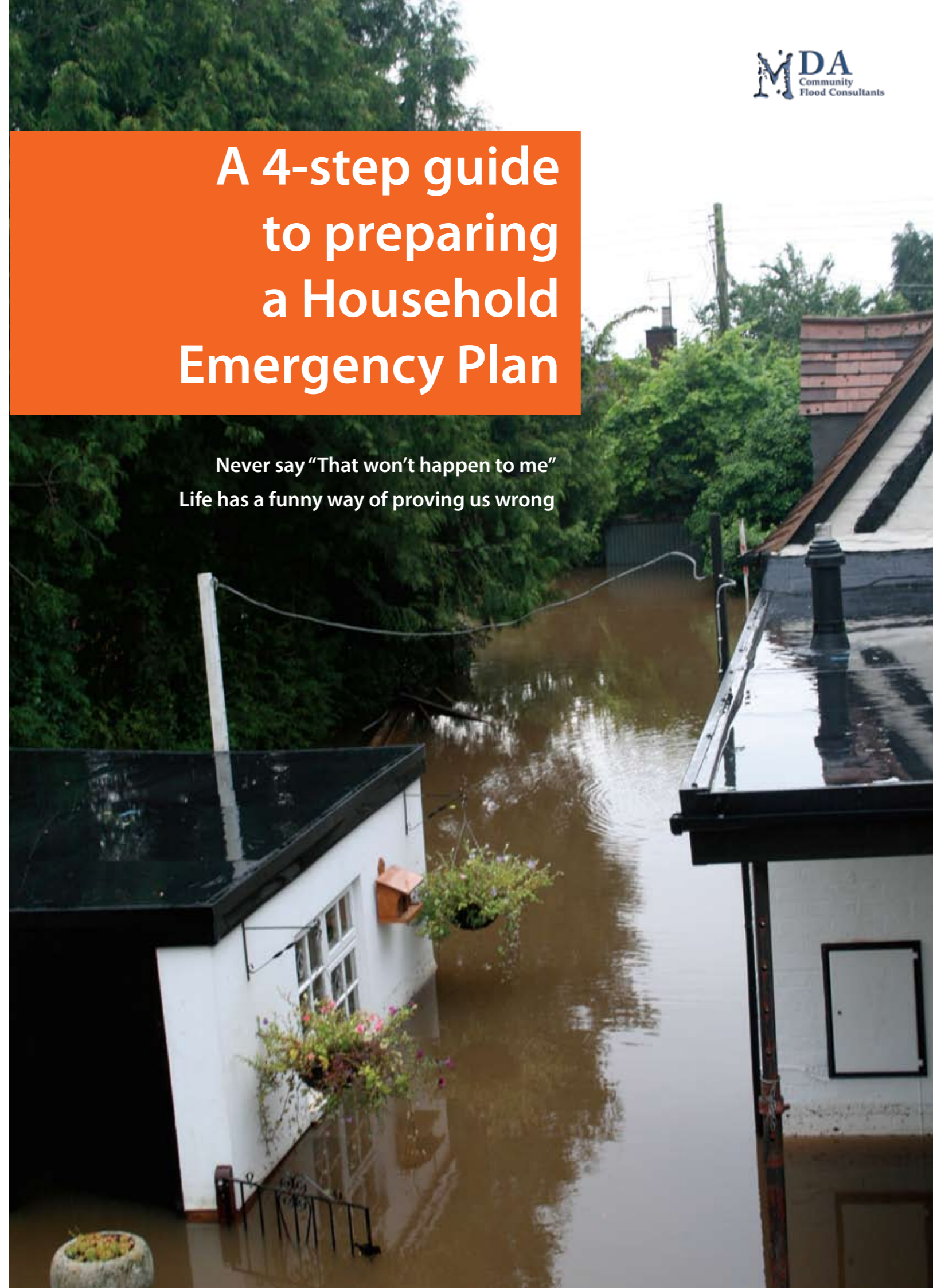
Reading glasses

Current short term medication

Hearing Aids

Camera (If time permits try to take photographs of any damage/flood levels before you leave.

Books / Kindle / e-reader





Why do I need a plan?

Being prepared is your most powerful tool for dealing with emergencies...

Preparing a plan in advance will help you to keep calm during a stressful situation.

Having something written down for you to follow through when your mind is whirling, will help to stay focussed on what you (and your household) need to do to keep safe.



Step 1: Be Informed

Emergencies can affect our lives by damaging our homes and possessions, impacting our health, upsetting our daily routines and causing financial burden.

Utilities like electricity, water, gas and phone service may be disrupted for a long time; you may not be able to heat, light or cool your home.

Access roads may be closed and public transport may not be available.

Find out about local risks

Your local Council will provide you with details of their emergency procedures and most offer excellent information on their websites.

Find out if you are at risk of flooding (see page 3).

Your area's local emergency services meet regularly as a group called a 'Local Resilience Forum' (LRF).

Each LRF publishes a Community Risk Register, you can read this to become more aware of the risks in your area. 'Google' your county plus LRF to find their website.

Talk to your neighbours and long standing residents - they will have a far better knowledge of local flooding and extreme weather events and how they impact on the area.

Know how to tune into your local radio.

If you have people who might need more help in your area, talk to them about who could help them in an emergency. Perhaps they would appreciate help in preparing their own emergency plan.

Consider joining together and producing a 'Community Emergency Plan', following severe floods in the UK, many communities have formed 'local flood groups' which have worked together in reducing their flood risk and providing support. Your local Environment Agency will provide you with details of how to set one up.

Everyone always waits for someone else to do this, so it's up to you!



Pet items

Make sure each pet has an ID chip, ID tag etc.

Assemble a "Pet Survival Kit" that can be ready to go if you are evacuating your pet to a kennel or to friends or family. You should include:

- Water, food and containers
- A leash / muzzle / harness
- A copy of all current vaccination, health records, license numbers and microchips numbers
- Medication for your pet (if needed)
- A pet carrier or a cage



Light

Two torches with spare batteries in case of power cuts or in case you need to switch of your electricity (LED torches offer far longer life than standard bulbs). LED Head torches offer the advantage of being hands free – it doesn't matter what you look like!

Wind-up torches are also a handy standby – but remember you will have to keeping winding them up!

There are now gadgets available that combine solar & wind-up power, FM/AM radio, led torch and usb charger – all in one for less than £20.00. Amazon.co.uk has a wide choice.

Protective clothing and blankets

Keep a change of warm clothes and blankets for each member of your household. If your home is flooded it may be that you have shifted everything upstairs and you can't find anything or even open a wardrobe door!

Spare keys

Car, Garage, House etc.

Hygiene

Include anti-bacterial hand gels, sanitary items and wet wipes plus essential items for small children. A roll of black plastic bags and kitchen roll comes in handy!

Communication

Include a battery-operated / wind-up radio and stick on a note of your local radio frequencies.

Remember Digital (DAB) Radios don't all offer FM band. Many local radio stations do not broadcast on digital radio frequencies yet.

Consider keeping an older landline phone – Cordless digital phones will not work in a power cut.

'Irreplaceable' items

Think about sentimental items and how you can protect them.

Saving a copy of your precious photographs, videos and documents on a portable hard drive is time worth investing.

Important documents

Keep copies of important documents in your emergency kit such as passports, wills, birth/marriage certificates, insurance documents, mortgage/rental papers and medical histories. Put them in a waterproof bag.



Childrens toys and favourite items

Talk to your children about what is important to them. This is likely to be different to what you think is important to them.

Step 4: Put together an emergency kit

In heavy snow, flooding or air contamination you may be isolated for a number of days.

Put together TWO kits, in one put everything you need to stay where you are until it's safe to leave.

The other should be a portable version that you can grab quickly if you need to get away.

Getting started

Get together with everyone in your household to make a list of what you will need. It is important to involve children so they understand what to do – it can also be great fun! Teenagers may need more subtle coaxing – good luck!

You will already have many items in the house. If you need to purchase anything, remember you don't have to do it all at once.

EMERGENCY KIT CONTENTS

You will need enough sturdy containers to hold an emergency kit for the whole household. Large lidded plastic lidded containers are ideal.

Here are suggestions of items to include – of course every household is different.

A copy of your emergency plan (and flood plan if applicable) and important contact details

Medications and special needs

Make a list of any regular essential drugs you take and put at least one weeks supply in your kit (check use-by dates and storage temperature requirements). Essential medicines may include: heart or high blood pressure tablets, insulin, asthma inhalers etc.

Keep a list of the medications each member of your household takes,

why and when they take them and normal dosage.

Extra items you may need include: an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses & cleanser, hearing aid batteries.

Food and water

At least 3 days' supply if you can, allowing three litres of water per day for each person. This water should be replaced every 12 months.

Portable gas burner stoves are cheap to buy and easy to use.

Include food items in your that are high in energy, have a long shelf life, and easy to prepare.

- Drinks
- Dried and long-life food
- Cereal bars & comfort food
- Ready-to-eat canned or bottled food plus can opener.
- Sealed snack food
- A bottle of wine (and why not!)
- Baby food jars if required

First aid kit

You can make up your own but small travel kits are cheap and easy to get.

Step 2 – Be Prepared

Events which usually carry early warnings such as heat waves, heavy snow, gales, flu epidemics etc., are usually easier to respond to, but they still require a little forward planning.

The elderly and young children in particular are susceptible to extreme temperatures.

Buy a cheap cold air-fan in the winter (they fly off the shelves in a heat wave!).

Ensure you have sufficient reserves of heating oil, wood, coal, calor gas etc. Deliveries of oil were delayed by up to three weeks during the heavy snows in 2010 – check fuel levels regularly.

Insurance

Insurance is an important step in protecting your property. You should review your insurance on an annual basis to make sure that your cover is still adequate – remember it can cost far more to restore a house than to build a new one.

Record all insurance details in your emergency plan and (you'll wish you had) take some time to photograph individual rooms and high value items in the house/ garden - after a severe fire or flood it becomes incredibly difficult to remember which items might be missing or damaged.

Fire

Many local Fire Service offers free fire safety checks and smoke alarms to protect your home – take them up on it!

Fit a smoke alarm (90 people die each year due to batteries not working).

Don't tackle fires yourself, leave it to the Fire Service.

Prepare a plan of escape and make sure everyone knows the route (add a second in case the normal route is blocked).

Select a safe agreed location away from the home where your family can meet after escaping.

If you must exit through smoke, crawl low under the smoke.

Before escaping through a closed door, feel the door before opening it. If it is warm use your second escape route.

If smoke, heat or flames block both of your exit routes, stay in the room with the door closed and find something to block smoke coming in under the door.

Once you've escaped, stay out.



Flooding

We have had the 'wettest', the 'coldest' and the 'hottest' all in the last ten years!

It is estimated that over 5 million people live or work in flood risk areas – are you one of them?

To check your risk just enter your postcode on the Environment Agency website or alternatively call :

Floodline
0845 988 1188

Many local areas at risk from river flooding are now covered by a 24 hour flood alert system. You can choose to receive an automatic warning direct to your mobile, work and home landline, text, email or pager.

Sign up on the EA website or phone Floodline direct.

The service is confidential your details will not be released to insurance companies nor will it increase the risk by which your premium is calculated!

Each flood warning area has a Quick-dial number to help you access up to date information about flood conditions. You can obtain the Quick-dial number for your area by phoning Floodline and asking an operator for it, or contacting your local Environment Agency office. After you receive a warning follow these easy steps to get local flooding information:

- Phone Floodline on 0845 988 1188
- choose option 1 for local flooding information
- enter your quick-dial number.
- Listen out for severe weather warnings for flash floods on radio & TV.

Surface water (or ground) flooding can occur very rapidly giving you very little time to save your valuable items. If you are at high risk of flooding consider installing flood property protection.

The Environment Agency has introduced new flood warning codes that will help you prepare for flooding and take action.

They are:



If you do receive a flood warning be prepared to put your emergency plan into place and monitor water levels and flood forecasts on the EA website

Put your mobile phone on charge upstairs (in case you lose power)

Move your car to higher ground

Do as much as you can in daylight. Doing anything in the dark will be a lot harder, especially if the electricity fails

If you are at risk of flooding – consider completing a personal Flood Action Plan.

These can be downloaded from the Environment Agency's website (see page 3 of the Emergency Plan leaflet accompanying this booklet).

Step 3: Write a Plan

How to make a plan

Record your plan on the separate sheet contained in this booklet

When it is completed, keep it with your emergency kit. Sit down with everyone in your household including children and the elderly; this helps everyone understand what needs to be done.

Essex County Council have designed a brilliant children's interactive website to help them understand what to do in a emergency (you might even enjoy it yourself!)

<http://www.whatif-guidance.org>

If time allows it may be wise to have

arrangements in place to transport elderly relatives and children to relatives or friends.

Pets

Don't forget your pets and animals when making your emergency plan. Make sure your cat or dog is registered and micro-chipped. Consider what you would do before, and what you would do during an emergency.

If your pet is in immediate danger do not endanger yourself, telephone the RSPCA who may be able to assist.

Pets may not be allowed into emergency shelters – consider how you would find alternative accommodation for them.



Important contacts

Often emergencies occur during the day when household members are at work or school.

Power cuts and road closures may result in everyone being stranded which can be extremely stressful.

Establish an out-of-town contact for members of your household to phone if you are separated and record their contact details in your plan. Choose someone your children know well and whose number they can readily remember and put it on their mobile.

All schools have their own emergency plans.

Tune in to local radio for the latest information on school closures etc.

