

8 * Excerpt from Large Family Mothering Amy Maryon EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AND BEING SAFE

If you carefully plan ahead on things, you can avoid most emergencies. But sometimes things just happen. Here are some things we have learned over the years to be prepared for:

Loss of power

Check your main circuit breaker box to find out if one of the circuits has popped.

Do not open the freezer and your food should stay good for 48 hours. When the power comes back on, don't open it, let it get cold again and then check your items. If you must go into a refrigerator, consider removing items and placing them in a cooler outside to stay cold. Any milk products, use up right away. Condiments and things left with no power for a significant amount of time, throw away. Focus on eating out of your refrigerator to avoid any waste of food. Don't keep lunchmeat, dairy products, or animal products after the power has been out for a long time. It is not worth the risk of food poisoning.

Grease fire

Never throw water on a grease fire. If fire is small enough, turn off the burner and smother flames with a lid or damp towel. Baking soda also will douse flames. Keep a fire extinguisher nearby for emergencies not in the cabinet above the stove

Electrical fire

Never throw water on a burning appliance, use a fire extinguisher or smother with rug or heavy blanket.

Over flowing toilet

Immediately turn the stop valve clockwise underneath the toilet to shut off the water. Bail out half of the water with a cup and bucket and use a plunger to open a clogged toilet.

Burst pipe

Shut off the water supply valve at the stop valve underneath the sink or at the main shut off valve which is usually located in basement, crawl space, or utility room near water meter. If you don't know where these are, find out today. Turn off the water heater to prevent overheating and cracking.

Frozen water pipes

During freezing weather, let your sinks drip lightly through the night to prevent this from happening.

Sink clogs

Bail out water into a bucket. Boil a large pot of water and pour down---in case you put grease down the drain to help soften it. Try plunging it or use a plumbers snake. Sometimes just time is needed for it to flow out and continue working. I have had to wait many times for a couple of days for a sink to unclog due to me putting spaghetti or some other item down the garbage disposal. Keep plunging and wait. If it doesn't unclog, have your husband investigate further.

To prevent this, do not put food scraps into the drain. I loved my garbage disposal and would chop up anything in it. I have learned that not all food gets chopped up. Put large amounts of food in the trash. In my current home, we don't have a garbage disposal and I have to clean out my drains after every load. It has helped me to train everyone not to put any type of food scraps in the sink. We wipe down plates as best as we can into the food slop bucket for the chickens before placing in the sink.

In bathroom sinks and tubs we purchased a drain cleaning tool. It is a plastic bendable auger that helps remove hair clogged in the drain. With many girls and long hair, I do this about once per month or when I see drains start to move slowly. It takes me seconds to push down drain and pull up a chunk of hair. Throw into the trash not the toilet!

If you get a jammed garbage disposal never put hands inside. Push the reset button located on the bottom of unit. Use a heavy wooden spoon or broom handle and move the blades back and forth to dislodge the object.

How to hide items

Many people hide their money or jewelry in obvious places. Most choose under the mattresses, in nightstands, in jewelry boxes, or in underwear drawers. I have learned that this is the first place that gets looked at when searching a home. Try some of these "unconventional ways:"

- Store cash or valuables in a container you use for hobby materials like a knitting tote bag.
- Carefully wrap money in foil and place in the freezer
- Consider hiding items in the basement, most don't want to go through that area.
- Cut out the center of a stack of foam paper plates and place objects inside of it. Put about eight plates back on the stack and twist tie the bag back up. This makes a nice storage for items that are larger.
- Open up a tin can and rinse out. Place money or rolled up items inside of it and tape the lid back on. Place back in your food cupboard.
- Place money inside of a maxi pad and wrap back up.

Some other safety tips for every home

Personal safety:

- My husband always says STRENGTH IN NUMBERS. Don't go out alone. If you can take a couple of children, do so. Even if it means more of an inconvenience.
- Keep car keys and cell phone on your nightstand---if you hear suspicious noises at night you can set off the panic alarm. In case of fire, you can grab keys to get out quickly. You can take your cell phone with you to make emergency calls.
- Invest in pepper spray. I keep a portable one and take with me when we go to the park. It has been helpful when a dog has come up on the children and myself. Use extra caution when spraying this and DO NOT do around your children. This has alleviated my fear of walking and a dog coming up on me unexpectedly.

Outdoor safety:

- Keep shrubbery trimmed around the home, this leaves no place to hide.
- Put up a security system decal or signs in your yard—even if you don't own one it could discourage intruders.

- Buy an inexpensive motion detector alarm (around \$15) to warn you of people coming in your driveway.
- Spring for a chimney sweep---if you burn wood have it professionally cleaned annual.
- Fence in the pool.
- Make sure you home number is visible in case of emergency for workers to know your home.

Indoor safety:

- Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors and check every year during the “time change” of spring forward and fall back.
- Secure tall bookshelves and large furniture to the walls.
- Extension cords---never place under rugs or heavy furniture where they could fray.
- Create a plan of escape for fire.
- Avoid burns in shower by setting hot water heater to 120 degrees.
- Invest in fire extinguishers.
- Skid proof showers and tubs.
- Store heavy items properly --- at waist level or below.
- Guns---be sure they are locked up, unloaded, and stored separately from ammunition.
- Don’t overload outlets---be sure that you have no more than one high wattage appliance plugged in to any given power point.

Preparing for disaster

MOST Americans are NOT prepared for an emergency. You should always keep a 3 day supply of food and water on hand for each member of your household. If you do not have a basement, choose a room with few windows and on the interior of your house. You should keep the following:

- Water---3 gallons of water per person. We use the big blue five gallon water containers and change the water each season to ensure a fresh supply.
- Food—an adequate supply of canned and dried food for each person for at least 3 days.
- Clothing—at least one change of clothing per person.
- Supplies---should include a flashlight, a battery powered radio, extra batteries, a complete first aid kit, toilet articles---toilet paper and maxi pads, backup prescription medication, a can opener, matches or a couple of lighters, a package of tea light candles, duct tape, and heavy duty garbage bags to seal windows and doors. You should also include a wrench (to turn off utilities), dust masks, and some wet wipes.

Store the emergency supplies in clearly designated and accessible areas. A clear plastic tub works well. Adding a deck of cards and perhaps some games can help pass the time during a crisis.

Have a way to prepare food whether that be your gas stove or a portable camping stove. Keep an ample supply of propane tanks so that you can cook on it for multiple days if needed.

Have a way to keep warm. Investing in a small kerosene heater is a good choice in cold weather areas. We use our kerosene to heat my husband’s workshop most of the time. Be sure to keep a container of kerosene on hand too.

We use small tea light candles to light bathrooms and other areas when the power is out. Use extra caution with small children.

I have seen advertised where they have emergency situation kits for families. Yes, they can be effective and work in bad situations. For our family, I think that if we are inconvenienced with a bad situation my children are not going to want to eat a bunch of dehydrated food or steel cut oats. Find things that your family enjoys and keep extra stock of them. This is why having a pantry is good. Your family can still eat some of their favorite foods. Steel cut oats and dehydrated foods are good, but if it is a short term usage, keep extra food stocked and it will go much smoother. Plus if you do not use up that dehydrated food that is sold in one of those kits, it will go to waste. Why not invest in things that you can rotate through your regular stock. Much more efficient and effective.