

Coping with calamities.

Emergencies:

Children need to be prepared.

Unexpected calamities can be big or small, but they can happen to anyone. By creating a family disaster plan you give your family a better chance of coming through an emergency safely.

Create a family disaster plan by learning about hazards in your community and how to prepare for them. Then have a family meeting to plan for different disasters, and practice your plan.

Establishing the plan should include the following:

- Post emergency numbers by the telephone so everyone knows where they are.
- Post "Totfinder" stickers on children's rooms.
- Install safety equipment like smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on each floor of your house and outside each bedroom. Check and clean equipment monthly with a vacuum cleaner. Change batteries when you change your clocks.
- Place fire extinguishers near stoves and on each floor of your house.
- Assemble emergency supply kits.
- Show children how to call 9-1-1. It may help to practice calling this number on a play phone.
- Listen to danger signals so your child will recognize them. Make sure she knows what smoke detectors, fire alarms, and local community warning systems sound like (horns and sirens).
- Draw a picture of your plan showing emergency ways out and a family meeting place. Post it by the door.

Help your child memorize important family information.

- He should know his family name, his address and phone number.
- He should also know the location of the safe meeting place outside of your house that you decided on in case of emergency.

After a disaster help him recover:

- Keep the family together as much as possible, rather than leaving children with relatives or friends.
- Let him be part of what's needed to get the family back on its feet. He won't feel so anxious if he's with you.
- Tell him as much as you know about the disaster and what will happen next. For instance, let him know where you will be staying for the night. Speak to him at his eye level.
- Reassure him that you are in control and will do your best to make things right.
- Encourage him to talk. Let him ask as many questions as he wants. Encourage him to describe his feelings. Try to include the whole family in the discussion.
- Let him help in recovery activities. Give him age-appropriate chores related to the incident that will help the whole family, like mopping floors if there's been a flood.
- Involve him in tasks that will help him understand things will eventually be alright. You might create a new photo album. Include photographs taken before the event if you have them. Add pictures of cleaning up after the event, and people in the community who