

Part 3

Protecting Yourself and Your Family

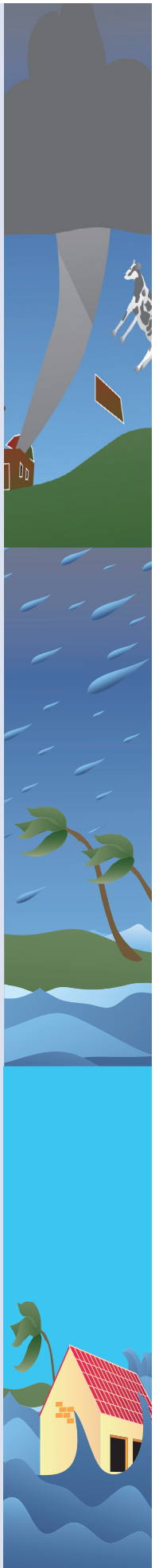
This part of the handbook covers the topic of protecting yourself and your family from natural hazards. In particular, it is important that your household has a stock of emergency supplies, an evacuation kit and evacuation plans for a tornado, flooding event and hurricane since each will differ depending on the nature of the threat. You should discuss and practice the plan with your family once a year, or whenever there is a major lifestyle change (for example, when a member of the family goes to a new school or is working in a different location).

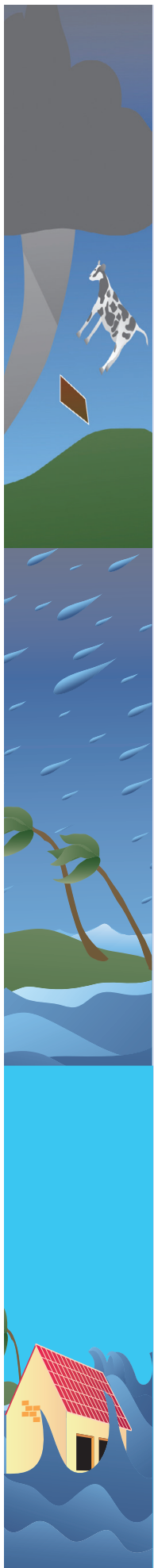
3.1 EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

A general rule of thumb when preparing for a hazard event is to remember to be self-sustaining for the first 72 hours (3 days) after a hazard event. Due to a lack of access or availability, basic supplies may be unobtainable. Therefore, a stock of emergency supplies will be helpful during a major event like a hurricane or tropical storm, as well as for a minor event like a simple power outage. The importance of these supplies was demonstrated during Hurricane Katrina in August of 2005, which knocked out power in some areas nearest the Mississippi Gulf Coast for weeks.

Your emergency supplies should be gathered as soon as possible and checked monthly so that they are complete, unused and fresh (mark and check expiration dates). Old food should be used or discarded and replaced with fresh supplies. Do not keep expired supplies. Your supplies should include at least the following:

- **Portable radio, flashlight and extra batteries** (or flashlight and radio with hand-crank rechargeable batteries)
- **NOAA weather radio**
- **First-aid kit**
- **List and supply of special medications** (prescriptions and others)
- **Three-day supply of nonperishable foods**





- Hibachi with charcoal, camping stove with fuel, or barbeque grill with propane. (Do not use these items indoors or in an area with no ventilation. Follow all manufacturer instructions.)
- Manual can opener
- Matches or lighter
- Disposable plates and kitchen utensils
- Supply of water - A reasonable estimate is one gallon per person per day for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene needs. It is important to have available good water containers for any water-interruption situations. Four- to six-gallon water containers are readily available in stores. Remember to store water for toilet use (in bathtubs, rubbish containers, washing machines, water heater, etc.).
- Pet supplies (food, leash, medications)

Some additional items you may wish to add to your stock include:

- Sanitary supplies or porta-potty
- Spare cash. Automated teller machines require electricity to operate and may not be available or accessible for weeks.
- Waterproof plastic sheeting or blue tarp, with string or rope
- Cell phone with a car charger and a hardwired single line phone - Cell phone networks may be overloaded during times of natural hazards. Cordless phones with a base station will not work without electricity. If you need to rely on cordless phones, get an alternate source of power. Otherwise, have an old-fashioned corded phone. Use your phone during a natural hazard only in an emergency.
- Bedding and clothing for each person
- Blankets and towels
- Rain jackets and pants
- Sunscreen and bug repellent
- Baby supplies (diapers, food, medication)

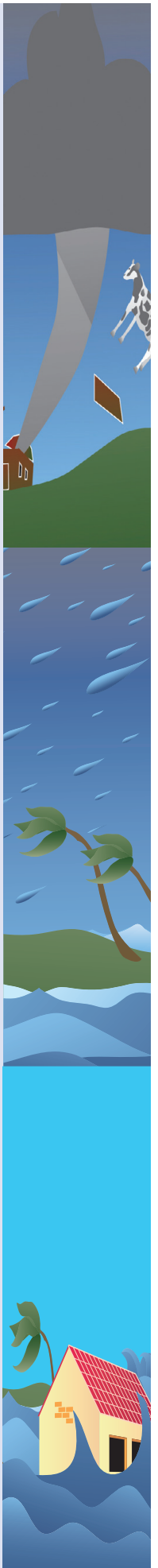
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, cleanser, bleach, trash bags, towellettes, water-free hand disinfectant
- Copies of important documents - driver's license, social security card, proof of residence, insurance policies, wills, deeds, birth and marriage certificates, tax records, medical records, family pictures, etc.
- Alternate power supplies - During an emergency or power outage, alternative sources of power may be needed (among these are generators, inverters, power stations and battery chargers). See Part 4 of this book for descriptions of alternative power sources that may supplement your emergency supplies.

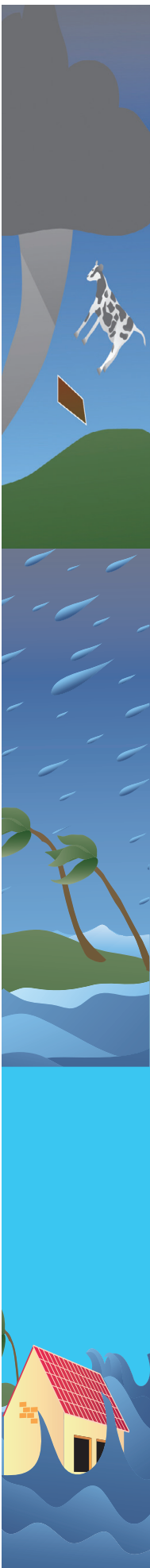
Note that if you are taking shelter in your home (outside the flood evacuation zone, well inland of the strongest winds of the hurricane, and in an exceptionally strong dwelling), you may wish to have more than five to seven days of supplies. There is always the possibility that a major storm or hurricane could disrupt the supply line of goods. If the space is available and your house is protected, stocking up for a two-week period is prudent. Gather the supplies over a period of time versus during an emergency, when you could face or contribute to shortages.



3.2 EVACUATION KIT

The evacuation kit differs from your stock of emergency supplies because the kit is what you will take if you need to leave your house in an emergency. Your evacuation kit should be prepared as soon as possible and can be checked before the beginning of hurricane season, which runs June 1 to





November 30. The components of the kit should be stored in one place, perhaps in a duffle bag or backpack, so that it is ready to go at a moment's notice. The kit is primarily for evacuation during a hurricane, although it could be used for other situations. It may include:

- 1 gallon potable water per day per person
- Personal items and family needs, such as 2-week supply of daily prescription medications, a 3-day supply of nonperishable food and any special dietary foods, can opener, infant formula and diapers; prescription eyewear and personal hygiene items such as waterless cleaner, toothbrush/toothpaste, toilet paper roll;
- List of any required medications, special medical information, Medical Care Directives, health insurance card, personal identification and other important documents;
- First-aid kit;
- Flashlights, batteries and spare bulbs, portable radio with spare batteries;
- Change of clothes, towel;
- Pillows, blankets and folding mattresses/air mattresses.

The American Red Cross has been recommending that the evacuation kit should contain supplies for five to seven days. Should the supply chain be disrupted (because of, for example, a damaged airport or warehouses), you will be better off than others who do not have adequate supplies.⁹

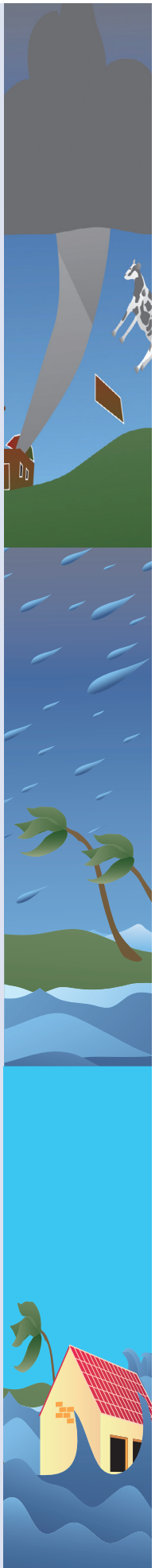
There is a fine line between bringing too many supplies that overload the limited shelter space of 10 square feet per person and not bringing enough. However, if you go to a shelter, keep in mind that there will be limited space, so bring only what is recommended unless you are instructed otherwise by your civil defense or emergency management agencies.

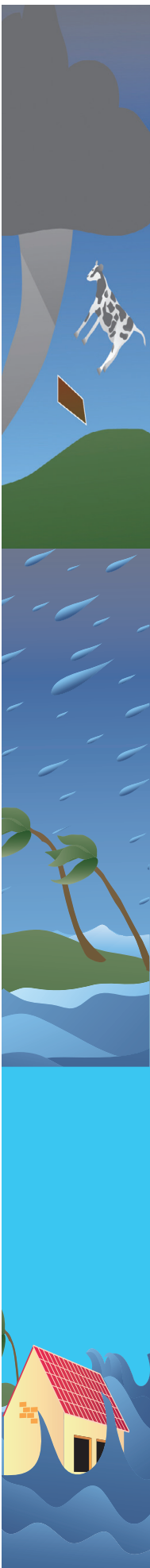
3.3 EVACUATION PLANNING

In Mississippi, it is important for families to plan for both flooding events and hurricanes. When you put your evacuation plan together, here are some things to consider:

- Stay alert, stay calm and be informed (tuning in to local radio and television is important). Create an evacuation plan and review it with your family every year.

- Evacuation procedures for a hurricane will differ from those of a flooding event. You must plan for both: in a hurricane, you must protect yourself from strong winds, torrential rain and coastal inundation. In a flood, you must protect yourself from inundation of rising water.
- Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) regularly inserts evacuation maps in newspapers during hurricane season. These maps identify recommended routes and can help you avoid coastal inundation from a hurricane because these maps consider historical inundation from both hazards. Evacuation maps may be updated at any time, so do not depend on outdated versions. See www.gomdot.com for up-to-date evacuation maps for your area.¹⁰
- Listen to your local radio and television stations carefully as there may be additional or modified directions based on the best available information at that time. Mother Nature is unpredictable and a team of scientists will always be monitoring unusual conditions for public safety. “Local” means radio and television broadcasts specific to the area in which you live. Television is important but may contain information that is more applicable to one area than another, because it can be broadcast across state lines and may provide more pertinent information for the area where it is based.
- Your evacuation plan should consider yourself, the members of your family, those with special health needs for whom you may take responsibility (like the disabled or elderly) and your pets. Practice evacuation procedures with your family through yearly drills.
- In an evacuation or emergency situation, all able-bodied persons (men, women and children) should be able to take care of themselves if they act calmly and with proper direction.
- During flash flooding events, parents should confirm with their child’s school the evacuation plans that are in place, specifically, where the students will be held and for how long during each type of natural hazard. You should not have to drive to school to pick up your children.
- As part of your evacuation plan, consider how family members will communicate if they become separated. Each family member should have a list of telephone numbers, cellular phone numbers and email addresses of everyone in the family and phone numbers of a few contacts outside of





the family. This list should be readily accessible and not require power to access (e.g., stored on a cell phone or computer).

- If needed, develop a plan to help those who cannot help themselves, such as the disabled or those with limited mobility. If people with special health needs are with a care-provider, confirm that the care-provider has an evacuation plan. Otherwise, you, your family, your friends or relatives, or someone nearby who is designated can take responsibility for that person(s).
- Develop a plan for your pets. Listen to local radio or check with your local civil defense department to determine if there are any pet-friendly shelter locations in your county. If possible, take your pet with you to anywhere that is high ground outside of the evacuation zone.
- If you use your house as a hurricane shelter and it is in an appropriate location, you may be better able to store food and water and take care of your loved ones, including those with special health needs, the elderly, and your pets. This is why it is important to strengthen your home as much as possible.
- If you are outside an inundation zone or flood zone and in a strong house, you still may be better off going to a public shelter.
- In general, stay off the roads. Only drive if it is absolutely essential. Your evacuation plan should emphasize reaching an area by walking. The police may close many roads during an emergency, so people can exit a freeway, but not necessarily get on it.
- There are a limited number of hurricane shelters and spaces that offer protection from wind, rain and coastal waters. Because there is a shortage of shelters, there may be a possibility you cannot get in, even if you wanted to. Therefore, plan to use a shelter only as a last resort.
- Become familiar with the closest shelter or shelters in case you have to evacuate to one (see Appendix A). Check for updates to the list of shelters on the Southeast Mississippi Red Cross website: www.redcross-sems.org/shelters.¹¹
- Plan and prepare to be at your evacuation point for several hours.
- Know the difference between a hurricane watch and a hurricane warning. Do not confuse the two. When each is triggered, there are

different actions you and your family should take. Also note that the civil defense and/or emergency management agencies may issue what is called mandatory evacuation in the case of a hurricane warning.

3.4 KEY DEFINITIONS

Hurricane Watch - Issued when hurricane conditions and associated damaging winds, surf and flooding rains are possible within 48 hours. During this watch period, prepare your home and review your plan for evacuation in case a hurricane warning is issued. As discussed earlier in this section, preliminary preparations should begin even before a watch has been issued.

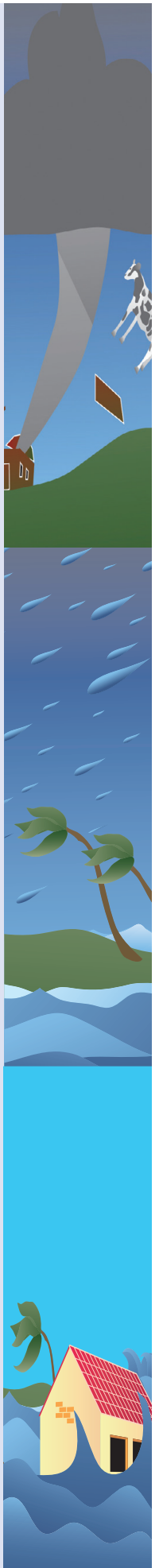
Hurricane Warning - Issued when hurricane conditions are expected within 36 hours. Complete all storm preparations and leave the threatened area if directed by local officials. Keep in mind that a hurricane warning may not always be preceded by a hurricane watch.

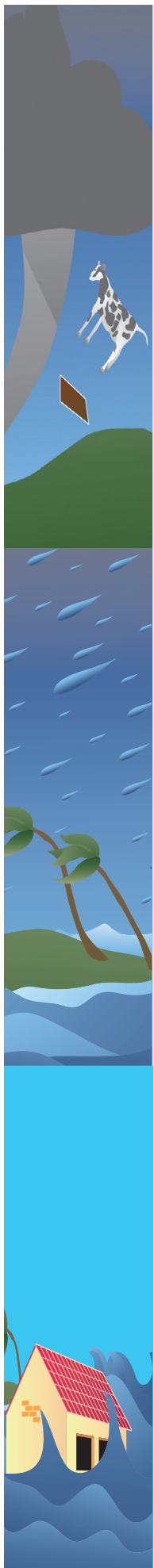
Flash Flood or Flood Watch - Issued when flash flooding or flooding is possible within the designated watch area. Be prepared to move to higher ground; and listen to NOAA Weather Radio, local radio, or local television for information.

Flash Flood or Flood Warning - Issued when flash flooding or flooding has been reported or is imminent. Take necessary precautions at once. If advised to evacuate to higher ground, do so immediately.

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is the official source of natural hazard information and instruction in the state. This information can originate from county, state, or federal agencies. For example, the EAS could disseminate warnings and/or instructions from the governor's office during threats or emergencies affecting one or more counties within the state. The statewide network may also be activated by the National Weather Service Forecast Office to disseminate weather-related watches or warnings.

If a siren sounds, turn on your radio. Some radios with the NOAA weather radio band turn on automatically when an emergency broadcast through the EAS is announced. This could be useful for homeowners along the coast. The NOAA weather radio station broadcasts around-the-clock weather and also participates in the EAS.





All local radio stations have voluntarily agreed to participate in the EAS system. Additional information may also be available on local and cable television. There are also eight primary radio stations around Mississippi that have a wide circulation and specialized equipment including decoders and backup generators for use during emergency situations (Table 3-1).²

Table 3-1. Participating Radio Stations Broadcasting Emergency Situations

| City | Radio Station |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Biloxi | FM 90.3 |
| Booneville | FM 89.5 |
| Bude | FM 88.9 |
| Greenwood | FM 90.9 |
| Jackson | FM 91.3 |
| Meridian | FM 99.1 |
| Mississippi State | FM 89.9 |
| Oxford | FM 90.3 |

3.5 PREPARATIONS BEFORE A HURRICANE


The following are some precautions that should be taken well before a hurricane arrives.

- Wedge sliding glass doors with a brace or broom handle to prevent them from being lifted from their tracks or being ripped loose by wind vibrations.
- Unplug all unnecessary appliances.
- Shut off gas valves.
- Turn refrigerators and freezers to their coldest setting.
- If you are going to evacuate, shut off electricity at the main switch, and gas and water at their main valves.
- Package your valuables, such as jewelry, titles, deeds, insurance papers, licenses, stocks, bonds, inventory, etc., for safekeeping in waterproof containers. Take these with you if you are going to evacuate.
- Outside, turn down canvas awnings or roll them up and secure them with sturdy rope or twine.
- Check door locks to ensure doors will not blow open.

- Check outdoor items that may blow away or be torn loose; secure these items or move items, such as potted plants, inside.
- Store chemicals, fertilizers, or other toxic materials in a safe section or secure area of the premises.
- Secure propane tanks. They should not be stored near sources of heat (like your water heater or other appliances).
- Fill the gas tank of your car.
- Deploy window protections well in advance of the arrival of any winds (see Part 4).
- Ensure that you have a sufficient amount of cash in hand to purchase goods and items if needed following the hurricane, as banks and ATM machines may be inaccessible because of a lack of electricity.

3.6 EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR A HURRICANE

As a general guideline, you should evacuate if you are:

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- Living in certain wood frame structures (e.g., single wall without a continuous load path design) or lightly-constructed building.

Go to a hurricane shelter only if it is open. Listen to your local TV or radio station for shelters that are open to the public. A list of open shelters can also be found at:

George and Jackson Counties

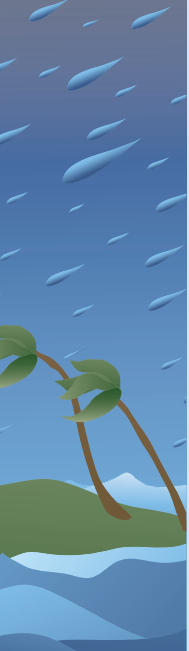
www.redcross-sems.org/shelters.php

Harrison, Hancock and Pearl River Counties

www.redcross-msgc.org/shelters.php

Stone County

www.redcross-scms.org/shelters.php

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- Evacuate with your evacuation kit before danger arrives. Not all parts of a school serve as emergency shelter. Follow the directions of personnel who are staffing the shelter. If there are no personnel, the shelter is either not open or you are at the part of the facility that is not being used as a shelter.
 - When you get to an evacuation shelter, you will have a maximum space of 10 square feet. There will be a bare floor. You will have to provide your own bedding, food, water and other essentials. Your evacuation kit should contain all of these important items. Make the best of the situation and cooperate with the volunteers.

3.7 EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR A FLOOD

The general rule if you are evacuating from a flood is to stay away from flood waters and head to higher ground. Stay away from moving water. Even six inches can make you fall or cause your car to stall. Two feet of moving water can move your car. If there is a flash flood and you are caught in your house, go to the second floor or the roof, if necessary.

3.8 EMERGENCY INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

Each year, NOAA provides an “Extreme Weather Information Sheet” customized for Mississippi and each of the coastal states. This information sheet provides general contact information and can be located at the NOAA website: www.ncddc.noaa.gov/.

For general emergency information, please contact your state or local civil defense and emergency management agencies. The best time to contact them is when there is no emergency and you are planning and preparing. The worst time is when there is an emergency and the agencies are responding to hundreds or even thousands of calls. Nevertheless, call them if you absolutely need to. However, by planning and preparing ahead, you can help yourself and the agencies. For a list of emergency contacts and contact information, please see Appendix B.

