Guides. Facts checked on 25 October 2026

Free printable emergency binder for your household

A free emergency binder to print and fill in by hand: medical details, contacts, meeting places, shutoffs, documents, supplies, water and power cuts, with sources.

> In an emergency, call 911 (US) or 112 (Europe) first. This page is reference material, not medical or professional advice.

This is a free emergency binder. Print it, fill it in by hand and keep it next to your emergency kit. It has pages for medical details, phone numbers, meeting places, utility shutoffs, documents, supplies, water and the first hour of a power cut.

Everything is meant for paper, which keeps working when the power and the phone network are down. The contents come from Ready.gov, FEMA, the American Red Cross, the EPA, the CDC and the USDA. We checked every number against its source page on 25 October 2026 and mark the lines that are our own suggestions.

How to use this binder

Print the whole page and put the sheets in a binder or in plastic sleeves. Write in pencil anything that will change, such as medicines and phone numbers.

Keep the binder with your kit. Ready.gov says:

> *"Keep this kit in a designated place and have it ready in case you have to leave your home quickly. Make sure all family members know where the kit is kept."*

Make a copy for each adult. FEMA's communication plan asks every household member to carry the contact details in a wallet, backpack or purse and to post a copy at home. We would also give a full second copy to a relative or friend you trust.

Go through the binder together once. The last step on Ready.gov's plan page is "Practice your plan with your household." Then review it every year: Ready.gov says to update your kit as your family's needs change, and FEMA's financial guide suggests tying the review to the start or end of daylight savings time, your birthday or the start of a new year. Update right away after a change in residence or a new insurance provider.

Keep passwords out of it. FEMA's financial guide does not recommend keeping written lists of passwords with the paper or electronic copies in its kit.

Binder details	Write here
Household name	
Binder kept at	
Second copy kept by	
Last reviewed on	
Next review on	

Household members and medical information

Write one row per person, including anyone who stays with you part of the week. Ready.gov's plan page lists "Medical needs including prescriptions and equipment" among the things to talk through. Copy medicine names and doses from the label, or ask your pharmacist.

Name	Date of birth	Allergies	Blood type (optional)	Doctor and phone

The Red Cross kit list asks for a 7-day supply of medications. Ready.gov points out that an emergency can make it hard to refill a prescription or find an open pharmacy, so write down how many days of each medicine you have on hand.

Person	Medicine	Dose and times	Pharmacy	Days on hand

Person	Medical equipment, diet or other special need	Backup plan or notes

Person	Medical equipment, diet or other special need	Backup plan or notes

Emergency contacts

For a life-threatening emergency, call 911 first. This page is for the calls after that.

FEMA's communication plan asks you to pick one person outside your area:

> *"It is also important to identify someone outside of your community or State who can act as a central point of contact to help your household reconnect. In a disaster, it may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town because local phone lines can be jammed."*

Choose the same out-of-town contact for everyone in the household, and make sure each person has that number on paper. FEMA also suggests saving one contact in every phone under the name "ICE" (In Case of Emergency). Phone batteries die, so the paper copy matters.

Who	Name	Phone	Address or notes
Police, fire, ambulance		911	
Out-of-town contact			
Local contact or neighbor			
Local contact or neighbor			
Work (adult)			
Work (adult)			
School or childcare			
School or childcare			
Doctor			
Pharmacy			
Veterinarian			
Electric company			
Gas company			
Water company			
Home or renters insurance			
Car insurance			
Health insurance			
Other			

Who	Name	Phone	Address or notes
Other			

Meeting places and staying in touch

Ready.gov asks for a family meeting place that is familiar and easy to find. FEMA's plan describes four. Write each address down before you need it, and if you have pets or service animals, think about animal-friendly locations:

- Near home, for a fire or other emergency that makes you leave: a big tree, a mailbox at the end of the driveway or a neighbor's house.
- Outside the neighborhood, for when you cannot get home: a library, community center, house of worship or family friend's home.
- Out of town, for when you cannot get home or to the place outside the neighborhood, or your family is apart and your community is told to evacuate: the home of a relative or family friend. Everyone should know the address and how they would get there.
- Indoors, if you live where tornadoes, hurricanes or other high-wind storms happen: a small interior room without windows on the lowest level of a sturdy building.

Place	Name and address	How we get there
Safe room at home (storms)		
Near home		
Outside the neighborhood		
Out of town		

Texts have a better chance than calls. Ready.gov explains why:

> *"Mobile networks can become overwhelmed during emergencies, making it hard to make and get phone calls. Text messages require less bandwidth, which means they are able to be transmitted more reliably during situations when many people are trying to use their mobile phones at the same time."*

Agree on the first message ahead of time. FEMA's plan says to let others know you are safe and where you are, and gives "I'm OK. At library" as an example of a short message. Ready.gov also says to have an emergency charging option for your phone, so decide where the backup battery lives.

If phones are down	Write here
Who texts the out-of-town contact first	
Our short message	
If no message goes through by this time, we go to	
Where the backup battery and chargers are kept	

Find the three shutoffs, label them and show everyone old enough to use them. Ready.gov on gas:

> *"If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone out quickly. Turn off the gas using the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home."*

> *"Caution: If you turn off the gas for any reason, only a qualified professional can turn it back on. NEVER attempt to turn the gas back on yourself."*

Washington State's health department states the rule most plainly (it is one state's wording, in a leaflet revised in March 2008 and reviewed annually):

> *"Shut off gas only if you smell gas or hear a hissing noise. Contact the gas company to turn the gas back on."*

Both tie the shutoff to a smell of gas or a hissing noise. Our reading: leave the gas on unless you smell it, hear it, or the gas company or local officials tell you to shut it off. Do not practice by actually turning it off, and call your gas company, because procedures differ between meter types.

For water, Ready.gov says to find the shutoff valve for the main line into the house, tag it and make sure everyone knows where it is. For electricity, shut off all the individual circuits before the main circuit.

Utility	Where the shutoff is	Tool needed	Company and phone
Water (main line into the house)			
Gas (meter or outside main valve)			
Electricity (circuit box)			

Documents and money

FEMA says the household information in its financial kit can help you prove the identity of all household members after a disaster. The checklist below is a short version built from FEMA's Emergency Financial First Aid Kit and the Red Cross kit list. Check the box when you hold a copy and write the date, as FEMA's own checklist does.

Document	Copy made	Where it is kept	Date added or updated
Driver's license and other photo ID (copy the front and back)	[ ]		
Passport or Green Card (copy the first two pages of a passport, or both sides of a Green Card)	[ ]		
Birth certificates, adoption and custody papers	[ ]		
Marriage license or divorce decree	[ ]		
Health insurance cards	[ ]		

Document	Copy made	Where it is kept	Date added or updated
Home or renters insurance policy	[ ]		
Car insurance and registration	[ ]		
Deed or lease	[ ]		
Proof of address	[ ]		
Medication list and key medical information	[ ]		
Bank and credit card account contacts	[ ]		
Pet registration and vaccine records	[ ]		
Photos or video of each room and your valuables	[ ]		

FEMA says to keep some cash with the documents:

> *"Keep some cash in the same safe location as your EFFAK to pay for emergency purchases in the event that ATMs are not functioning or banks are closed."*

Small bills are easier to spend when a shop cannot make change. That part is our suggestion, not FEMA's.

For the paper copies, FEMA suggests a fireproof and waterproof box or safe at home, a bank safe deposit box, or a trusted friend or relative. Electronic copies go on a removable flash or external hard drive, password-protected, in that same box.

Supply checklist

This is Ready.gov's basic kit list in its own words, with a box to check and the date you last checked each item. Ready.gov says to store items in airtight plastic bags and put the kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers. It also says to replace expired items as needed, so look at expiration dates as you go.

For quantities, Ready.gov says several days of water and food. The Red Cross gives numbers: 1 gallon of water per person per day, as a 3-day supply for evacuation and a 2-week supply for home, with the same split for food.

Basic items	Have it	Checked on
Water (one gallon per person per day for several days, for drinking and sanitation)	[ ]	
Food (at least a several-day supply of non-perishable food)	[ ]	
Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert	[ ]	
Flashlight	[ ]	
First aid kit	[ ]	
Extra batteries	[ ]	
Whistle (to signal for help)	[ ]	

Basic items	Have it	Checked on
Dust mask (to help filter contaminated air)	[ ]	
Plastic sheeting, scissors and duct tape (to shelter in place)	[ ]	
Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties (for personal sanitation)	[ ]	
Wrench or pliers (to turn off utilities)	[ ]	
Manual can opener (for food)	[ ]	
Local maps	[ ]	
Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery	[ ]	

The extras depend on who lives with you. Check the ones that apply.

Extra items	Have it	Checked on
Prescription medications	[ ]	
Non-prescription medications such as pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medication, antacids or laxatives	[ ]	
Prescription eyeglasses and contact lens solution	[ ]	
Infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes and diaper rash cream	[ ]	
Pet food and extra water for your pet	[ ]	
Cash or traveler's checks	[ ]	
Important family documents (copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records) in a waterproof, portable container or saved electronically	[ ]	
Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person	[ ]	
Complete change of clothing appropriate for your climate and sturdy shoes	[ ]	
Fire extinguisher	[ ]	
Matches in a waterproof container	[ ]	
Soap, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes	[ ]	
Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items	[ ]	
Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels and plastic utensils	[ ]	
Paper and pencil	[ ]	
Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children	[ ]	
Other	[ ]	
Other	[ ]	

Water: how much to store and how to disinfect it

The CDC's rule is short: "Store at least 1 gallon of water per person, per day for 3 days." It also says to try for a 2-week supply if possible. Ready.gov says children, nursing mothers and sick people may need more, and the CDC adds pregnant women and pets. The emergency water calculator does the multiplication for any household size.

Water for our household	Write here
People in the household	
Days to cover	
Gallons needed (people x days x 1)	
Extra for babies, pets, illness or hot weather	
Total gallons	

The CDC says to replace water you filled yourself every 6 months, so note when you filled each container.

Where the water is stored	Gallons	Date filled	Replace by

If you have to treat water, the EPA's order is bottled or stored water first, then boiling, then bleach if you cannot boil.

- Bring the water to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute. Above 5,000 feet (1,000 meters), the EPA says to boil it for 3 minutes.
- For bleach, use regular, unscented chlorine bleach. The EPA says the label may say it contains 6 or 8.25% of sodium hypochlorite, and not to use scented or color-safe bleach, or bleach with added cleaners.
- Add the amount from the table below. The EPA says to double it if the water is cloudy, colored or very cold.
- Stir and let stand for 30 minutes. The water should have a slight chlorine odor. If it does not, repeat the dose and wait another 15 minutes.

This is the EPA's table, copied as published:

Volume of Water	Amount of 6% Bleach to Add*	Amount of 8.25% Bleach to Add*
1 quart/liter	2 drops	2 drops
1 gallon	8 drops	6 drops

Volume of Water	Amount of 6% Bleach to Add*	Amount of 8.25% Bleach to Add*
2 gallons	16 drops (1/4 tsp)	12 drops (1/8 teaspoon)
4 gallons	1/3 teaspoon	1/4 teaspoon
8 gallons	2/3 teaspoon	1/2 teaspoon

*Bleach may contain 6 or 8.25% sodium hypochlorite.

Our bleach	Write here
Strength on the label	
Dropper kept at	

Copy these numbers from the table, not from memory. In our offline AI test a small model answered 2 drops of bleach for 4 liters of water. The table above says 8 drops per gallon. Boiling or disinfecting also does not remove salts, heavy metals or most chemicals, so it will not make seawater drinkable.

What to do in the first hour of a power cut

Check off each step as you go. Most come from Ready.gov's power outage page.

- ☐ Write down the time the power went out (the table below).
- ☐ Keep freezers and refrigerators closed.
- ☐ Get the flashlights. Ready.gov says to have one for every household member.
- ☐ Put phones on low power mode or airplane mode to save the battery.
- ☐ Disconnect appliances and electronics to avoid damage from electrical surges.
- ☐ Do not use a gas stove or oven to heat your home.
- ☐ Run a generator only outdoors, at least 20 feet away from windows, doors and attached garages.
- ☐ Check that your carbon monoxide detectors, with battery backup, are working on every level of your home.
- ☐ If someone relies on a powered medical device or refrigerated medicine, start the backup plan you wrote on the medical page.
- ☐ Find your electric company's outage number on the contacts page and report the outage.

On food, the USDA says the refrigerator will keep food safe for up to 4 hours, and a full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full). It also says to keep an appliance thermometer in both. Write the time in the first row, add the hours and fill in the rest.

Power went out at	Write here
Time and date	
Refrigerator food safe until (4 hours later)	
Half-full freezer safe until (24 hours later)	
Full freezer safe until (48 hours later)	

Our power outage food timer counts it for you if you have a screen. When the power returns, the USDA says never to taste food to determine its safety, and to discard what is on its list if the refrigerator has been without power for more than 4 hours.

Medicines need a separate check. Ready.gov says:

> *"If the power is out for more than a day, discard any medication that should be refrigerated, unless the drug's label says otherwise. Consult your doctor or pharmacist immediately for a new supply."*

Pets

Ready.gov warns that many public shelters and hotels do not allow pets inside, so find a safe place for them before anything happens. It also suggests a buddy system: a neighbor, friend or relative who can care for or evacuate your pets if you cannot.

Pet name	Kind and age	Microchip or ID number	Vet and phone	Medicine

Pet items	Have it	Checked on
Food: several days' supply in an airtight, waterproof container	[ ]	
Water: a bowl and several days' supply	[ ]	
Extra supply of the medicine your pet takes, in a waterproof container	[ ]	
Copies of registration and other documents, in a waterproof container and available electronically	[ ]	
Collar with ID tag, harness or leash, and a backup	[ ]	
Traveling bag, crate or sturdy carrier, ideally one for each pet	[ ]	
Litter, bags and paper towels for sanitation	[ ]	
A photo of you with your pet, to document ownership if you get separated	[ ]	
Microchip details kept up to date, with an emergency contact outside your area	[ ]	

Keep the information offline too

A paper binder is the most reliable offline copy of this information. It needs no power, no signal and no software, and it works when a phone is dead or a laptop will not start. Its weaknesses are fire, flood and age, so keep a second copy somewhere else and review it every year. Ready.gov also suggests scans on a secure, password-protected jump drive or in the cloud, and FEMA says to keep electronic copies in the same fireproof box as the paper. We would do both and trust the paper first. For reference material

that does not fit in a binder, see our offline survival library guide. We're building Waystone, a planned offline assistant for laptops, but it is in development and nothing is sold, so nothing here depends on it.

Sources

Every number on this page is copied from one of these sources. We check them again on the date shown above.

1. Ready.gov (US Department of Homeland Security, FEMA)
   Build A Kit
2. Ready.gov (US Department of Homeland Security, FEMA)
   Make a Plan
3. FEMA and America's PrepareAthon, on Ready.gov
   Create Your Family Emergency Communication Plan (July 2015)
4. Ready.gov (US Department of Homeland Security, FEMA)
   Get Tech Ready
5. Ready.gov (US Department of Homeland Security, FEMA)
   Safety Skills: Know How to Shut Off Utilities
6. Washington State Department of Health, with the state Emergency Management Division
   Turning Off the Utilities
7. FEMA and Operation HOPE
   Emergency Financial First Aid Kit (EFFAK), September 2019
8. American Red Cross
   Survival Kit Supplies
9. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
   How to Create and Store an Emergency Water Supply
10. Ready.gov (US Department of Homeland Security, FEMA)
    Water
11. US Environmental Protection Agency
    Emergency Disinfection of Drinking Water
12. Ready.gov (US Department of Homeland Security, FEMA)
    Power Outages
13. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service
    Keep Your Food Safe During Emergencies: Power Outages, Floods & Fires
14. Ready.gov (US Department of Homeland Security, FEMA)
    Pets and Animals
15. Waystone
    Waystone offline AI test on an Apple M2 Mac with 8 GB, 22 October 2026 (our own test)