

Making a Family Emergency Communications Plan

Disasters Don't Plan Ahead. You Can!

OEM Open House 9/9/17 – Arline Stith, presenter

Content mostly based on MEMA – Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/



Cell/Mobile vs Landline Phone

- Nearly one-half of all households (47.4%) have only a cell/mobile phone (at least one), and no landline telephone.
- Approximately 41% still have a landline and a mobile phone.
- Approximately 8% have only landlines (no cell/mobile).
- Approximately 3% have no phone of any type.



If You Have a Cell Phone

- ▶ You can get emergency alerts with WEA (Wireless Emergency Alerts), such as AMBER Alerts, Presidential Alerts during a national emergency, and extreme weather and other threatening emergencies in your area.
- ▶ It will come in with a special tone and vibration on your cell or mobile phone.
- ▶ There is no charge for this message.
- ▶ There are settings on your phone (iPhone go to *Notifications* in settings; will be under *Government Alerts*).
- ▶ Sign up for **CodeRed**, the City of Leominster's local notification system.



Cell Phone Vulnerability

- ▶ Cell towers typically have emergency battery backup arrangements (generators) that support operations for some number of hours.
- ▶ Whether or not a permanent generator can be installed depends on the cell tower site (such as a roof, on the land, inside a building).
- ▶ Depending upon call traffic, backup power could be as little as 2 hours or up to 24 or possibly more hours.
- ▶ In critical service areas, battery backup is generally enhanced by generators that automatically start when the batteries cannot provide enough power.



Landline Phones

- ▶ Only corded, hard-wired phones work during power outages.
- ▶ Cordless landline phones require electric so if the power is out, so is the cordless phone.
- ▶ If your home landline phone works on a fiber optic network and you have a fully charged 12-volt battery backup Unit, you should have up to 8 hours of service.
- ▶ Sign up for **CodeRed**, the City of Leominster's local notification system.



Making a Family Emergency Communications Plan

When an emergency or disaster occurs, will you be ready?

Develop a plan with the members of your household to prepare for:

- **what to do**
- **how to find each other, and**
- **how to communicate in an emergency**



Making a Family Emergency Communications Plan – What to Do

- ▶ **What to do: Questions you need to answer**
 - ▶ How will you exit your home?
 - ▶ What will you do with your pets?
 - ▶ If you are asked to evacuate, do you have an already assembled portable emergency kit to take with you? Who will be responsible for taking the kit?
 - ▶ Where will you meet?
 - ▶ How will you communicate?



Making a Family Emergency Communications Plan - Establish Meeting Locations

Where will you meet?

Select **two** family meeting locations where your family can reunite after a disaster.

- **Choose one close to home**
- **Second farther away, in case you are asked to evacuate or can't return to the area.**

Making a Family Emergency Communications Plan - Make an Emergency Contact Plan

- ▶ **Ask an out-of-state friend or relative to serve as your family's emergency contact. After a disaster, it is sometimes easier to call long distance to unaffected areas.**
 - ▶ Provide every family member with the name, address, and phone number of the emergency contact and make sure each family member has a cellphone or a prepaid phone card.
 - ▶ Inform your emergency contact of any family member's special needs or medical issues.
- ▶ **List emergency contacts in cell phones as "ICE" (in case of emergency).** This will make it easier for emergency management personnel to contact the right person in case of an emergency responder needs to make a call on your behalf.



Tips for cell phone Communication in Disasters

If or when you do have service:

- ▶ **Text is best** – A text message may get through when a phone call will not, because it requires less bandwidth. Keep mobile phone conversations brief to minimize network congestion.
- ▶ **Conserve phone batteries** – Place phones in airplane mode, and close unnecessary applications. Limit watching videos and playing games, which saves batteries and reduces network congestion.
- ▶ **Keep batteries charged** – Car phone chargers work in a pinch (remember to conserve gasoline too), portable power bank chargers, and solar chargers (5-7 watt range will recharge in 1-2 hours).



Develop an Emergency Contact Plan – Alternate Communication Methods

- ▶ **Identify alternate communications methods:**
 - ▶ **Show all family members how to text message**, as it may be easier to send a text than make a call during an emergency.
 - ▶ **Learn how to use social media**, which can be an effective tool to let friends and family know your location and status.
 - ▶ **Use the American Red Cross to register yourself as “safe and well” or search for loved ones after a disaster** at:
<https://safeandwell.communityos.org/cms/index.php> or call 1-800-RED-CROSS, 1-800-733-27677.



Learn How to Receive Emergency Alerts and Get Information

- ▶ Receiving advance warnings for severe weather, timely [emergency alerts, and information during a disaster](#) is critical to staying safe during an emergency. (Handout)
- ▶ Have multiple methods for receiving emergency alerts, including at least one with an audible alert to wake you in the middle of the night.
- ▶ Call **2-1-1**, the Commonwealth's 24/7 **non-emergency** telephone call center **for information about emergency shelters, transportation restrictions, or for questions about emergency evacuations.**
- ▶ **Only call 9-1-1** if you need immediate assistance from **police, fire, or emergency medical services.**



Making a Family Emergency Communications Plan - Plan How to Evacuate

- ▶ **If there is time before you evacuate:** Lock all your windows and doors, Unplug appliances and electric equipment, Check with your neighbors to see if they need assistance.
- ▶ **Identify and practice** how you will exit your home.
- ▶ **Establish possible evacuation routes** to ensure you are able to get to your designated meeting location(s).
- ▶ **Identify available modes of transportation.**
- ▶ **Make arrangements** with family, neighbors, friends, or local government if you don't have personal transportation.
- ▶ **If you need assistance**, contact your local public safety official to make them aware of your needs.



Plan How to Shelter in Place

- ▶ **Designate safe room(s) within your home.** They should have:
 - ▶ as few windows or doors as possible; and
 - ▶ access to television, radio, and telephones.
- ▶ **If you receive medical treatments or home health care services, work with your medical provider** to determine how to maintain care and service if you are unable to leave your home for a period of time.
- ▶ Make sure you have necessary supplies and can access your **emergency kit.**



Practice Your Plan with Your Household

- ▶ Practice your emergency plan at least **2-3 times a year** with all members of your family.
- ▶ To practice your plan, **test your emergency communications plan**, assemble at your meeting locations and practice your evacuation routes.
- ▶ **Update your plan** with any changes, if necessary, after you practice.



Consider Other Plans

- ▶ **Familiarize yourself with the emergency plans** that are in place at your **workplace**, children's **school** or **daycare**, or other places where your family spends time.
- ▶ **If no plans exist at these places, consider volunteering to help develop one.** You will be better prepared to safely reunite your family and loved ones during an emergency if you think ahead, and communicate with others in advance.



Links for More Information

- ▶ OEM web site: www.LeominsterOEM.org
- ▶ Facebook: www.Facebook.com/OEM.Leominster
- ▶ Email: Info@LeominsterOEM.org
- ▶ Twitter: @LeominsterOEM