FORTRESSREADY

BUDGET PREPAREDNESS • DIY SKILLS • FAMILY PLANS

PREPARE FOR YOUR FAMILY'S FIRST 72 HOURS



A practical plan for uncertain times

Ready together. Resourceful by nature.

FortressReady helps families prepare for disruption with practical plans, useful skills, and supplies they can afford. Our mission is to turn uncertainty into clear decisions: protect the people who depend on you, use what you already have, learn what you can make or repair, and spend deliberately on what matters.

Start with people.

Build around the children, adults, animals, abilities, and daily care needs in your household. A useful plan gives each responsible person a clear job.

Make preparation affordable.

Use existing supplies, repair useful equipment, practice simple skills, and compare purchases against real needs. Progress can begin with a conversation and a sheet of paper.

Turn reading into action.

Each chapter ends with its own worksheet. Keep the page-end action prompts, gather the decisions on the worksheet, and use them during a safe family practice session.

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This 148-page edition contains all 13 chapters, their worksheets, household planners, an illustrated skills reference, official resources, shopping tools, a subject index, and a closing note. Use the worksheets to turn the reading into a household plan.
Three days is a starting planning window, not a prediction of when help will arrive.

Shopping prices are planning allowances, not retailer quotes. Links are ordinary, untagged links. No affiliate tracking has been added to this edition.

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Your Family's 72-Hour Plan

Before you buy another piece of gear, decide how your people will stay safe, find one another, and get where they need to go.

The first useful piece of equipment is a plan

Imagine an evening outage. One adult is home, another is across town, and a child is still with a caregiver. The lights go dark. Messages stop arriving. A bag of supplies helps, but it cannot tell anyone who is picking up the child or where the family should meet. Those decisions belong on paper before the disruption begins.

This chapter helps you build that paper plan. It is the foundation for the food, water, equipment, and skills covered later. Your starting point is the household you actually have: its people, its animals, its routines, and its budget. A family with an infant needs a different plan from two adults who regularly cycle long distances.

Treat 72 hours as a starting point

Three days gives this book a practical planning window. It is not a forecast of how long a disaster will last, a promise that help will arrive, or a limit on how much preparation is worthwhile. Build a usable first layer, then extend it as your circumstances allow.

Begin with local hazards and official emergency information rather than a prediction about the end of the world. A prolonged outage, dangerous weather, or an evacuation can interrupt the same essentials: shelter, care, water, food, transportation, and communication. [1]

Hold a short household meeting

Ask everyone: Where are we on a typical weekday? Who depends on us? What becomes urgent if power, transport, or communication fails? What can each person comfortably do? Record the answers without turning the conversation into a test of toughness.

Children need clear, age-appropriate instructions and reassurance. Give them small, useful jobs. Adults remain responsible for departure decisions, dangerous equipment, and care of dependents.

> **DO THIS TODAY / NO PURCHASE REQUIRED**
>
> Gather your household, a pen, and a sheet of paper. Write down every person and animal included in the plan. List where each is normally located and one need that cannot be overlooked.

Build Around Real Needs

A good plan fits the least mobile person, the youngest child, and the care that cannot simply be paused.

Make a household needs profile

For each person, record the information that changes your decisions: age, mobility, communication needs, allergies, dietary requirements, essential prescriptions, and equipment that depends on electricity. Include glasses, hearing support, and assistance with daily tasks where relevant. Discuss continuity of essential treatment with the person's healthcare provider before an outage. [2]

For babies and young children, identify feeding arrangements, diapering supplies, temperature protection, a suitable sleep arrangement, transport equipment, and familiar comfort items. Later chapters address supplies in detail. For now, name the need and who will meet it.

Assign a lead and a backup

Divide responsibilities so the plan does not depend on one adult being present. One person may coordinate school pickup; another may handle pets, essential documents, and transport. Give every critical task a backup person who has agreed to do it.

Use a simple sentence: "If I am unavailable, ___ takes responsibility for ___." Check that the backup has the necessary access, contact details, transport, and authority. Follow school and daycare pickup procedures; a family plan does not override them.

Do not assign several simultaneous tasks to the same person unless they can actually complete them. Walk through the order: get children, collect essentials if safe, check the route, then depart.

Include animals and protect your information

Record pet food, medication, carriers or restraints, care contacts, and destination arrangements. Confirm a host's willingness to accept animals and verify the policies of any lodging or shelter you intend to use. [3]

Keep a fuller household record securely stored. Carry only the details needed to contact, identify, and care for people. A child's contact card does not need Social Security numbers, account passwords, or a complete medical history.

> **USE WHAT YOU HAVE / A SIMPLE ROLE CARD**
>
> Task | Lead person | Backup person | Items or access needed. Make one row for child pickup, pets, information, documents, transport, and checking in. Keep a copy with your household plan.

Agree on Rally Points

Choose exact places, explain when each applies, and make the fallback clear before anyone needs it.

Use three levels of meeting place

Start with a nearby meeting place for a sudden building evacuation, such as a home fire. It should be safely clear of the building and emergency access. Then choose a location outside the neighborhood for a situation that prevents returning home. Meeting locations and a written contact plan are established emergency-planning basics. [1]

Add an out-of-area destination for a wider disruption. This third layer is a FortressReady planning extension: it might be an agreed relative's home or another verified lodging option. "Head west" is not a destination. Record the exact address, permission to use it, accessibility, and an alternative.

Write the switch-over rules

For every rally point, note when to use it, who is expected, and what to do if it is closed or unsafe. An agreed check-in time can help coordinate a non-immediate situation; it must never require someone to remain in danger. Follow current emergency instructions and move away from immediate hazards.

Avoid improvised rescue loops where several adults repeatedly cross an affected area looking for one another. Decide who coordinates information and how a destination change will be communicated. Children should follow the procedures of the responsible adult, school, or caregiver.

Create a communication ladder

List household contacts, school or care contacts, and an agreed person outside the area who can relay updates when networks work. Carry the key details on paper. If service is available, keep updates short: who is safe, current location, next destination, and intended check-in. [2]

If neither calls nor texts work, use the prearranged meeting and destination plan when travel is safe. A broadcast radio can provide information but cannot send a message. Two-way radios require appropriate equipment, practice, and compliance with applicable rules; do not assume they will connect distant households. The communication chapter develops those options.

> **RALLY CARD / FILL IN EXACT LOCATIONS**
>
> Near home: _____ Outside neighborhood: _____ Out of area: _____
> Out-of-area contact: _____ If a location is unsafe: _____

Stay, Leave, or Relocate

Make decisions around the hazard and the people in your care. Gear does not make every location safe.

Write triggers, not guesses

Choose observable conditions that change your plan. Examples include an evacuation instruction, an unsafe building, an approaching hazard, or an essential care need that can no longer be met at home. Follow current local instructions. Do not delay a required evacuation to finish packing or to wait for a missing household member. [3]

Staying home may be appropriate in some situations; sheltering instructions vary by hazard. Do not apply a generic "stay indoors" rule to every emergency. Record where you will get authoritative information and how you will receive it without relying on one phone.

Give transportation a primary and a backup

Write down who rides in which vehicle, who drives, and how children, animals, and essential supplies travel. If you lack a vehicle, arrange help in advance with trusted people or investigate available local assistance. [2]

Bicycles, e-bikes, and trailers are options for suitable riders and conditions. Test the route and load beforehand. Follow child-transport equipment requirements. Confirm that the least able traveler can complete the plan.

For an e-bike, plan a realistic loaded trip and a fallback if charging or assistance fails. Avoid closed or hazardous routes, floodwater, and flood barriers. [4]

Separate a temporary stay from a permanent move

Confirm short-term destinations, expected costs, sleeping arrangements, care needs, and pet acceptance. Identify a backup if the first host is also affected. Record what information you need before returning.

A permanent move is a separate decision. During the first three days, secure safe temporary accommodation and protect access to documents, income, treatment, and family contacts. Then assess housing, schools, work, and longer-term affordability. Chapter 12 provides a fuller transportation and relocation planner.

> **A DESTINATION NEEDS AN AGREEMENT**
>
> Ask the host now: Can we come? Who and which pets can you accommodate? For how long? What should we bring? What happens if your household must also evacuate?

Build Your Support Circle

A small network with clear agreements is more useful than a large group with unspoken expectations.

Plan with other households

Start with trusted people and ask what each household can offer: spare seats, accessible lodging, or childcare. Confirm willingness and limits, accounting for each household's dependents.

Write down contacts, available transport, destination agreements, and the division of responsibilities. Decide how households report a change and what each does independently if communication fails. No household should wait in danger because a group departure time was missed. Keep the plan small enough for everyone to understand.

Walk through a realistic scenario

Try this original practice exercise: an outage starts while one adult is at work, children are with a caregiver, and your primary host is unavailable. Phone service is intermittent. Use the written plan to identify the pickup person, safe destination, transport, pet arrangements, and check-in method.

Notice the gaps. Does the driver have enough approved passenger space? Is pickup authorized? Is the destination agreed? Fix the paperwork and practice again safely.

Leave this chapter with five decisions

Name your lead and backup people. Write the rally points. Confirm an out-of-area contact. Agree on primary and backup transportation and destinations. Set a date to review the plan.

Keep accessible copies, including one offline. Update them when people, care needs, addresses, or equipment change. The next chapter turns gaps into a prioritized shopping list. Your first useful action can be free.

> **BEFORE YOU TURN THE PAGE**
>
> Can each adult explain the plan without looking at the other? Can a child describe the next safe step in age-appropriate terms? Do the people outside your home know what you have agreed?

CHAPTER SOURCES / consulted November 4, 2026

[1] American Red Cross - Make a Plan [open]
[2] Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency - Make a Family Emergency Plan [open]
[3] Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency - Safety Tips for Evacuations [open]
[4] National Weather Service - Turn Around Don't Drown [open]

Put Your Plan on Paper

Collect the decisions from this chapter. Type into the fields or print and write. Keep completed copies secure and available offline.

01 / HOUSEHOLD

Household name / plan date

Who / which pets? Usual locations?

Essential care, feeding, access, equipment?

02 / RESPONSIBILITIES

Who handles pickup, pets, papers, transport?

Backup people / access needed?

03 / RALLY POINTS

Near-home meeting point / when used

Outside neighborhood / when used

Out-of-area destination / address

If unsafe or missed: fallback / check-in

04 / CONTACTS

Update contact: name / number / backup

If networks fail, what is the plan?

05 / MOVEMENT AND DESTINATIONS

Leave triggers / decision-maker / backup?

Primary transport: riders / cargo?

Backup transport / route / fuel or charging?

Temporary destination / backup?

Host, pets, stay length, cost: agreed?

When to return or consider a longer move?

06 / SUPPORT CIRCLE

Helping households / contacts / limits?

If unavailable or separated, what next?

07 / PRACTICE AND REVIEW

Next drill / review date / responsible adult?

What gaps must we fix? Our first action?

- [ ] Adults can explain.
- [ ] Child steps clear.
- [ ] Helpers informed.
- [ ] Offline copies ready.