

SECTION 7: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

This section provides information about emergency preparedness and what you need to do in the home, the office and your car to ensure you are safe, secure and available during an emergency.

Once you complete this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the need for preparation
- Prepare your car, home and workplace for emergencies.

NEED FOR PREPARATION

Chances are good that when an emergency arises, you will either be at home or at your place of work. You need to be prepared for emergencies when at home or at work, to ensure you're equipped to respond when situations arise. This means having radio equipment available and ready for use, along with supporting materials like paper and pens, a flashlight, and other useful items. It also means having a kit that contains anything you may need during a 24-hour period without support (things like medications, water, chocolate bars, and spare batteries).

Preparation goes beyond simply your ability to operate. You should also prepare your family, your home or your business so that during an emergency you will be free to participate in ARES. Discuss your role in ARES with your employer so that they will understand the need to give you time off if you are needed during a disaster.

IN YOUR CAR

In many emergencies, your car will become essential transportation. In many situations, it may become your operating post. The following guidelines suggest steps you can take to ensure that your vehicle is ready for an emergency situation:

- Keep the gas tank above the halfway mark at all times.
- Install proper winter tires (and not all-season tires) in the fall.
- Keep snow chains in the trunk during the winter (and learn how to use them).
- Keep sand bags and a snow shovel in the trunk during the winter.
- Keep the following items in the car or in a Ready Kit:
 - 12v power cables for all your portable radios (including handhelds)
 - Empty coffee thermos
 - Bottles of drinking water (except in winter)

AT HOME

The first priority in home safety is ensuring the safety of your family and property. By preparing in advance, you'll ensure that you'll be available for ARES operations and that your family and home will be safe in your absence. Consider the following recommendations:

- Keep bottled water available (2L per day per adult, 1L per day per child).
- Keep an alternate heat source available (for example, a catalytic camping heater) in case an electrical outage turns off your heat. (DO NOT use any devices that emit carbon monoxide within the home!)
- Give every member of the family the number of a family friend or relative outside the region. This way, that person can serve as a point of contact in case your family members cannot reach each other.
- Ensure that you have flashlights at strategic points in the home, so that you can move around safely during a night-time power outage.
- Have at least one POTS phone (a phone that does not require a power adapter) in the house. A power outage will disable cordless and 'full featured' phones.
- Keep a small battery powered AM/FM radio in the kitchen where it can be easily found during a power outage. (A radio capable of receiving TV audio is very useful during emergencies, if one is available.)
- Have an evacuation bag prepared, in case your family needs to leave in a hurry. The bag should contain a change of clothes for each family member (old or out-of-style clothing can be used), warm clothing in wintertime, a flashlight with spare batteries, spare car and house keys, small bottles of water, extra doses of any essential medication, and photocopies of identification, insurance papers, prescriptions, phone numbers, and special medical instructions.
- Keep any pet carriers near the evacuation bag.
- If you have FRS/GMRS radios, know where they are so you can throw them into the evacuation bag. FRS/GMRS radios may be used to keep your family coordinated in chaotic situations at shelters or evacuation points.
- If you have a generator, do not try to connect it to your house wiring without the assistance of a professional, certified electrician.
- During an emergency, try to keep telephone calls to a minimum (including dialup Internet calls).

AT WORK

If you do not take your car to work, prepare a small ready pack that you can leave at your desk or in your office.

If you are willing to participate in callouts during your working hours and need to explain your ARES involvement to an employer, contact your emergency coordinator to ask about obtaining an employer letter. An employer letter, issued either by the emergency coordinator or preferably by a served agency official or emergency preparedness coordinator, explains briefly what ARES does for the community, and the value of your involvement in it. (Such a letter does not compel your employer to give you time off or facilitate your participation in ARES, but it may help your employer understand the benefit your participation brings to the community and allow the employer to justify the expense of supporting you.)

EQUIPMENT

Ensure that your equipment is complete, appropriate, and reliable.

For more information about equipment selection and configuration, see [“Equipment selection and configuration”](#) on page 14.1.