

# EMERGENCY

A Public Safety Publication

CITIZEN'S ACTION GUIDE

## Be Informed. Plan Ahead. Take Action.

Have you ever stopped to think about what you'd do if a major incident affected our community? Immediately after an emergency, citizens can find themselves without essential services like water and electricity, and first responders may not be available right away due to impacts.

**So, how can you prepare yourself and your family?**

### BE INFORMED

Different areas of the country are affected by different types of disasters. Take, for example, the coastal areas of the United States, they receive hurricane threats of which the central United States rarely feels the impacts.

Cobb County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), along with its community partners, is constantly assessing risks specific to our state, region and county.

Within the Cobb County Hazard Mitigation Plan, there are eight hazards identified for which we prepare and mitigate the effects. What do you think is Cobb's most significant hazard? Check out the plan on the EMA website, [www.cobbcounty.org/ema](http://www.cobbcounty.org/ema) to find out and see the assessment criteria!

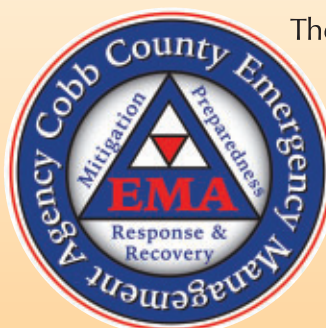


### PLAN AHEAD

Once you understand the hazards that Cobb County is vulnerable to, make a plan on how you will respond in the event of an emergency.

Ask yourself these four questions when coming up with an emergency plan:

1. How will I receive emergency alerts and warnings?
2. What is my shelter plan?
3. What is my evacuation route?
4. What is my family communication plan?



### TAKE ACTION

Before a disaster occurs is the best time to get involved! Just as you prepare your family for potential disasters by determining emergency plans, you can also help strengthen the community's response by becoming a trained volunteer.

There are lots of ways to get involved. What's your niche? If you need help coming up with a few ideas, the Cobb County EMA offers training in self-preparedness and can help you get connected with a local volunteer organization whose goal is to reach persons affected by disaster.



# Weather Sirens: What Do You Need To Know?

## When do we test?

Cobb County operates 74 outdoor warning sirens across the entire county – you may have heard them sounding before! Emergency Management personnel test the sirens at noon on the first Wednesday of every month. If the weather is inclement, a make-up test will be performed on noon of the first Thursday of the month; the monthly test will be cancelled if there is inclement weather on both Wednesday and Thursday. During a test, you'll hear the sirens sound for three to five minutes across the entire county.

When the sirens sound outside of these criteria, the activation has occurred to warn citizens to seek immediate cover from imminent danger. It is the county's policy to sound the sirens during Tornado Warnings issued by the National Weather Service and during other weather or safety events when the EMA Director deems it necessary to warn the public of impending danger.

## How does the polygon affect you?

When the National Weather Service issues Tornado Warnings, they provide graphical depictions of the area of maximum impact – this is referred to as a polygon. Cobb County's automated siren system recognizes Tornado Warning polygons and activates sirens only located within these areas of maximum impact so that we do not have to sound all 74 sirens within our system when only a small portion of our county is under a Tornado Warning. If you are in one area of the county and another person you're in communication with in another area of the county hears alarms, it's likely that they're located within a warning polygon while the area in which you're located is not receiving threat of a tornado. The only way to be 100% sure is to tune into your local weather report or listen to a weather radio to know the areas most impacted within our community.

## What do you do if you hear the sirens?

Did you know that most fatalities and injuries during tornadoes are caused by flying debris? When trying to seek cover during a Tornado Warning, keep that in mind; you'll want to go to a place that provides as much protection as possible from debris.

Inside of sturdy structures is the most ideal place to be during a tornado, find an interior room (without windows) on the lowest possible level of your office, home or other building. If you're inside a manufactured home or office, it's best to get out immediately and seek a nearby permanent structure or storm shelter.

If you find yourself in danger during a potential tornado and cannot find a sturdy structure to take cover in, it's suggested that you find cover in a low-lying area, and if possible placing something over your head or body for protection from flying debris. Do not get under an overpass or bridge, and never try to outrun a tornado if there are nearby structures in which you could protect yourself.

## When should you rely on a Weather Radio?

Weather Radios provide a 24-hour nationwide network of continuous weather information directly from the National Weather Service. These radios provide information on watches, warnings, forecasts and other useful information. During an emergency, the National Weather Service provides immediate life-safety information to radio receivers located within the warning area. This information will be preceded by a special warning tone.

# CERT, Community Emergency Response Team

Did you know that Cobb County  
Emergency Management Agency hosts  
free training on emergency preparedness?



The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their areas and trains them in basic disaster response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhoods or workplaces following events when professional responders are not immediately available to help.



Once you've completed the CERT training, Cobb County EMA offers several volunteer opportunities within our agency like joining the Search and Rescue Team or the Damage Assessment Team, both of which meet and train regularly and are on-call if needed during or after an emergency. If the EMA's volunteer opportunities don't match what you're looking for, we're still happy to assist you in finding the volunteer opportunities that are best suited for your personal skills.

The CERT training hosted by the EMA covers a total of 24 hours of material over multiple sessions. Scheduling varies in order to meet the needs of the organizations and citizens attending the training. Even though the format is customizable, all sessions need to be attended in order to complete the CERT training. If interested, you can see the most up-to-date training dates at the Cobb County EMA's website or reach out to us directly to discuss setting up a CERT training for your organization.

## See Something, Say Something

Managing an emergency is also about making sure we recognize when something seems out of place. That's why local authorities participate in the national initiative, **"If You See Something, Say Something"** that engages the public in protecting our community through awareness-building. If something seems suspicious or unfamiliar from what you're used to seeing in your community, make sure to report it to your local law enforcement agency. When you're reporting an unusual behavior or event, be sure to include: Who or what you saw; when you saw it; where it occurred; and why you felt it was suspicious. If the behavior is an imminent threat or the situation is escalating, it's always safest to dial 911.

# Ten Tips for Fire Extinguisher Use



1. A fire can triple in size in just one minute, so if the fire is isolated to a single area, using a fire extinguisher may be a good option if you act quickly.
2. Use a fire extinguisher only after you've called 911, evacuated the area and determined that it's safe to attempt to extinguish the fire yourself – make sure that smoke inhalation isn't an immediate threat and that the fire isn't blocking your only emergency exit!
3. When purchasing a fire extinguisher for your home, look for one labeled A-B-C because it can be used on most fires that would occur in your home. The A-B-C rating scale indicates that the chemicals inside are suitable to fight fires against trash, wood, paper (A); liquids (B); and/or electrical equipment (C).
4. Make sure you're physically prepared to handle the fire extinguisher in your home. Some models are too heavy to operate and hold at the same time.
5. In considering the size of the extinguisher and your physical ability, also keep in mind that you'll need to know how to operate the extinguisher ahead of time. During an emergency is not the best time to read instructions on how to engage a lever or unlock a latch.
6. Store your fire extinguisher in an easily accessible location where it can be easily grabbed during an emergency, not locked behind a closed case or underneath other heavy objects.
7. Remember the word "**P.A.S.S.**" to assist you with operating the fire extinguisher.
  - P**ull the pin.
  - A**im low, pointing the extinguisher nozzle at the base of the fire.
  - S**queeze the handle to release the extinguishing agent.
  - S**weep from side to side at the base of the fire until it appears to be out.

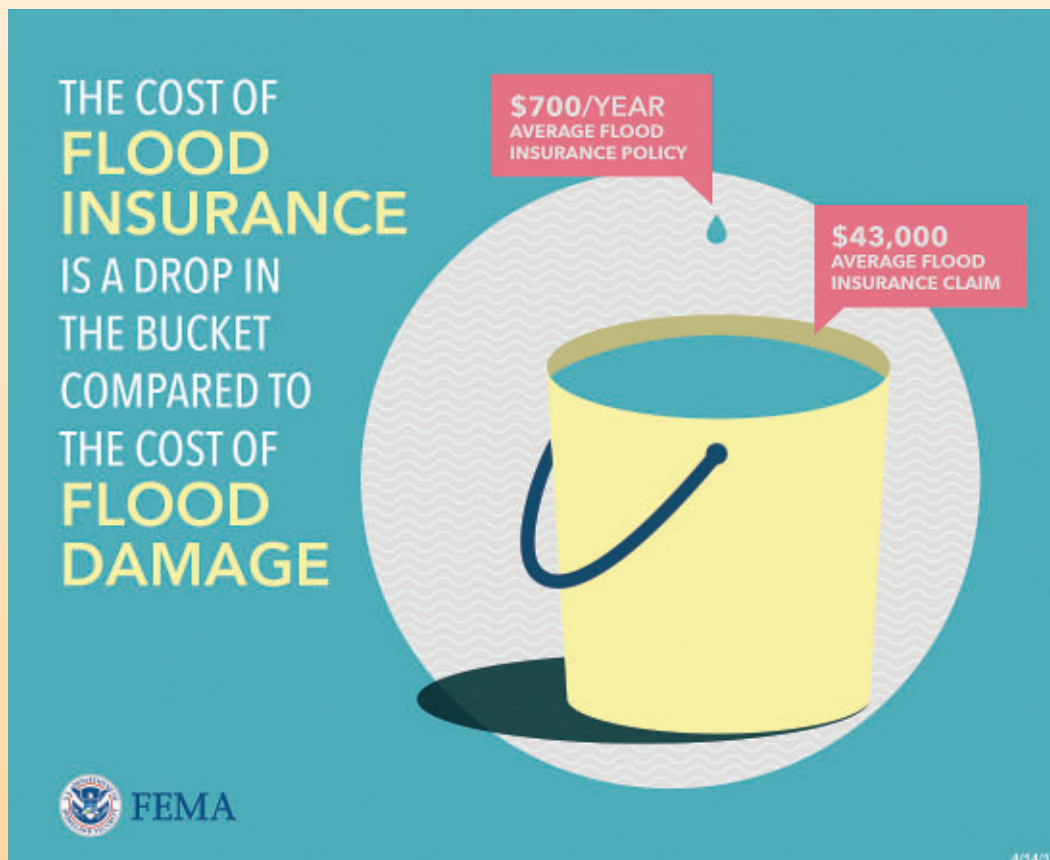
**Watch carefully in case the fire breaks out again and repeat the P.A.S.S. method if necessary.**
8. When using a fire extinguisher, if your exit plan becomes compromised at any point, get out of the house as soon as possible and wait for first responders to arrive.
9. If you have any doubts about whether or not to stay at the site of the fire and continue to fight it with an extinguisher... get out and stay out! Remove yourself from danger and let the professionals extinguish the fire!
10. Ask your local first responders about fire extinguisher training in your area. Cobb County EMA and Cobb County Fire and Emergency Services both offer training sessions to the public!

# Cobb County Participates in the National Flood Insurance Program

Did you know that Cobb County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) so that we can provide our property owners within floodplains the most affordable insurance possible? The NFIP's ultimate goal is to provide subsidized flood insurance policy options to local communities, but it does so by encouraging these communities to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations.

Because approximately 20% of Cobb County is within a floodplain, our EMA works with the Water Department, Community Development and other community partners to ensure that structurally sound buildings are maintained within floodplains, and that these floodplains are maintained to a level found suitable to federal standards.

Because of this participation, unincorporated Cobb County has been given a Class Rating of 8 in the Community Rating System. The Community Rating System recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP standards. The Class Rating 8 results in a flood insurance premium reduction of 10% inside of Special Flood Hazard Areas. If you live inside of a city limits and want to learn more about your premium reductions or you want to learn more about floodplains, check out our Hazard Mitigation Plan or visit [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov).



# Planning for Emergencies in the Workplace and Places of Worship

Check out [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) to help your business or place of worship prepare for emergencies. As an employer or cleric, you can use this site as the springboard for developing an **Emergency Action Plan (EAP)** for your company or house of worship, and for finding useful tips, suggestions and resources ahead of emergency situations.

Planning for emergencies involves several steps. **FEMA has established the Ready Program that includes four steps to prepare workers and worshipers for emergencies of all types.** When people know how to respond in a variety of emergency situations, they know where to go, how to keep safe, and what equipment to take and/or use. Much like a school preparing children through emergency drills, this knowledge reduces confusion and panic, allowing them to take action more quickly and safely.

## The Four Steps of the Ready Program Are:

### 1. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- Know the regulations that govern your emergency action plan
- Organize an Emergency Action Team to implement your emergency program

### 2. PLANNING

#### ***Planning must include:***

- What to do in the event of an emergency
- Steps to take to prevent emergencies
- Ways to limit the business/operational impact of emergencies

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION

#### ***The Emergency Action Plan must include:***

- Resource management
- Emergency response
- Crisis communications
- Business continuity
- Information technology
- Employee assistance
- Incident management
- Employee training

### 4. EXERCISE/EVALUATE

- Test and evaluate the emergency plan
- Conduct training and exercises
- Evaluate the exercise results to know effectiveness of the emergency plan
- Determine program improvements
- Review emergency plans regularly

**WITHOUT AN EMERGENCY PLAN  
YOUR BUSINESS CAN END UP HERE.**

[Ready.gov/business](http://Ready.gov/business)

Up to 40% of businesses never recover after experiencing a major disaster. Do you have a plan to keep your business running if disaster strikes? For a free online tool that helps you develop an emergency plan, visit [Ready.gov/business](http://Ready.gov/business).

Ad Council Ready Business FEMA American Red Cross

# Building a Disaster Supply Kit

**Where will your family be when disaster strikes? Disaster can strike without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home.**

What would you do if basic services – water, gas, electricity or telephones – were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away.

Cobb EMA tries to prepare citizens by expressing to you the importance of preparing ahead! Families can cope with disaster by preparing in advance—one of those ways is by making sure you have a disaster supply kit always on hand, or at least having the necessary tools ready within your residence to meet your immediate needs.



Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your needs for at least three days. Assemble a disaster supply kit with items you may need in an evacuation. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffle bags or covered trash containers.

*Disaster Supply Kit continued next page*



# Disaster Supply Kit List

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## INCLUDE

- A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that won't spoil
- One change of clothing and footwear per person, and one blanket or sleeping bag per person
- A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medications. Have a first aid kit for each vehicle.
- Emergency tools, including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and many extra batteries
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash or traveler's checks.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members
- An extra pair of glasses
- Keep important family documents in a waterproof container. Keep a smaller kit in the trunk of your car.
- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates and plastic utensils

## TOOLS

- Non-electric can opener, utility knife
- Fire extinguisher: small canister ABC type
- Pliers and tape
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Signal flare and whistle
- Paper, pencil
- Needles, thread
- Medicine dropper
- Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water
- Plastic sheeting and small collapsible tent
- Map of the area (to locate assembly areas and evacuation routes)

## APPAREL

- Clothing and bedding
- Sturdy shoes or work boots
- Rain gear, hat and gloves
- Thermal undergarments
- Sunglasses

## SANITATION

- Toilet paper, towelettes, hand sanitizers
- Soap, liquid detergent
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for sanitation uses)
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Disinfectant



Sign up for Cobb County's Mass Notification System, Swift911, to receive weather notifications via phone, text and/or email from Cobb County's EMA. To opt-in, go to the EMA's website and click on the Swift911 logo to register.

## **Cobb County Emergency Numbers to Know**

Cobb County Emergency Communications: .....911  
DOT Call Center/Road Complaints: .....770-528-3666  
Water Department Emergencies: .....770-419-6201  
Cobb Emergency Management Agency: ...770-499-4567  
Public Safety Headquarters: .....770-528-5611  
Police Department Headquarters: .....770-499-3900  
Fire Department Headquarters: .....770-528-8000  
Code Enforcement Issues: .....770-528-2180  
911 Non-Emergency Call Center:.....770-499-3911

For additional information on any topic covered in this pamphlet, visit FEMA's [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), GEMA's [www.ready.ga.gov](http://www.ready.ga.gov) and Cobb County's [www.cobbcounty.org](http://www.cobbcounty.org) to learn more.