

## Helpful links:

These links include information about specific kinds of emergencies. They also have plans for the disabled, pet owners, businesses, and teachers.

[redcross.org/preparedness](http://redcross.org/preparedness)

[ready.gov](http://ready.gov)

- Includes help for seniors, disabled, pets, businesses and children/teachers.

[readync.org](http://readync.org)

- Includes preparedness measures for specific emergencies, seniors and pets

[buncombecounty.org](http://buncombecounty.org)

- Includes all your local information and resources

**For more information call 250-6560 or email [BePrepared@buncombecounty.org](mailto:BePrepared@buncombecounty.org).**



*Provided by: Buncombe County Department of Health  
September 2011*

# Are You Prepared?

A guide for Buncombe County residents.



Emergencies can happen at any time.

Let's *all* be prepared.

As your Buncombe County Commissioners, we urge you to be prepared. We are working to make sure that all the County's resources are ready in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. We strongly encourage you to join us by preparing your home and place of business.

Please read and follow the suggestions contained in this publication. Preparing ahead will help everyone get through an emergency a little easier.

Let's Prepare Together!

Your Buncombe County Commissioners

*David Gantt, Chairman  
Bill Stanley, Vice Chairman  
K. Ray Bailey, Commissioner  
Holly Jones, Commissioner  
Carol Peterson, Commissioner*



“Will I have enough of my medicine?”



I've talked with my family about what to do in an emergency.



We practice for an emergency at school.

How will I reach my children who are away at college?



How can I help my aging parents in an emergency?



### Fast Facts:

- ◇ If power goes out, leave refrigerator doors closed. Foods will usually be safe to eat for about 2 hours.  
  
Foods in a closed freezer that is 1/2 full will hold for up to 24 hours. Food in a full freezer should be safe for 48 hours.
- ◇ Cough or sneeze inside the bend of your elbow. Wash your hands often with soap and water. These help prevent the spread of viruses.

**Cash /Checkbook/Credit cards**

- Cash and change
- Copy of your ID and credit cards



**Important Paperwork** (in waterproof container)

- Mortgage, insurance, bank account records
- Birth certificates, wills
- Social Security cards, tax information



**Baby care** (if needed)

- Disposable diapers
- Formula, bottles, pacifier



**Other supplies**

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Radio or TV (battery operated), extra batteries
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Whistle to signal for help
- Wrench or pliers to turn off gas, water or electricity



**Pets**

- Food, water, bowls, litter and pan
- Leash, harness or carrier
- Medicine, shots and medical records (in a waterproof container)
- Recent picture in case your pet gets lost



**Special items**

- Pictures or other things that are special to you and cannot be replaced



# Contents

What is a public health emergency?	5
------------------------------------	---

What is pandemic flu?	6
-----------------------	---

Why do I need to prepare?	8
---------------------------	---

Preparing for a public health emergency	9
---	---

How will I know about a public health emergency?	11
--	----

What is Buncombe County doing to prepare?	12
---	----

Make an emergency preparedness kit	13
------------------------------------	----

Helpful links	16
---------------	----

## Think about it ...

How prepared are you and your family for a public health emergency?

- Could your family manage if you had no power for a week or more?
- If you couldn't leave home, do you have food and water to last at least 3 days? What about medicines or diapers?
- What could you do to be more prepared?



These questions and others are important for everyone to think about.

Some emergencies are easy to see, like a flood or fire. A public health emergency is harder to see. It can make you very sick.

You can prepare for most kinds of emergencies by doing the same things.

We want you to **Be Prepared!**



## Make an Emergency Preparedness Kit

Put your kit in a sturdy container that is easy to carry, like a backpack, duffle bag or plastic storage bin.

Think first about basic things that you and your family will need: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth. Keep at least a 3-day supply.

### Water

- 1 gallon per person, per day



### Food

- Ready-to-eat foods that don't need to be kept cold
- Food for infants, the elderly, or those on special diets
- Non-electric can opener
- Paper cups and plates, plastic spoons and knives, paper towels



forks,

### Clothes and bedding (for each person)

- Blankets or sleeping bag
- At least one change of clothes
- Coat or jacket, hats, gloves



### Medicines and self care

- Prescription and over-the-counter medicines
- First aid kit
- Hand wipes or gel
- Personal care items (toothbrush, paste, soap, deodorant, contact lens supplies)
- Toilet paper, garbage bags, ties



## What is Buncombe County doing to prepare?

Buncombe County has been planning for public health emergencies for many years.

The County works with preparedness groups from local agencies, city, state, and federal governments.

The County has:

- A County-wide emergency plan for large-scale emergencies.
- A Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Plan.
- A multi-agency team that works to improve the way important messages are shared with the public and between agencies.
- A Public Health Preparedness Coordinator to make sure that Buncombe County is as prepared as it can be for public health threats.

Other things the County does:

- Regular true-to-life drills. Public and private agencies practice their response to an emergency together.
- Watches for human and animal disease outbreaks and takes quick action.

## What *is* a Public Health emergency?

A public health emergency can be many different things.

It may be a **sickness** that can spread easily from one person to another. (Hepatitis A, measles and pandemic flu for example.)

An emergency could also be an **event** that puts many people at risk of illness. (A flood, gas leak, and blizzard are examples of an event.)

Look at the chart below to see what can happen with public health emergencies.

Event/Sickness	Can cause
Pandemic flu	Loss of work or school Spreads very easily Can cause death
Gas leak or chemical spill	Damage to groundwater Harm to lungs, eyes, skin
Blizzard	Loss of power—spoiled food Lack of heat Stranded at home Help cannot get to you

## What is Pandemic flu?

*Pandemic - a serious illness that spreads very quickly in a large area, affecting many people.*

Pandemic flu is a public health emergency.

A pandemic flu happens when:

- a new flu virus appears in humans
- the new virus spreads easily from person to person
- it causes major sickness
- the virus moves around the world



Because pandemic viruses are new, humans cannot fight them very well. This causes the disease to spread from person to person very fast. Many people become sick.

**There is no pandemic flu at this time.**

## How will I know about a public health emergency?

Any time there is a public health emergency, the Buncombe County Health Center alerts all local media as soon as possible.

To learn what you need to do about these emergencies:

- Listen to local radio stations
- Watch local TV
- Read the newspaper
- Check local TV and newspaper websites
- Check the Buncombe County website at [buncombecounty.org](http://buncombecounty.org) and follow on social network sites @buncombegov
- Watch Buncombe County TV, Charter Cable Channel 2
- Listen or watch for a hotline number that you can call for current recorded information
- Subscribe to the free Buncombe County E-zine at [buncombecounty.org](http://buncombecounty.org).

### 3. Stay Inside

You may be asked to stay inside where you are. If so, here is what you should do:

- Be sure to have your emergency kit with you, if you're at home.
- Watch TV, listen to the radio, or check the internet to learn what else you should do.

### 4. Evacuate (Leave the area)

You should be able to quickly collect medicines, important papers, photos and other things you need within minutes.

- Plan where you will go if you must leave your home.
- Plan where your family will meet, if separated.
- Keep at least a half tank of gas in your car at all times.
- Take your emergency kit with you.
- Listen to your radio to learn what else you should do.

### 5. Don't forget your pets

- Plan ahead to take your pets with you. They may be lost or hurt if you leave them behind.
- Plan for a safe place to take your pets. Shelters don't often allow pets.
- Make an emergency kit for your pets.



## What about other kinds of flu?

**Seasonal flu** is the flu we see every winter. This flu is a virus that spreads easily from person to person. It spreads through coughs, sneezes, and being close to or eating after someone who has flu.

Symptoms of seasonal flu include:

- fever
- cough
- sneezing

This flu can be serious or cause death.

Unlike pandemic flu, there is a vaccine to prevent seasonal flu. It must be given every year, beginning in the fall.

**Bird flu** is a flu that affects birds



Bird flu spreads very easily among birds. A small number of people have gotten bird flu by working very closely with birds.

Only a few people have gotten this flu from another person. If bird flu begins to spread easily from person to person, it may become a pandemic flu.



## Why do I need to prepare?

Some emergencies may only cause short-term problems. Others, such as pandemic flu, might change the way we live for months.

Pandemic flu can cause many people around the world to get sick at the same time. Things that we take for granted could be affected.

- Stores may be closed or have few supplies, including food.
- Banks, ATM's, restaurants, post offices and other businesses may be closed.
- If businesses are closed, well people may not be able to work.
- Gas may be in short supply; buses or taxis may not run.
- Large groups may not meet, like sporting events or church services.
- Schools and childcare centers may be closed.
- Sick patients could fill doctors' offices, clinics and hospitals.

By planning ahead you can help yourself and your family get through most emergencies a little easier.

## Preparing for a Public Health Emergency

Being prepared means that you have made an emergency kit. You could stay in your home for several days, or leave quickly if you had to.

You can prepare yourself and your family for most public health emergencies by doing these 5 things:

### 1. Make a Family Contact Plan

- Talk about what you would do during different kinds of emergencies.
- Talk about plans with older or disabled family members and neighbors.
- Local phone lines may not work. Decide on someone far away that your family can check in with in case you are separated.

### 2. Make an Emergency Kit

- Your kit should have enough in it to last at least 3 days. Longer is better.
- The kit should be packed in something strong and be easy to get to.
- You may want to make two kits. One for using at home and a smaller kit in case you have to leave.
- Use the check-list on pages 13—14 as a guide to making your own emergency kit.