

Final Draft
March 11, 2010

ECHO Questions and Answers

15 Minute Conversation

“Prepare for Emergency Evacuation”

Disclaimer: For some emergencies it is best to stay in your home – for example, a tornado or a blizzard. But for other emergencies you need to leave your home – and that’s what we are discussing tonight: evacuations.

1. What kinds of disaster may require an evacuation?

Sample Answer:

- Natural disaster – most likely
 - Flood
 - Wild fire
- Accidents – more common than you think
 - Release or spill of hazardous materials (for example: chlorine gas)
 - Fires
- Terrorism – a possibility

2. If a disaster is unexpected, how can you prepare for an evacuation?

Sample Answer Part One:

MAKE A PLAN:

- Make a plan of where you would go if you had to leave.
 - Choose a friend or relative in another city to go to
 - Make sure they have your contact info
- Select a designated emergency contact
 - Out of the area—preferably out of state (Local phone lines are overwhelmed)
- Always keep your car’s gas tank at least half full.
 - During an evacuation, gas stations will have long lines

Sample Answer Part Two:

PREPARE AN EMERGENCY KIT

- Flashlight (with fresh batteries)
- Battery-operated radio (with fresh batteries)
- Cell phone (with charger)
- Important papers - SS card, License, proof of residence, insurance papers, credit cards, photo of family
- If you don't speak English – wear an identity card around your neck
- Medicine
- Clothes – Idea: Switch for seasonal clothes when daylight savings changes
- Food and water – enough for three days (bottled water, energy bars)
- First aid kit
- Comfort items for kids
- [Somali cultural note: pack an extra head cover]

3. How do I know whether to evacuate?

Sample Answer:

- In some cases, authorities know ahead of time that your home may be threatened.
 - Listen to the radio
 - Watch TV
 - Public safety officials may go door-to-door
 - Public safety vehicles may make announcements with loudspeakers
 - Follow directions – this is very important.
- Sometime a disaster happens quickly, so you have to think for yourself.
 - Use your common sense
- Be cautious about listening to rumors
 - The rumors may be wrong

4. What should I do with my home when I leave?

Sample answer:

- If official warnings say get out immediately – don't worry about house – just worry about safety of yourself and household members and get out.
- Don't panic
- If you have time
 - Lock house and close windows
 - Turn down thermostat

- Turn off stove
- Leave a note on front door of where you went

5. What about people in wheelchairs or others who may need assistance?

Sample Answer:

- Prepare by practicing what to do
 - Who will help? Friend? Relative?
 - Have helpers practice with you.
 - Have 2 or 3 alternatives in case you can't reach people
- Do not rely on regular buses, emergency vehicles or mobility buses
 - Prepare for a ride ahead of time with friends or relatives

6. What if I have a pet?

Sample Answer:

- Take your pet with you
 - Pets left at home may cause problems for responders
- Take pet food
- Take pet IDs, pet carrier & vaccination records
- Keep in mind – many shelters may not accept pets
 - Pet shelters *may* be available
- Plan for your pet along with you family emergency plan
- [Somali cultural note – this question may not be relevant]

7. What if I am at work when a disaster hits?

Sample answer:

- Just like at home, it is best to prepare ahead of time
 - Find out if your workplace has an emergency plan.
 - Get to know the plan
 - Check out the emergency exits – especially stairways
 - Find out your workplace emergency contact number
 - Have some items in your workplace just in case (a mini-emergency kit)
 - Flashlight
 - Battery-operated radio
 - Cell phone
 - Shoes good to walk in
 - Car may be inaccessible or streets gridlocked
- It is not unusual for major buildings to be evacuated – fire, bomb scare, etc.

8. What if I have a child in school?

Sample answer:

- School will have a plan – learn what it is.
- Find out school emergency contact number
- In some cases officials will evacuate all schoolchildren
- They will let you know if you can pick up child

9. Where do people go in an evacuation?

Sample Answer:

- It depends on the kind of disaster.
 - Sometimes you can go to home of a friend or relative in another city
 - Check hotels or motels
 - Other times you must find a public shelter

10. How do I find a shelter?

Sample Answer:

- Officials or American Red Cross can direct you to a shelter.
- You should register so people know where to find you later.
 - Undocumented? Don't worry – they don't check immigrant status

11. What do I need to know if I drive my own car in an evacuation?

Sample Answer:

- Idea – some people keep emergency kit in car – that would save time.
 - You may have to sleep in your car
- Stay on routes recommended by officials.
 - Other routes may be blocked or unsafe
- Get familiar with alternate routes ahead of time
- Drive safely
- Never drive through water deep enough to reach the rim of a car wheel.

12. What if I don't own car or cannot drive it?

Sample Answer:

- Plan ahead to car pool or find another means of transportation.
- In some cases officials may provide buses for evacuations.

- If so - this will be announced

13. How will I know when I can return home?

Sample Answer:

- For your safety, wait for official word – on radio or TV
- Officials will guard areas so that only residents can enter
 - Have proof of residence with you
- Use your work and school contacts to find out when you can return to school and work

14. We've mentioned a lot of agencies that can help you. You can find all of them listed on our website along with additional information

Sample answer:

- **HOSTS READ:** For more information on how to prepare for emergency evacuation, visit www.echominnesota.org.
- Other possible sites – American Red Cross, Local County Emergency Management Director – but especially: www.ready.gov

15. Do you have anything else you'd like to add on this subject?

Sample answer:

- Emergencies cause a lot of emotion and confusion, so it is best to do your thinking ahead of time
- Listen to official notifications and follow directions
- Any other answers

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