



Kiowa County Health Department

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Time to Prepare for Storm Season

In the blink of an eye, disasters can alter a family's normal routine. Neighborhood streets can be closed because of large debris or downed power lines. Suddenly, an area that is a familiar part of a normal daily routine is now unrecognizable. In times like this, it is crucial for a family to have a plan to reunite and meet at a safe location.

With severe storm season around the corner, the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and Kiowa County Health Department (KCHD) encourages families to create a plan for both adults and children to follow. A family may not be together when a disaster strikes so it is important to plan in advance: how to get to a safe place; how to contact one another; how to get back together; and what to do in different situations. During a disaster, roads are often blocked or closed and alternate routes must be used. Knowing multiple routes of travel in advance can save time and frustration when trying to reach loved ones.

OSDH and KCHD also encourages families to have a basic, 72-hour emergency kit consisting of water, snacks, first-aid kit, flashlight, batteries, prescription medicine and important paperwork. Parents can help reduce the effect of disasters on children by adding a few simple kid-friendly supplies such as books, games, a favorite toy or comfort item and medical items such as infant/child fever reducer to the kit. Those with babies should consider a three-day supply of formula, diapers, antibacterial wipes, non-perishable baby food and sealable plastic bags for soiled items.

Darrell Eberly, emergency manager at OSDH, reminds families who have members with medical conditions and disabilities to consider any unique needs during and after a disaster. "If you have, or care for someone, with a disability or access and functional needs, it's especially important to include needed supplies, equipment and medications as part of your planning efforts," said Eberly. "If evacuating from the home is necessary, it is important to take medication and specialty equipment such as hearing aids, oxygen, a wheelchair, diabetic supplies, food for a special diet and supplies for a service animal."

OSDH, KCHD and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer the additional following tips for families preparing for disasters:

- Check with your mobile carrier for options on wireless emergency alerts being delivered to your cell phone or other device.
- Practice your plan by quizzing your kids periodically and conduct fire and other emergency drills.
- Check emergency supplies throughout the year to replace batteries, food and water as needed.
- Plan alternate ways to charge communication and assistive technology devices if there is loss of power.
- Plan for medication requiring refrigeration.

OSDH released videos in English, Spanish and American Sign Language to ensure the message of preparedness is available to various populations. To access these videos, visit the [OSDH YouTube](#) channel and select the Preparedness playlist.

Families may begin preparing for disasters by downloading, printing and completing a family plan by visiting www.ready.gov. For more tips and information, like the Kiowa County Health Department and OSDH Emergency Preparedness Response Service pages on [Facebook](#) or access the KCHD website at <http://kiowa.health.ok.gov>. You can also contact the KCHD Local Emergency Response Coordinator at 580-726-3316.

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