when disaster strikes

getting back on your feet

When disaster strikes, help can be a phone call away.

Disasters can happen anytime, anywhere. And when disaster strikes, you may not have much time to respond.

Whether an earthquake, flood, fire or an act of terrorism, disasters are sudden and unexpected. No matter what type of disaster, the resulting financial devastation and emotional trauma can be overwhelming. Recovering from disaster takes time.

This brochure is designed to provide some basic information on how to recover – emotionally and financially – when disaster strikes. It provides basic tips on what to do and where to get help.

Listed in the back are local, state and federal emergency and disaster resources. Keep this brochure in a handy place.

responding immediately after the disaster

If disaster strikes, try to stay calm and don't panic. Remember, help is on the way. Local officials and relief workers will provide assistance, but it could be hours or even days before they can get to you.

Following are some tips on what to do and how to cope until help arrives.

- **Don't** call 9-1-1 unless you have a major injury or life-threatening emergency.
- Check for injuries and apply first aid.
- If you have established a family disaster plan, follow it.
- Check for any hazards or damage to your home.
- Turn off the gas.
- Don't use matches or turn on electrical switches – you could cause an explosion.
- Call your out-of-area family contact and check in.
- Stay tuned to the radio for information from local authorities.
- Check in with family members and neighbors.
- Avoid the disaster area unless you need to be there – you could hamper rescue operations and put yourself in danger.

If you need to evacuate, determine a safe meeting place where you can reunite with loved ones. Leave a message at home to let people know where you are.

If you have put together a disaster supplies kit (see *When Disaster Strikes: A Planning & Resource Guide*), get it now and keep it with you. Make sure your important documents are part of that kit. Whether you are evacuated or confined to your home, you will need the water, food, first-aid kit, tools and other supplies to cope until help arrives.

recovering from the trauma

People react in many different ways to the trauma that follows disaster. You may find yourself feeling disoriented. You might feel sad, angry, fearful, helpless or just numb. People can lose sleep and have difficulty concentrating. The best advice is to address your feelings and to keep the lines of communication open.

Here are some tips on how to cope:

- Talk about your feelings and respect that others might react differently.
- Accept that your ability to function may be temporarily limited.
- Stay healthy and get enough sleep.
- Do something to help.
- Maintain ordinary routines as much as possible.
- Seek professional help if you need it.
- Remember you are not the only one feeling overwhelmed.
- Limit the amount of TV and radio.
- Stay connected with your support systems – family, friends, social groups, neighbors, spiritual groups.

getting financial assistance

Disasters can result in significant financial loss. However, when disaster strikes, government agencies are quick to respond. Citizens are quickly notified where to find a nearby Disaster Application Center (DAC), where affected residents may apply for loans and grants, and receive information regarding housing, employment, business and other types of relief. Referrals are also made to numerous volunteer agencies that provide food, shelter and medical aid.

While DACs are an important resource, your family needs to know where to go for help. Depending on the type of disaster you may need to contact local, state or federal agencies. These agencies offer assistance in several forms:

- low-interest loans and cash grants
- housing assistance
- tax refunds
- veterans benefits
- unemployment benefits
- crisis counseling
- free legal counseling
- filing insurance claims*

Be sure to keep detailed notes and a log of all phone calls and correspondence with relief and other agencies. Make a note of and hold onto your disaster identification number if one is assigned to you. Keep all documentation.

*The California Department of Insurance offers two booklets entitled “Residential Property Claims Guide,” and “Don’t Get Burned After a Disaster.” Call 800-927-HELP to get copies.

resources

Federal Emergency Management Agency:
FEMA is the lead federal emergency response organization. FEMA helps people and businesses respond to disasters and get back on their feet. After a disaster, the toll-free number for your area is frequently broadcast on television and radio.

www.fema.gov

800.525.0321	24-hr Hotline
800.480.2520	Emergency Publications
800.555.1212	Call for the number in your area
800.521.FEMA	Register for referral to assistance agencies

Governors' Office of Emergency Services:
OES coordinates preparedness for and response to major disasters. It is responsible for the state's readiness in responding to and recovering from natural, manmade and war-caused emergencies and for assisting local governments in their emergency efforts.

www.oes.ca.gov

800.550.5234	Safety Information & Referral Line

Department of Social Services:
CDSS provides aid, services and protection to needy children and adults. CDSS also sponsors several disaster-related programs that include a feeding program and emergency welfare services for victims of presidential-declared disasters. These programs provide food, temporary care and shelter for disaster victims.

www.cdss.ca.gov

800.759.6807	General Disaster-Related Questions

California Department of Insurance:
CDIS assists consumers, aids in licensing insurance agents or brokers, and provides information on laws that regulate the insurance industry. The website maintains a "Catastrophe and Disaster Information" page where emergency disaster information will be provided in the event of a real emergency in the State of California. Also available from CDIS are two booklets entitled "Residential Property Claims Guide," and "Don't Get Burned After a Disaster."

www.insurance.ca.gov

800.927.HELP Consumer Hotline

California Department of Transportation:
CALTRANS provides up-to-date information on road conditions of the California Highway System. It covers incidents that cause significant delays such as closures, land construction and emergencies.

www.dot.ca.gov

800.427.7623 Road Conditions

California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection:
CDF is dedicated to the protection of over 31 million acres of California's wild lands. It also provides emergency services and often takes the lead in disaster response.

www.cdf.ca.gov

916.653.5123 Fire Safety Publications

California Environmental Resources Evaluation System: CERES is an information system developed by the California Resources Agency that facilitates access to a variety of electronic data on California's diverse environments. CERES provides comprehensive flood information for California, including preparedness and recovery.

www.ceres.ca.gov

resources
continued

California Dept. of Toxic Substances Control: Established under the auspices of the California Environmental Protection Agency, DTSC is responsible for protecting California and its residents from exposure to hazardous waste, regulating waste facilities, and overseeing cleanups.

www.dtsc.ca.gov

916.323.6042 Hazardous waste management and disaster response

American Red Cross: Chartered by Congress in 1905, the American Red Cross is a humanitarian organization led by volunteers to help people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. Their mission is to ensure nationwide disaster planning, preparedness, community disaster education, mitigation and response. The American Red Cross Disaster Education Program is a nationwide effort to help people prepare for and respond to disasters of all types.

www.redcross.org

Salvation Army: Founded in 1865 by William Booth, the Salvation Army provides a wide range of social, medical, and educational programs, as well as other community services. Call the operator for your local corps number or check the business section of your local telephone directory.

www.salvationarmy.org

local numbers

Call **9-1-1** in an emergency.

fire

police

hospitals

utilities

schools

crisis counseling

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." Nelson Mandela

Senator George Runner

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Santa Clarita, CA 91355
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fax (661) 286-2543

Victorville Office
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Victorville, CA 92392
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www.sen.ca.gov/runner

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