

householder's guide to
**major
emergencies**



Preparing for the Unexpected

Practical advice to help you
be better prepared in the
event of a major emergency

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Foreword

This booklet outlines some practical steps to help you be better prepared for an emergency and to let you know what to do if one occurs.

Major emergencies, whilst not common, can occur. 'A major emergency' is a phrase used to describe a range of incidents from a major road traffic accident, rail crash or fire, to a flood, severe storm or explosion.

If and when a major emergency occurs, the emergency services have a joint major emergency plan in place outlining how the Health Service Executive South, An Garda Síochána and the Local Authority work together to respond to the effects of the emergency.

The purpose of this booklet is to inform you, the householder, about some practical and simple arrangements you can make in your own home and community environment. The booklet will also outline the types of major emergencies that might occur and the possible impact on you and your family.

Knowing what to do makes it easier to remain calm and confident in an emergency – preparation is the key.

We hope you find the information useful.

An Garda Síochána
Cork County Council
Cork City Council
Kerry County Council
Health Service Executive South



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Preparing for an emergency



What are the most important steps you can take?

Think about what might happen.

In thinking about what you and your family or household might do in an emergency, bear in mind that you may be in a situation where:

- You may be separated from each other.
- Normal services such as landline phone or mobile phone might be inaccessible.
- Power supplies may be cut.
- You may be injured, and others may be injured or dead.
- There may be fire or other dangerous elements present.

Talk with your family, household members and neighbours about things you could do.

Do some or all of the following seven suggested activities.

1 Involve your family or household

- Decide how family members will stay in touch in the event of, or after, an emergency.
- Agree on how you will contact each other if not at home, who will collect children from school, and who will check on elderly or disabled neighbours.
- Agree on a place for family or householders to meet if separated.
- Make arrangements for pets.

2 Store important documents safely

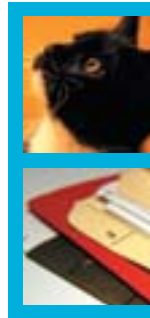
3 Learn about your home

Find out how and where to turn off electricity, gas and water supplies in your home.

4 Find out about your local emergency services

Make a record of your local emergency telephone numbers (Local Authority, Gas, Electricity) on page 25.

Remember to dial **999** or **112**
for An Garda Síochána, Fire and
Ambulance.



5 Learn some basic first aid

If anyone is seriously hurt you will need the Ambulance Service. However you may be able to deal with minor injuries yourself with some knowledge of First Aid. For more information on First Aid training contact your local branch of: Civil Defence; The Irish Red Cross; The Order of Malta; St. John's Ambulance.

The information on pages 19 – 20 can help you to cope until professional medical assistance arrives.

6 Find out about emergency plans

The following are some examples of emergency plans that may be of relevance to you:

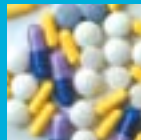
- Primary/Secondary schools – find out if children will be kept at school or sent home on their own and how can you arrange for them to be picked up.
- The workplace – check if your workplace has plans in place for emergency evacuations – and find out what you are meant to do.
- Apartment buildings – check if your apartment building has plans in place for evacuation and who is responsible for those plans.



7 Prepare an emergency kit and keep it handy

Keep the items listed below in your home so they can become your emergency kit for use in all types of emergencies:

- Battery-operated radio (with spare batteries).
- Torch (with spare batteries), candles and waterproof matches.
- First-Aid kit and manual.
- Medications e.g., asthma inhalers, toiletry and sanitary supplies.
- Special needs for infants, the aged and people with disabilities.
- A mobile phone, spare battery and charger.
- Extra car and house keys.
- Copies of important family documents e.g., wills, your house deeds, your insurance files etc.
- A copy of this booklet.



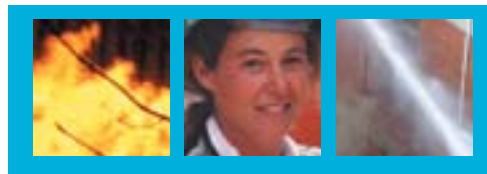
What to do if an emergency occurs

If an emergency occurs in your presence there are a number of things you can do. Call **999** or **112** and request attendance by emergency services. **DO NOT** assume others will do this.

Make those around you aware of the situation.

Seek reliable information about what is happening and advice from emergency services. This information may be provided:

- In person by emergency services at the scene.
- Via radio or television – telephone numbers will be broadcast over radio and television.
- **DO NOT CALL 999 or 112** for information, as the operator will not be able to provide it.
- Check on your neighbours, especially those who are elderly or disabled or may not be able to understand English well.
- You may be advised to stay in your house or to evacuate – in either case, follow the advice given by the emergency services, as it will be tailored to the circumstances.
- Should evacuation be advised, remember to take all your prescribed medication with you. Refer to pages 14–15 for guidance on evacuation.



What to do in specific emergency situations

The following guidelines outline steps to take in response to some specific emergency situations.

1. Fire

- Evacuate the building as quickly and as safely as possible and proceed to the agreed assembly area.
- If surrounded by smoke, stay low to the floor and crawl to the exit. (As the smoke, poisonous gases and heat will rise).
- If possible cover your nose and mouth with a wet cloth and protect any exposed skin.
- Before opening a door feel it with the back of your hand. If it is hot do not open it, there may be a fire on the other side.
- If you cannot escape, stay in an unaffected room, close the door, go to the window and attract attention so as to alert rescuers of your presence.

2. Severe storm threatened

- Tie down loose items outside that cannot be brought in.
- If time allows, shop nearby for essential food items such as dry foods and drinks.
- Stay indoors – preferably downstairs – and keep pets in.
- Clear windowsills and close curtains to protect against flying glass.
- If gas, electricity or water supplies are cut off, contact if possible the relevant services. Make a note of these numbers on page 25.
- As soon as it is safe, rope off or protect damaged areas to prevent injury from falling masonry, broken glass or electric cables.



3. Risk of flooding

- Protect doorways and low level air vents with sandbags or rubbish bags filled with earth.
- Turn off gas and electricity.
- Move as much as you can, including food and bottled water, upstairs.
- If flooding traps you remain near a window to attract attention.

4. Bomb explosion

- Get out of the building as quickly and calmly as possible.
- In the event of falling debris, shelter under a sturdy table or desk until the situation has stabilised enough for your safe passage. When safe, leave quickly, watching out for weakened floors and stairs.
- Ensure your own safety before trying to help others.
- If trapped in debris, do not light a match. Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or clothing. Rhythmically tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can hear where you are.



5. Receiving a suspicious package

If you receive a package that appears to be out of the ordinary, for example, from someone you do not know, or if it is badly wrapped, or if it has unusual contents, follow the steps below.

If you have NOT OPENED the package – DO NOT OPEN IT.

- Leave the package where it is.
- Get everyone out of the room and close the door. Isolate the room and prevent others from entering.
- Call **999** or **112** and ask for An Garda Síochána.
- Make a list of persons who were in the room to give to authorities when they arrive.
- If applicable, alert the building security staff.
- Wait in a safe place until emergency services arrive and follow their instructions.



If you HAVE OPENED a suspicious package – leave it where it is and cover it if possible.

- Get everyone out of the room and close the door. Isolate the room and prevent others from entering. If you are able, turn off air conditioning.
- If possible, wash your hands or shower with soap and water. Do not touch your mouth and eyes with your hands.
- Call **999** or **112** and ask for An Garda Síochána.
- If you are experiencing any immediate physical symptoms call **999** or **112** and ask for the Ambulance Service.
- Make a list of persons who were in the room to give to authorities when they arrive.
- If applicable, alert the building security staff.
- Wait in a safe place until emergency services arrive and follow their instructions.

6. Chemical accidents, toxic fumes and smoke

Hazardous chemicals can be released by accident or by a deliberate criminal act. They range from household chemicals to more toxic industrial chemicals. Exposure could cause serious or fatal injury. Emergency services will identify the hazard and tell you what to do. You may be advised to stay in your house or to evacuate – in either case, follow the advice given by the emergency services, as it will be tailored to the circumstances.

If the chemicals are heavier than air, emergency services may ask you to move to higher ground. For your safety, in all circumstances, listen to advice from the emergency services.

If you are asked to stay inside your home:



- Stay inside and close and lock all windows and external doors – however, ensure your keys are readily available, or that you have an accessible escape route if you need to evacuate.
- If advised by the emergency services, turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.
- Close fireplace vent.
- Close internal doors to reduce air movement.
- Gather your emergency kit and make sure the radio is working.
- Go to an internal room, ideally one at ground level with no windows.
- Continue to monitor your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are advised to evacuate – emergency services may later call for the evacuation of specific areas in your community and issue specific instructions.





All chemical tankers/containers have warning labels as shown above

If you come across a road traffic accident involving a chemical tanker/container:

- Alert the Emergency Services (An Garda Síochána, Fire, Ambulance). Ring **999** or **112**.
- Do not approach the incident, keep well away and advise others to do likewise.
- Do not attempt rescue of injured or trapped persons.
- Do not touch or walk in any spilled liquid or solid.
- Keep up wind from any fumes or smoke – remember fumes and gases may be invisible and odourless.

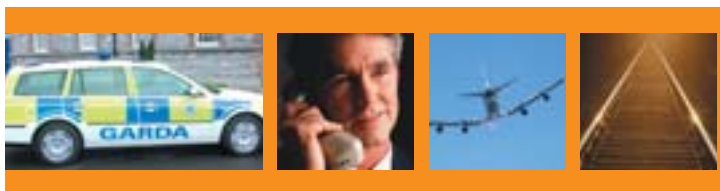
7. Biological agent release

If you are at a site where emergency services advise that there has been a release of a biological agent you should:

- Follow the advice of the emergency services / health authorities.
- Pay close attention to all official health instructions.

If you have been exposed, health authorities may recommend:

- Decontamination (cleansing) to remove any agent from your clothing and skin.
- Treatment with antibiotics or other medication.



8. Nuclear/Radiological incident

The National Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents describes procedures for dealing with a major emergency at a nuclear installation abroad that could result in radioactive contamination reaching Ireland. The Plan provides a framework for standard procedures and coordination amongst government departments and state agencies that would be involved in the emergency response.

Radioactive substances are used in Ireland in medicine, industry and education. Properly handled, this work poses no harm to the workers involved or to the general public. However an incident involving these substances could occur and exposure to radiation can have serious health effects.

If you have been exposed:

- Move quickly away from the source of the radiation.
- If possible place a protective barrier between you and the source of the radiation.
- Call 999 or 112 and ask for the Fire Service
- Follow the advice of the emergency services, they will have access to the advice and resources of the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII).

9. Other emergencies e.g., Rail, Air Crashes etc.

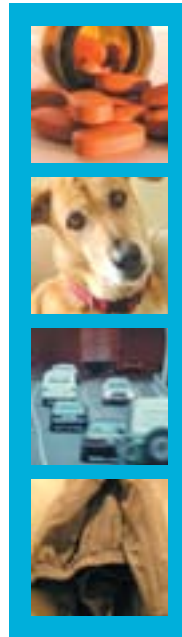
- If you are first on the scene – raise the alarm, dial 999 or 112 and inform the Emergency Services.
- Unless you are directly involved, keep well away from the scene.

Be ready to evacuate

If the emergency is serious enough, you may be asked to leave your home and go to a nearby welfare/ accommodation centre (like a community hall or hotel).

If you have to evacuate:

- When directed by emergency services, make sure fires are out, switch off gas and electricity, unplug appliances, lock door and windows.
- If there is time take along:
 - Medicines
 - Warm clothes
 - Special foods
 - Personal documents
 - Immediate valuables
 - Baskets and leads for pets





- Listen for emergency warnings and safety advice on radio or television.
- The emergency services will probably ask you to go to a 'welfare/accommodation centre' – if you decide to go anywhere else, for example to relatives, let someone know so you can be accounted for.
- If you have elderly or disabled neighbours check that they are ok and inform the Emergency Services that they require assistance.
- Allow for special needs of infants, the aged and people with disabilities.
- If you have a mobile phone, take it with you.
- Follow the instructions issued by the emergency services.
- When you return to your home after being told it is safe to do so, open windows to provide ventilation.

How to cope emotionally

People react to emergencies in different ways. Following an emergency, you may experience a range of physical and emotional reactions. You might feel shocked, afraid or anxious; you might experience feelings of horror, depression, anger and grief. THIS IS NORMAL.

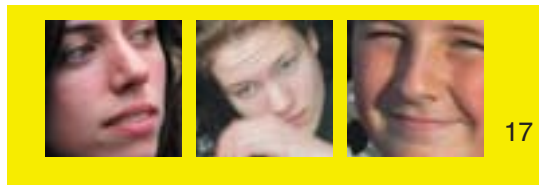
However, should your reactions continue over an extended period, you should consult with your GP who will access appropriate professional support through the Health Service Executive South, to help you deal with these difficulties.



What to do

You need to remain calm so you can control your fear and actions. Remember that someone may need your help. If you are feeling particularly anxious or frightened, follow this advice:

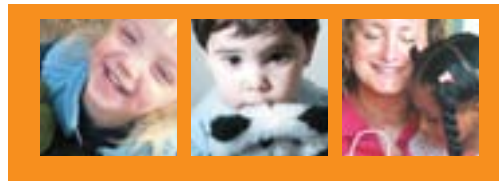
- Keep your family together wherever possible.
- Comfort each other and support those who are with you or have come together during or after the emergency.
- Focus on your feelings and any irrational thoughts – talk calmly about them with family or friends.
- Focus on what practical tasks you and your family can do – practical actions are helpful and will reduce anxiety.
- Try to notice your success in coping in very difficult circumstances and take some satisfaction in this.
- Monitor information from emergency services by listening to your radio or television – DO NOT continuously watch disturbing footage on television, take turns listening to the news with other adult members of your family or household.
- If separated from family members, if possible find out where they are and only arrange to reunite with them when it is safe to do so; and
- When the danger has passed, check if your neighbours are distressed – talk to them about their experiences.



Helping children

When children experience a major emergency, they can also experience a range of feelings and express a wide range of behaviours. They may become withdrawn, anxious, clingy, angry; they may re-enact their experiences in their play, or they may seem to regress or act younger than their age. Here is some advice on how to help children through these difficult times:

- Listen to your children, be available to them and open to their questions about what has happened.
- Take their feelings seriously and respond with age-appropriate information and reassurance.
- Acknowledge to them that you are feeling a similar way and that this is a difficult time.
- Comfort and reassure them, sometimes children need more hugs and affection when they are feeling scared or vulnerable.
- Keep an eye on their sleeping patterns and expect this to be disrupted for a few days.
- DO NOT expose them to constant media coverage about the emergency.
- Allow them to express their feelings through their play or other creative activities (painting, drawing) if they want to.
- Re-establish normal routines as soon as possible – this will reassure children and help them to feel secure and safe again.



First Aid tips

Please remember that the basic first aid steps set out below are not a complete first aid guide. The best people to handle any medical emergency are trained responders.

Six key steps

If someone is injured, six key steps will help keep everyone at the scene as safe as possible until professional help arrives.

1. Make sure the situation is safe, for example keep clear of power lines, gas, smoke, fire and passing traffic.
2. If the injured person is unconscious and not responding, or if the incident has not otherwise been reported, call **999** or **112** immediately and ask for the Ambulance Service.
3. If the person is not breathing, remove any blockage to the airway. If you (or any bystander) have the necessary skills, commence cardio-pulmonary resuscitation.
4. Attend to severe bleeding or shock, and then care for injuries to muscles, bones and joints.
5. Monitor the injured person's condition whilst waiting for professional assistance to arrive.
6. Help the person to rest and give reassurance.



Bleeding

- Cover the wound with a dressing or clean cloth and place direct pressure on it.
- Encourage the person to lie down if necessary.
- Raise the injured part above the level of the heart, but take great care if you suspect a broken bone.
- Cover the dressing with a bandage to hold it in place.
- If the bleeding does not stop, apply additional dressings, pads and bandages on top of existing ones.



Burns

- Cool the burn with plenty of clean, cold water (except for burns that are charred, whitish or deep).
- Burns that are charred, whitish or deep – cover with a clean cloth.
- Do not break blisters.
- Gently remove rings, watches, belts or tight clothing.
- Cover burned areas with dry, clean, non-stick dressing or cloth.
- Cool water only to be applied.
- Treat for shock as required.

Shock

- Keep the victim from getting cold or overheated.
- Raise the legs about 30cm, if you don't suspect broken bones.
- Do not give food or drink.

Injuries to muscles, bones and joints

- Rest the injured part, avoid movements that cause pain.
- Immobilise the injured part before moving the victim or giving additional care.
- Apply ice or cold pack to reduce swelling and pain.
- Raise the injured area to slow the flow of blood and reduce swelling.

Radio & TV warnings advising the public

In major emergency situations it may be necessary to issue warnings and advice to the public. Such messages would normally be broadcast on all radio and TV channels.

Remember to cater for power cuts – you should have a battery-operated radio and know how to tune into local stations.

Radio	FM	AM
RTÉ Radio 1	89.2	729
RTÉ 2FM	92.2	1278
Today FM	101.1	
RTÉ Lyric FM	98.8	
RTÉ Radio na Gaeltachta		
Cork County	94.1	
Cork City	93.6	
96FM	96.4	
County Sound West Cork	103.3 / 103.7	
Red FM	106.05	
Radio Kerry	97.05	
Cork Campus Radio (UCC)	97.45	
Cork University Hospital (CUH) FM	107.08	

TV

RTÉ 1 RTÉ 2 TV3 TG 4 Sky Channel 6

Regulated industrial sites in the Cork Region

Some industrial sites – because of the nature and quantity of chemicals stored or processed – are required by law to distribute information packages, if appropriate, to people living in the immediate vicinity of their site.

This requirement applies to the following sites within the Cork region:

- Bantry Bay Terminals Ltd., Bantry
- Calor Gas Ltd., Whitegate
- Calor Gas Ltd., Tivoli Industrial Estate
- Cognis Ireland, Little Island
- ConocoPhillips Whitegate Refinery Ltd., Whitegate
- Dynea Ireland Ltd., Marino Point, Cobh
- Eli Lilly S.A., Dunderrow, Kinsale
- Flogas Plc., Tivoli Industrial Estate
- Irish Distillers Ltd., Midleton
- GlaxoSmithKline, Currabinny, Carrigaline
- The National Oil Reserves Agency Ltd., Centre Park Road
- Novartis, Ringaskiddy
- Pfizer Cork Ltd., Inchera, Little Island
- Pfizer Cork Pharmaceuticals, Ringaskiddy

If you live in the immediate vicinity of any of these sites you should or will receive, if appropriate, an information package from the company concerned. Make sure that both you and all house occupants understand the information and advice so that you can take the appropriate action in the event of an incident.

If you have not received the information package you should request it directly from the company.

Where to go for more information

Please feel free to contact us if you have any queries about this booklet. The Cork & Kerry Joint Emergency Planning Groups (An Garda Síochána, Health Service Executive South, Cork City Council, Cork County Council and Kerry County Council) will be happy to deal with any queries you have.

Contacting us

Emergency Management Officer

Telephone: 021 492 7380 or
021 492 7395

E-mail: emo@mailp.hse.ie

Contacts

An emergency situation may mean you need to contact relatives, emergency and repair services quickly. Make a note of important telephone numbers on this page and the next page.

If you are an older person, disabled or ill, make a note of the telephone numbers of your health workers and other helpers.

In the event of a major emergency only make calls which are absolutely necessary because the telephone system is likely to become overloaded.

Remember to dial 999 or 112 for An Garda Síochána, Fire and Ambulance Services.

FAMILY CONTACTS:

NAME

TELEPHONE NOS.

SPECIAL HELP

DOCTOR:

SOCIAL WORKER:

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE:

HOME HELP:

OTHER CONTACTS

ESB:

BORD GÁIS:

Remember to dial
999 or **112**
for An Garda Síochána,
Fire and Ambulance
Services.

Published by the Cork & Kerry Joint Emergency Planning Groups, July 2006.
Please keep this booklet in a safe place.



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí



Féidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive