



When it comes to reacting to a flood, hurricane, blackout, or another disaster, people with ADHD seem to have a leg up. Their “can-do” attitude, coupled with a knack for outside-the-box thinking, help them make smart decisions in situations that might overwhelm people who think, well, a bit more slowly.

Of course, it’s much easier to react to a disaster when you’re *prepared* for it. Alas, the skills required for disaster preparedness—planning, prioritizing, and organizing—aren’t exactly an ADDer’s strong suit. No wonder you’ve been putting off making the preparations you know are necessary—the kind that might save a life.

Fortunately, I’m here to help. To make it easier for you and your family to get ready for any disaster that might come your way, follow these three steps.

By JUDITH KOLBERG, Atlanta-based author of *Organize for Disaster* and other books on organization (Squall Press). She can be reached at info@fileheads.net.

1 Prepare a grab-and-go bag for each family member (see below). A grab-and-go bag is a backpack or small suitcase on wheels that you pack ahead of time, in the event a disaster forces you to leave town.

In addition to his or her grab-and-go bag, one person in the family should also carry a first-aid kit containing common over-the-counter medications, as well as a two-week supply of all prescription drugs used by family members. (If your insurance will not cover this, buy them out of pocket.) This person can also be responsible for a small battery-operated radio, an extra set of keys (car, home, and safety deposit box), and cash.

Grab-and-Go Bag

- two small bottles of water
- four high-protein, high-calorie energy bars, or a similar quantity of trail mix, dried fruit, or granola
- change of clothes (in a young child’s grab-and-go bag, pack extra underwear, as kids under stress tend to have “accidents”)
- toothpaste, toothbrush, tampons, razor, and travel-size toiletries
- lightweight flashlight (with extra batteries in a baggie)
- multi-blade knife
- spare pair of eyeglasses
- antibacterial hand sanitizer
- plastic bags for food
- writing pad, pen or pencil, and disposable camera (so you can document emergency expenditures, damage, repairs, and so on)

Talking about disasters can be frightening for young children. If you’re unsure how to describe what might happen in a disaster, or how your family will respond, go to fema.gov/kids.

2 Create a written communication/reunion plan. One of the scariest things about disasters is that they can leave family members geographically scattered, making it hard for them to communicate.

To make sure that you and your loved ones can remain in touch no matter what, create your communication/reunion plan using the basic form printed below.

Set aside a couple of hours to sit down *as a family* to fill it out. If you tend to “zone out” when filling out forms, have another family member do it for you.

Family Communication/Reunion Plan

Home phone _____

Home address (reunion site #1) _____

Mother's full name _____

Mother's work phone _____

Mother's cell phone _____

Mother's e-mail _____

Father's full name _____

Father's work phone _____

Father's cell phone _____

Father's e-mail _____

Neighbor's name and address (reunion site #2) _____

Neighbor's home phone number _____

Reunion site #3 _____

Out-of-town contact name and address (reunion site #4) _____

Out-of-town contact phone _____

School #1 name and address _____

School #1 phone _____

School #2 name and address _____

School #2 phone _____

Your plan should include phone numbers and e-mail addresses for each family member. Indicate an out-of-town contact whom you can leave messages with and retrieve messages from if it's impossible to call someone in your hometown. Program the numbers into everyone's cell phones and your landline (corded) phone. Landline phones often work when cell and cordless phones don't.

You should also specify “rolling” reunion sites where everyone agrees to meet. Reunion site #1 is your home; everyone who is not at home when disaster strikes should head there as soon as possible. If traveling to the first site is out of the question, family members should head to site #2, site #3, and so on. I recommend making site #2 a neighbor's home, and site #3 a public building, such as a school or a library, situated one to three miles from your home.

In case of widespread disaster, it's wise to designate a fourth reunion site 10 to 20 miles from your home. The home of a relative or a friend might be a good choice.

Once you fill in all the blanks, make a copy for each family member. In addition, post a copy of the plan on your refrigerator, give one to each child's school or day-

care center, and place one in the glove compartment of each car and another in your grab-and-go bag.

3 Stock up on provisions, in case your family is forced to “hunker down” for a while. Remember that the electricity may go out; in addition to having no lights, you may be unable to cook, and may have no heat, air conditioning, television, computer, or working toilet.

Below is a basic list of provisions. Store them in a closet, a cabinet, or another agreed-upon, easily reached location in your home.

Emergency Supplies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) <input type="checkbox"/> water-purification tablets, in case your water supply runs out <input type="checkbox"/> three-day supply of canned or other nonperishable food for each family member, as well as for all pets <input type="checkbox"/> disposable forks, knives, spoons, cups, plates, and napkins <input type="checkbox"/> bottle opener and manual can opener <input type="checkbox"/> small camp stove, with fuel and matches <input type="checkbox"/> digital thermometer (refrigerated food needs to be 40 degrees F or lower, and frozen food 0 degrees F or lower) <input type="checkbox"/> plastic bags for garbage and food-storage <input type="checkbox"/> one change of clothing and footwear per person <input type="checkbox"/> one blanket or sleeping bag per person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> basic toiletry items <input type="checkbox"/> toilet tissue and paper towels <input type="checkbox"/> plastic bucket, with a cover (to use as an outdoor toilet) <input type="checkbox"/> liquid soap, antibacterial moist towelettes, disposable plastic gloves <input type="checkbox"/> battery-powered or hand-cranked radio <input type="checkbox"/> one flashlight for each family member, with extra batteries <input type="checkbox"/> first-aid kit <input type="checkbox"/> whistle <input type="checkbox"/> fire extinguisher <input type="checkbox"/> tool kit (consisting of a multi-bladed knife, hammer, Phillips-head screwdriver, flathead screwdriver, and pliers) <input type="checkbox"/> reflective tape, to make clothes, shoes, flashlights, or other equipment visible in the dark <input type="checkbox"/> landline telephone and a cell phone with extra batteries
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Disasters cause severe emotional stress, and stress aggravates ADHD traits, like impulsivity, distractibility, and hyperactivity. The best way to de-stress during a disaster is to retain as many familiar routines as possible—homework times, meal times, and so on. Exercise and deep breathing can help, too.

It's a long list, I know. But it should take you only a few hours to buy everything and find a place to store it all. You may wish to declare a “family preparedness day,” on which the whole family gets together to shop for provisions, bring them home, store them, and review your family communication/reunion plan.

ADDers tend toward perfectionism, but that can get in the way when you're preparing for disaster. It's impossible to prepare for *every* contingency. But as long as you pack grab-and-go bags, prepare a communication plan, and assemble your “hunker down” provisions, you'll have the basics covered. That's all you should aim for. ▲