

This is Troy Nicolini with the National Weather Service with your Community Comment.

The wet season is just around the corner here in Northwestern California. As mentioned in a previous Community Comment, there are some things you can do prepare your car for winter weather. Today I want to talk about some things you can do to prepare your family and your home for winter weather.

It is super important to have an emergency communications plan that has all of your family members contact information as well as some out of the area contacts that everyone knows to check in with if they can't reach each other directly. This is even more important than ever since many of us don't remember phone numbers any more now that our cell phones have it all in memory. When a big storm knocks out phone lines and cell phone towers it can be really hard for family members to communicate so build a plan now. Google "family communications plan FEMA" to find great templates that you can use to build your plan.

It is also important to have some emergency supplies in your home. This is important for winter weather but also for other hazards such as earthquakes. Even though it has been a while since we had a event that made it hard to get supplies, the North Coast is always vulnerable to being isolated from the outside world. Rockslides and floods can cut off roads in to our region so stockpile some basics to survive for several days, with a special emphasis on water.

If you live in a rural setting then this is a good time to make sure there aren't trees or tree branches that are prone to being knocked onto your home from the frequent high wind events we get. Also check culverts to make sure they are not plugged with branches and debris. Plugged culverts are a frequent cause of localized flooding in our rugged terrain.

Also remember that our high winds can knock trees onto powerlines causing power outages. The most important thing to do to prepare for power outages is to ensure that you will have safety lighting in your home. Avoid using candles because they are a significant fire threat. Instead, get some the newer night lights that are LED ..and have battery backup. These stay on when the power goes out and they last for several hours on their battery. If you get the three-in-one kind then they also double up as a flashlight. Peppering these around your home will ensure that you and your family can safely move about when the lights go out during a power outage. Google 3-in-1 LED night light to ~~get~~ find some examples. Having other flashlights with spare batteries is also a good idea.

By doing a little bit of preparation before winter you can ensure that your family will be safe when those storms hit. Make the preparedness activities fun family activities and you also help nudge your family toward a preparedness culture that will last a lifetime.

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