



Don't let a disaster catch you BY SURPRISE!

Prepare in advance for severe weather, other potential disasters

Severe Weather Awareness Week (April 8-14) is just around the corner in Michigan, providing a good opportunity to take stock in how well you've prepared your family to face a natural disaster.

Everything starts with good planning. Experts say it's critical to prepare for those first 72 hours, when it's more likely you'll be on your own before the emergency crews arrive. To help get you started, check out the Emergency Preparedness page on the City of Novi's website, cityofnovi.org.

"You're going to want the essentials, like food, water and clothing," said Marshall Johnson, emergency management coordinator for the City of Novi. "You're going to want a first-aid kit, extra batteries ... a NOAA Weather Radio is extremely valuable to have at your house because it has a tone alert."

Rule No. 1: Don't try and outrace a tornado

"It's usually not going to work because you can't predict when a tornado is going to turn direction and head straight at you," said Johnson. "Your best bet is to get out of the car and find shelter

immediately, even if it means lying down in a ditch."

Oakland County experienced 32 tornadoes between 1950 and 2016 (none were reported last year). With that in mind, you'll need to know the difference between a tornado watch and a warning.

"If it's a watch, we're looking for certain atmospheric conditions for a thunderstorm or tornado," Johnson said. "If it's elevated to a warning, that means something has been spotted and people need to take shelter and prepare for the possibility of power outages."

Prior to joining the City in 2017, Johnson served as an emergency training officer with the Michigan State Police. The retired police lieutenant trained fellow officers in how to prepare for any type of disaster, whether it's a natural occurrence, chemical, technological or terrorist threat.

Rule No. 2: Don't forget the Hershey's

The most critical ingredient to survival is water. As a rule of thumb, you should stock up enough water to supply each member of your family with a gallon per day. For a family of four, consider storing 56 gallons to last a total of two weeks.

As for food, stock up on commercial canned goods, dehydrated foods and

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR POWER GOES OUT

- Remain calm and assist family members or neighbors who may be vulnerable if exposed to extreme heat or cold.
- Locate a flashlight with batteries to use until the power comes back on. Do not use candles – This can cause a fire.
- Turn off sensitive electronic equipment such as computers, VCRs and televisions.
- Turn off major electric appliances that were on when the power went off.
- Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- Do not use the stove to heat your home – This can cause a fire or fatal gas leak.
- Use extreme caution when driving. If traffic signals are out, treat each signal as a stop sign.

freeze-dried products. Most of these options have a 30-year shelf life if stored properly. Buy some emergency ration bars – and also stock up on some comfort food. A little Hershey's chocolate can go a long way toward lifting your spirits.

When the grid goes down, the best option is to have a standby generator that will kick on automatically in the event of a power outage. Be sure to never use a portable gas generator inside a garage or home because of the threat of carbon monoxide poisoning.

If a tornado does strike, go to a room in the interior of your home to avoid



flying debris and glass. Just remember, if you're caught in your car, get out.

"Do not stay in your car and try to out-race the tornado," Johnson said. "Get out and find shelter as soon as possible. Sometimes people will get in a ditch, and I've heard people talk about hiding under overpasses. The bottom line is, any protection is better than none."

Rule No. 3: Safety first

In the aftermath of a disaster, the first thing you'll want to do is make sure everyone is safe. In addition to a well-trained force of public safety officers, the City of Novi has a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) made up of volunteers who can help serve as the eyes and ears for the Public Safety Department in the event of an emergency.

"They'll help with damage assessment," Johnson said of the CERT volunteers. "They can drive through the neighborhoods to survey the situation and compile information to help us make informed decisions."

Many emergencies arrive without warning. There was the Northeast blackout of 2003 that affected over 50 million people throughout the U.S. and Canada. On a more recent note, a massive 48-inch water main break last year affected more than 300,000 residents throughout Oakland County – including thousands of households in Novi.

WHERE YOU SHOULD TAKE SHELTER FOR A TORNADO:

- **In a home:** The basement offers the greatest safety. Seek shelter under sturdy furniture if possible. In homes without basements, take cover in the center part of the house on the lower floor, in a small interior room such as a closet or bathroom. Keep away from windows.
- **In a mobile home:** You should leave the home and take cover in a pre-arranged shelter. If there is no shelter nearby, leave the trailer and lie flat in a ditch or ravine. Protect your head by placing your arms over it. Do not take shelter under your home.
- **Driving a vehicle:** Stop! Get out of the vehicle and take shelter in a nearby ditch or ravine. Lie flat and put your arms over your head. Do not get under your vehicle and do not use overpasses as a shelter.
- **At work or at school:** Follow advance plans to move to interior hallways or small rooms on the lowest floor. Avoid areas with glass and wide free span roofs, such as gymnasiums.
- **In open country:** Lie in a gully, ditch, or low spot in the ground and hold onto something on the ground.

"We always plan for the worst-case scenarios," Johnson said. "When there's significant damage to the infrastructure, the City has to stand up and become an emergency response organization. Making sure everyone is safe is the first priority. Following that is getting power restored and making sure the roads are cleared. There's so much to do after an emergency, and that's why it's important to be as prepared as possible."