

Prepare now for more extreme weather events, natural disasters

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American Red Cross

The American Red Cross Cascades Region is encouraging everyone to take critical action during National Preparedness Month this September to be ready for worsening disasters.

Deadly storms, raging wildfires and extreme heat are becoming more frequent and intense and families are experiencing the effects.

“Disasters can happen at any time, often without warning, changing lives forever in just minutes,” Red Cross Regional Disaster Officer Jonathan Seibert said. “As our climate changes, it’s critical to help protect your loved ones and National Preparedness Month is the ideal time to get your household ready for emergencies.”

HOW TO PREPARE Get ready for disasters by making a plan to stay safe, gathering important supplies and knowing how you’ll stay connected. Follow these steps to prepare for emergencies:

Depending on the emergency, you may need to stay where you are or go somewhere else to stay safe. If you may need to leave, think about where you will go, how you will get there, where you will stay and what you’ll take with you. Plan well in advance if you’ll need help leaving or use public transportation.

Next, gather and organize critical supplies — like food, water and medicine — into a go-kit and a stay-at-home kit. Your go-kit should include three days of supplies that you can take with you. Your stay-at-home kit should have two weeks of food and water, and a one-month supply of medications, if possible.

Customize your kit to meet your household's specific needs. If you have young children, don't forget formula and diapers. If you have pets, include leashes, carriers, food, bowls, litter and a litterbox.

Make a plan to reconnect with loved ones if you are separated or if the phone or internet is down. Write down important phone numbers on a contact card and carry it with you.

Finally, download the free Red Cross Emergency app for real-time weather alerts and expert advice in both English and Spanish. And don't forget to sign up for free emergency alerts from your local government to get critical information during local emergencies.

CLIMATE CRISIS EFFECTS. This summer, a record-breaking 1.5 million acres have been burned by wildfires in Oregon. We've opened more than 20 shelters for level 3 "Go Now" evacuations since June.

So far in 2024, nationwide, 2.7 million more acres of land have been burned by wildfires compared to all of 2023. In July, Hurricane Beryl broke records as the earliest Category 5 storm ever recorded and in early August, Hurricane Debby brought widespread flooding to much of the East Coast. Plus, 2024 is on track to be the hottest year on record according to experts. Altogether in 2024, the U.S has experienced 19 climate disasters, each with losses of over a billion dollars — more than double the average from the last 40 years.

When these disasters happen, the Red Cross is there providing food, shelter and comfort to ensure no one faces this difficult time alone. To help families better cope with this worsening climate crisis, the Red Cross is also enhancing our support for those who need it most and increasing our capacity to respond to non-stop disasters.

"The best defense during an emergency is to be prepared, and that's true for both our individual families and our entire community," Red Cross Cascades Region CEO Priscilla Fuentes said. "During National Preparedness Month, consider donating to help people affected by disasters big and small, or making an appointment to give blood. If you have the time, take a first aid class or put on a red vest and join us as a volunteer."

Visit redcross.org or call 800-RED CROSS (800-733-2767) to learn more today.