

# WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

## PLAN TO STAY IN TOUCH: HANDOUT



# FEMA

### ACTIVITY: DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

In emergency situations you may need to contact family members, friends, or caregivers to check on their safety or advise them of your status. Follow the steps below to develop a communications plan.

**PUT YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PLAN IN YOUR DISASTER KIT!**

#### **Identify contacts.**

List the names, addresses, phone numbers, and other essential information for family members, friends, caregivers, and other frequently used contacts. Here are some tips:

- Immediate family members include those still living in your home, those who are away temporarily (at college, deployed, etc.), and those living elsewhere in your community or in other places.
- Extended family members, such as parents and other relatives, may live close by or in other places. They, too, may need to be contacted if they are affected by an emergency, or they may need to know your status if the emergency occurred in your area.
- Some family members may be entrusted to caregivers in group homes, nursing homes, or other facilities or programs. Some may live alone but depend on health care or personal care providers for support. Again, you or they may be affected by an emergency and need to be contacted.
- Don't forget your pets. They may be left at home or in kennels while you are away during the day or on extended periods of travel. In emergencies, you may need to know if they are safe or if someone can check on them.
- Be sure to include an out-of-town contact. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.

#### **Organize your contact information into a communications plan.**

You may also want to prepare wallet cards with contact information, to laminate and store in your wallet for ready access. (See the next page.)

#### **Review your communications plan.**

After you have assembled your plan and cards, review them with family members and other contacts to ensure the information is complete and accurate. Add alternate phone numbers or contacts as needed.

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### Share your plan.

- Be sure every family member knows the phone number of the emergency contact and has a cell phone, coins to use a pay phone, or a prepaid phone card.
- Teach family members or friends to use text messaging. Text messages can often get through network disruptions when phone calls can't.
- If you have a cell phone, program your primary contact as "ICE" (In Case of Emergency). In an accident, emergency personnel will often check ICE listings. Tell your contact that you've listed him or her as your emergency contact person.
- Include your communications plan in your family disaster kit. Post a copy on the refrigerator or near a telephone. Distribute copies of your plan to everyone who needs to have one.
- Update your plan and wallet card as needed.

### Stay informed.

Subscribe to alert services. Many communities now have systems that will send instant text alerts or emails about bad weather, road closings, or local emergencies. Sign up by visiting your local office of emergency management Web site.