

AFTER THE DISASTER:
TIME FOR RECOVERY

Immediately after the disaster, try to reduce your child's fear and anxiety.

- **Keep the family together.** While you look for housing and assistance, you may want to leave your children with relatives or friends. Instead, keep the family together as much as possible and make children a part of what you are doing to get the family back on its feet. Children get anxious, and they'll worry that their parents won't return.
- **Calmly and firmly explain the situation.** As best as you can, tell children what you know about the disaster. Explain what will happen next. For example, say, "Tonight, we will all stay together in the shelter." Get down to the child's eye level and talk to them.
- **Encourage children to talk.** Let children talk about the disaster and ask questions as much as they want. Encourage children to describe what they're feeling. Listen to what they say. If possible, include the entire family in the discussion.

- **Include children in the recovery process.** Give children chores that are their responsibility. This will help children feel they are part of the recovery. Having a task will help them understand that everything will be all right.

You can help children cope by understanding what causes their anxieties and fears. Reassure them with firmness and love. Your children will realize that life will eventually return to normal. If a child does not respond to the above suggestions, seek help from a mental health specialist or a member of the clergy.

For more information, contact:



Grundy County Emergency Management Agency

Grundy County Local Emergency
Planning Committee

815-941-3212

Helping Children Cope with Disaster

Grundy County
Emergency
Management Agency
& Local Emergency
Planning Committee



HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH DISASTER

Tornadoes...Fires...Floods...Hazardous Material Spills

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. These events can be frightening for adults, but they are traumatic for children if they do not know what to do. During a disaster, your family may have to leave your home and daily routine. Children may become anxious, confused or frightened. As an adult, you will need to cope with the disaster in a way that will help children avoid developing a permanent sense of loss. It is important to give children guidance that will help them reduce their fears.

Ultimately, you should decide what is best for your children, but consider using these suggestions as guidelines.

Children and Their Response to Disaster

Children depend on daily routines: they wake up, eat breakfast, go to school, play with friends. When emergencies or disasters interrupt this routine, children may become anxious.

In a disaster, they'll look to you and other adults for help. How you react to an emergency gives them clues on how to act. If you react with alarm, a child may become more scared. They see our fear as proof that the danger is real. If you seem overcome with a sense of loss, a child may feel their losses more strongly.

Children's fears also may stem from their imagination, and you should take these feelings seriously. A child who feels afraid is afraid. Your words and actions can provide reassurance. When talking with your child, be sure to present a realistic picture that is both honest and manageable.

Feelings of fear are healthy and natural for adults and children. But as an adult, you need to keep control of the situation. When you are sure that danger has passed, concentrate on your child's emotional needs by asking the child what is uppermost in his or her mind. Having children participate in the family's recovery activities will help them feel that their life will return to "normal".

FOUR STEPS TO SAFETY

Advice to Parents: Prepare for Disaster

You can create a Family Disaster Plan by taking four simple steps. First, learn what hazards exist in your community and how to prepare for each. Then meet with your family to discuss what you would do, as a group, in each situation. Next, take steps to prepare your family for disasters, such as: posting emergency telephone numbers, selecting an out-of-state family contact, assembling disaster supplies kit and installing smoke detectors on each level of your home. Finally, practice your Family Disaster Plan so that everyone will remember what to do when a disaster does occur.

- **Develop and practice a Family Disaster Plan.** Contact your local emergency management office for materials that describe how your family can create a disaster plan. Everyone in the household, including children, should play a part in the family's response and recovery efforts.
- **Teach your child how to recognize danger signals.** Make sure your child knows what smoke detectors, fire alarms and local community warning systems (horns, sirens) sound like.
- **Explain how to call for help.** Teach your child how and when to call for help. Tell your child to call 9-1-1.
- **Help your child memorize important family information.** Children should memorize their family name, address and telephone number. They should also know where to meet in case of an emergency. Some children may not be old enough to memorize the information. They could carry a small index card that lists emergency information to give to an adult or babysitter.

Teaching Your Children How to Call for Help

Teach your child how and when to call for help. They should call 9-1-1. Even very young children can be taught how and when to call for emergency assistance. If your child cannot read, the chart on the next page has pictures that may help them identify the correct number to call in the event of an emergency.

As you explain each picture, have your child color the symbol on the emergency phone number chart. Doing so may help your child remember who they should call in an emergency.

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

My Family Name: _____

My Phone Number: _____

My Address: _____

My Town: _____

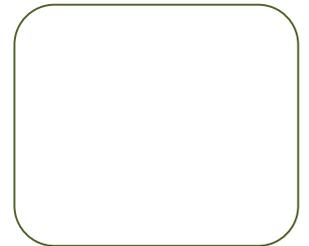
My County: _____



Ambulance

Fire

Police



Mother

Father

Other