

## **Preparing Children for Natural and Manmade Disasters**

From National Strategy for Youth Preparedness

**Psychological vulnerability** is when a serious or traumatic event, such as a natural or manmade disaster, can greatly impact the mental health of children. Most studies focus on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or similar conditions. Between 30 and 50 percent of children in disaster conditions may be likely to develop PTSD symptoms that will persist for long periods of time.

**Physical vulnerability** refers to the actual physical harm a disaster can have on a person. In the United States, infants and young children (0-to 4-year-olds) may be most likely to die of exposure to extreme heat, compared to other ages of children and young adults; 5-to 14-year-olds are most likely to die in storms and flood events; and adolescents and young adults (15-to 24-year-olds) are most likely to die of excessive cold.

**Educational vulnerability** refers to how destruction caused by a disaster may negatively impact children's academic performance, as it may cause children to miss school and delay their progress. For example, some children may be forced to change schools following a storm, with the average being three moves per child over a three-month period following a severe storm.

### **Prepared children are more confident during an actual emergency.**

Children are empowered through understanding of risks and knowing protective actions. Studies and anecdotal evidence support the idea that children who have learned about emergency preparedness experience less anxiety during an actual emergency. The knowledge of what to do during an emergency empowers them to act with confidence and enables them to become active participants in emergency efforts.

### **What children can do to prepare**

Participating in emergency preparedness activities—such as learning basic first aid, where to go in case of an emergency and helping parents create a disaster supply kit. Collecting items for the kit, learning basic first aid, making a family preparedness plan or creating a list of emergency numbers—not only empowers children but also educates adults about preparedness. Family preparedness activities are an essential part of all community preparedness efforts.

### **First aid Resources:**

How to make a first aid kit:

<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family/get-kit/anatomy>

First aid for children

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources/Teaching-packages/Microsite/Life-Live-it-first-aid-education-for-children>

### **Emergency Kit resources:**

<https://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit>

**Where to go in case of an emergency:** (Tornado's, Floods, Earthquakes, Hurricanes, Wildfires)  
<http://www.weatherwizkids.com/#>