Emergency Preparedness.

It's all over the news. It's on billboards. There are fairs and seminars, handouts and articles, gentle reminders and scary suggestions.

We all agree that we need to do something, but most of us don't know where to start. So we just don't. But it's important.

A speaker aptly described earthquakes as "come as you are" disasters. You get no warning. You can't run for cover. If one hit right now, do you have a plan? Do you have enough water and food set aside for your family?

Earthquakes aren't the only potential disasters here. We have floods, snowstorms, power outages, windstorms, as well as a major highway and train system with possible crashes and whatever toxic leaks might occur…

This year at XYZ School, please work through the steps with us. Make sure that you're building a plan and a kit at home. Make sure that the emergency forms that the school needs are up to date and on file. Look into the programs offered by the City of Shoreline. Make yours a "Ready Neighborhood."

In a large-scale disaster, YOU are the help. The City of Shoreline has fantastic emergency departments, but there will not be enough of them to go around. With a little bit of planning, a little bit of old-fashioned "how are you, neighbor?" and a little bit of resolve, we will be able to meet the challenges of an emergency with some really strong communities.

Here is your guide.

School Forms!

1. Emergency contact information

Why? In the event of a big emergency, the school can only release your child to people who are actually listed on your form. Even if your child recognizes your wife's sister and wants to go home with her, if she's not listed, she won't be able to sign your child out. This protects you, your child, and the school – you will feel more comfortable if you are unable to get to the school to collect your child, that he or she will only be with the adults that you specified.

Fill it out. Update it often.

2. Office sign in form

Why? It's not just convenient to know whether you've been in the school that day or not. If a big emergency hit, that is an important form! If you did not sign in when you entered the building, no one would know to look for you. Conversely, if you forgot to sign out when you left, there may be people wasting time searching for you, when you are actually safe.

Forms in this packet!

1. Disaster calendar

Why? This is the easiest way to wrap your brain around readiness, and getting what you need into your house without breaking the bank. Each week, check off the few items that are on that week's list, and pat yourself on the back for being that much closer to being prepared.

2. Wallet contact list

Why? So, you have a cell phone/electronic organizer with all of your important contacts in it? Ever forget to charge that phone? Ever wonder what would happen to the organizer if it ended up getting wet? Take the time to fill out the wallet paper and either laminate it or seal it in clear contact paper. Make one for each of your kids, and stick them in their backpacks.

3. Backpack checklist

Why? Probably in preschool, or maybe even sometime in elementary school, you were required to make a comfort packet for your child to keep at school. It's a good idea, but it takes up space in the classroom, and your child probably doesn't always go right from the classroom to your car to go home every day.

Pack this Ziploc once, stick it in an unused pocket in the backpack, and leave it alone.

4. Family Emergency Plan worksheet

Why? Chances are that you know some of these things. But it's good to get them down on paper. Fill out the form and put it with your emergency supplies. The second sheet is the wallet contact form – fill those out and laminate them (or seal them in clear contact paper). Put them in your wallet and in the backpack Ziploc.

5. Family Supply List

If you don't want to follow the disaster calendar, this is a good list for your kids to help you follow. These are things you should think about having on hand to be prepared.

6. and 7. Sample Supply Lists

Here are two examples of how to organize your supplies as you accumulate them.

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On the other side of the portfolio, you will find valuable information from the City, both from the Neighborhoods Coordinator, and the Emergency Management Office. Here's what you're looking at:

1. Get Ready Shoreline pamphlet

This brochure outlines the "Ready Neighborhood" and "Map Your Neighborhood" programs. The idea is that you and up to 15 neighboring houses have a little 90-minute meeting and share information. This gives you piece of mind that one of your neighbors can shut off your gas if they smell a leak or check in on your kids or elderly parent if you are not home. It also helps you know who's got nursing skills, who's got a chainsaw, and so on (which could be potentially important in an earthquake).

2. Neighborhood Program brochure

This gives you more information on Block Watch, Ready Neighborhood, Traffic Services, and so on. It also gives you contact information for your own Neighborhood Association, which gives you an avenue to tackle neighborhood concerns, issues, events, and so on.

3. Get Ready Shoreline Emergency Preparedness

This contains vital information on what to do in disasters. It shows you how to deal with plumbing, gas, structural safety, answers the top 10 emergency preparedness questions, and reiterates the supply lists and family plans.