



Valley View

Dakota County Emergency Preparedness

Planning for every type of emergency is almost impossible, but having a general plan in place and preparing your family in advance can save you valuable time and possibly your life.

The most common weather-related disasters that occur in Dakota County are thunderstorms, floods, tornadoes and blizzards. Other possible emergencies include widespread power outages, contagious disease, chemical spills and terrorism. Most of these emergencies are best handled by planning ahead.

Make an Emergency Plan—One of the most important steps you can take in preparing for emergencies is to develop a family emergency plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it's important for all family members to understand the plan.

Steps you can take

- Learn about the disasters and emergencies that could occur in your community and talk about them with your family.
- Sign up for the Emergency Alert Program through the Dakota Communications Center which calls you in the event of an emergency.
- Establish a nearby meeting place if you're not able to go home.
- Ask a friend or relative (preferably outside the local area) to serve as a central contact to coordinate information if family members are separated and cell phone networks are not working. Be sure all family members know how to reach the contact and report in.

- Instruct your family to call 911 in an emergency. Teach children how to dial 911.
- Make sure all family members know how to shut off the water, gas and electricity and keep appropriate tools near the shut offs. Always consult with your utility company prior to turning them back on if your house has been damaged.
- Be certain your smoke detector and carbon monoxide detectors work.
- Make a photo record of your belongings as a record for your insurance company. Include interior and exterior photos of your home.
- Notify caregivers and babysitters of your plan.

Valuable resources to help you with your Emergency Plan:

Department of Homeland Security—
www.dhs.gov.

Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management—
www.dps.mn.gov

American Red Cross—www.redcross.org
codeReady Minnesota—www.ready.gov/minnesota

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) - www.fema.gov

National Weather Service—
www.weather.gov

Ready.gov—www.ready.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - www.cdc.gov

Information provided by Dakota County

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Mark Your Calendars

- ♦ *November 5—Election Day*
- ♦ *November 11—Veterans Day*
- ♦ *December 7—Pearl Harbor Day*
- ♦ *December 21—Winter begins*
- ♦ *January 20—Martin Luther King Jr. Day*
- ♦ *February 2—Groundhog Day*

Keeping Burglars Away—A former thief offers some tips

After his career as a professional thief led him to an eight-year prison stint, Bob Portenier went straight and now works as a crime prevention consultant. He tells *PrimeTime* what you can do to make your home a less likely target for a burglar.

Portenier, who says he has a “Ph.D. in crime,” has not lost the skills he developed in years of breaking into houses. In a test for *PrimeTime*, it took him just 7.5 minutes to bust through the glass window of a concealed basement door, get inside the house, collect guns, jewelry, antique silver, and electronic equipment, and then be on his way.

With more than 8,000 home burglaries every day across the country, and only 15% of home burglars ever caught and arrested, it is worth taking precautions to make your home burglar-proof. Following are tips from Portenier and Ed O’Carroll, a crime prevention officer with the Fairfax County Police Department in Virginia.

PROTECTING YOUR HOME

- **Do not walk in on a crime.** Never enter your home if you suspect an intruder may be inside. Women in particular, says Portenier, have a tendency to wander around the house when they are suspicious, looking to see if anything has been stolen. “They walk into trouble,” he says, when the best thing to do would be to leave and call 911.
- **Do not confront an intruder.** If you walk in on a crime in progress, leave as quickly as possible and call 911. You never want to have a confrontation with a criminal. In order to prevent a property crime from escalating into a violent one, you leave immediately.
- **Get an alarm.** “To me, the best insurance a homeowner can have is having a security system,” says Portenier. But, cautions O’Carroll, an alarm system should not be your only defense against burglary. “Don’t have a false sense of security that an alarm system is going to keep the bad guy out. An alarm system doesn’t make your doors any tighter, your windows any stronger...an alarm system just lets you know when someone’s gotten in.”
- **Get to know your neighbors.** Join a Neighborhood Watch program in your area or start one yourself. “Neighbors are your best defense against burglary,” says O’Carroll. “We rely upon neighbors to be the eyes and ears of law enforcement, and oftentimes it’s a concerned neighbor, a citizen who has zero tolerance for crime, that makes that all-important call to 911.”
- **Install good locks.** Make sure exterior doors and windows have strong locks that are in working order. Don’t forget the sliding doors on the patio or balcony, which are common entry points for burglars. O’Carroll suggests a horizontal “charley bar” that keeps the doors closed and cannot be lifted out of the track. “A lot of folks just put a stick in the track,” he says. “That can be lifted out with a coat hanger.”
- **Find a new place for your valuables.** Lingerie drawers, night stands and under mattresses are often not-so-secret hiding places for cash, jewelry and guns. Time is too important to a burglar to keep searching for your valuables, so keep them in places other people don’t.
- **Keep your doors locked at all times.** Even if you are just working in the back yard do not leave your front door unlocked.
- **Do not leave a key out.** Instead of hiding a key in the mailbox or under a doormat, give an extra one to a neighbor for emergencies.
- **Keep the garage door locked when not in use.** If left open, it’s a virtual invitation for a burglar to choose your home.
- **Use timers.** To make your home appear as if is occupied, use timers for your lights, radios, and TVs. “It’s good to have the radios and TVs come on and off throughout the day,” says O’Carroll. “it gives the illusion of occupancy.”
- **Keep shrubbery trimmed.** It prevents a criminal from using it to conceal his presence and gives opportunity for neighbors to observe activity, says O’Carroll.

Keeping Burglars Away cont.

- **Don't advertise your absence.** Park a car in your driveway in your absence, have some garbage left in your cans, have a neighbor pick up your mail on a daily basis, and consider having your lawn mowed or snow shoveled while you are away.
- **Make your street address visible.** If the numbers are easy to read, it will help police locate your home.
- **Install porch and walkway lights.** Outside lighting is a good deterrent against crime.
- **Protect your backyard with a fence.** "It shows ownership," says O'Carroll. "It tells people where they should and shouldn't be... We want to make it difficult for anyone to get back there. Anyone tries to scale a fence, we hope our neighbors are going to see it and call the police department." But, cautions Portenier, while a fence may be intended to provide privacy for the homeowner, it can also offer protection for a would-be burglar instead.
- **Get a dog, or pretend to.** Dogs make most would-be intruders think twice. If you don't want to care

for a dog, buy a dog food bowl and a chain as a deterrent, suggests O'Carroll.

The unfortunate reality is that no home is completely burglar proof. "There's no magic cure. If a burglar is determined to get in they're gonna get in," says O'Carroll, "but if they're casing the neighborhood and looking at hundreds of homes, we want to make sure they don't pick yours."

Information provided by ABC News Internet Ventures



Reduce Distracted Driving

Here are some suggestions to help you dodge distractions when you are behind the wheel.

1. Turn off your cell phone

- Make a commitment to not use your cell phone while driving. Remember, it's illegal for drivers to use their cell phones (except to dial 911) while driving in Minnesota.
- Turn your phone or ringer off so you won't be tempted, and let your friends/family know you won't be answering their calls or texts while you are driving.
- Nearly 25% of all crashes involve drivers distracted by cell phones. Just by deciding not to text and drive, you'll be 23 times less likely to crash (National Safety Council).

2. Keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel

- Anything that takes your eyes or mind off the

road—or your hands off the wheel—is a distraction, even if it doesn't seem dangerous. Put in your favorite CD, fix your hair, and program your GPS before you hit the road.

- Reaching for an object, adjusting the radio, eating a snack, and reading directions can all increase your risk of crashing. Limit these activities as much as possible, or ask a passenger to help.
- ### **3. Don't be afraid to speak up!**
- It's OK to ask your friends/family not to distract you while you're driving.
 - If a friend or family member is talking or texting while he or she is driving, ask if it can wait, or offer to take over.
 - If you're talking to a friend/family that you know is driving, tell them you'll call back later. Avoid texting people if you know they're behind the wheel.

Holiday Recycling

Did you know that Americans throw away 25 % more trash during the Thanksgiving to New Year's holiday season than any other time? This extra garbage amounts to 25 million tons of trash. Just because we create a lot more trash doesn't mean we have to throw it all away. With you local curbside recycling program and the Recycling Zone of Dakota County, you can make the holiday season the season of recycling. You can recycle gift boxes, Christmas trees, cards, junk mail, magazines, catalogs, plastic, glass and aluminum beverage containers and more!

How to Have a Greener Holiday Season:

- ★ Use reusable shopping bags. This will reduce the amount of plastic bags that get trashed.
- ★ Send your holiday greetings in electronic form. E-cards can be enhanced with sound and animation and they create no physical waste.
- ★ Wrapping paper and tissue paper **aren't** recyclable. Check out tips on eco-friendly gift wrapping options at www.DakotaValleyRecycling.org/green-holidays.
- ★ Always buy recycled-content wrapping paper, cards and envelopes or make your own greeting cards out of last year's cards.
- ★ Shipping a gift? Reuse the foam peanuts from another package. Unwanted packing peanuts can be taken to the County's recycling center, The Recycling

Zone (3365, Dodd Rd, Eagan) for free. Need packing peanuts? The Recycling Zone gives them out for reuse for free! Call them at 651-905-4520 to check on availability and hours.

- ★ About 40% of all battery sales occur during the holiday season. Buy rechargeable batteries to accompany your electronic gifts, and consider giving a battery charger as well. Rechargeable batteries reduce the amount of potentially harmful materials thrown away, and can save money in the long run.
 - ★ Turn off or unplug your holiday lights during the day. Doing so will not only save energy, but will also help your lights last longer. Holiday lights for your house and tree can be recycled once they break or you no longer want them. Bring them to The Recycling Zone for free during any of their open hours.
 - ★ If you get new electronics for the holidays (such as a computer, TV, cell phone or stereo), you can bring your old ones to The Recycling Zone to be recycled for free. They also accept small household electric items such as coffee makers, toasters and blenders.
 - ★ Once the holidays are over, bring greenery such as garlands, wreaths or trees to a yard waste site. Go to www.DakotaValleyRecycling.org/yard-waste for a list of sites open during the winter. Or, call your garbage hauler to find out about having your tree picked up at the curb.



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