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Abstract: The article focuses on emergency preparedness. Emergency preparedness has three aspects. They are recognition, prevention and reaction. A person must learn to recognize risky situations in which the possibility of an emergency is increased. A person must work to make the situation safer before an emergency occurs. And finally, he or she must know the resources available in case of an emergency.

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Ready for Anything

Being prepared for an emergency means knowing what to do in a lot of situations.

If everything always went as expected, you wouldn't need to be prepared for emergencies.

But of course, everything doesn't always go as we would hope. It's during these times that you'll want to make sure you're prepared. You won't necessarily have to save the day by yourself, but you should know how to make the right decisions, even in the worst of times.

That might mean having the presence of mind to call 9-1-1 and calmly give the operator the important information. Or, it might mean performing CPR or applying other first-aid skills. (You'll find that the First Aid merit badge plays a large role in emergency preparedness.)

Imagine this scenario: You and a friend are mountain biking when you come upon an injured biker who needs your help. Now is not the time to hesitate.

First, find out how serious the injuries are. If he's conscious, keep him as calm as possible. If the injuries are serious, resist the urge to move the victim. Instead, try to keep him still until help arrives.

If you're in the middle of nowhere and the victim must be moved to get help, you'll need to splint any fractured bones (remember that First Aid merit badge?) to help reduce the pain. Ever made a stretcher out of tree limbs and T-shirts? If the biker still cannot be moved,

consider sending your buddy for help while you stay behind.

Scouts whose troops choose next month's suggested program theme, Emergency Preparedness, will learn how to make appropriate decisions in a variety of situations. They'll also refine their first-aid skills.

Find complete program details in "Troop Program Features" Vol. I (BSA Supply No. 33110, 1-800-323-0732, www.scoutstuff.org). Learn more about emergency preparedness in the merit badge pamphlets "Emergency Preparedness" (No. 33368B), "First Aid" (No. 33301B) and "Lifesaving" (No. 33297B).

Taking Action

Sometimes it's not enough to sit back and wait for others to keep us safe, Remember the three aspects of emergency preparedness:

- * **Recognition.** Learn to recognize risky situations in which the possibility of an emergency is increased.
- * **Prevention.** Work to make the situation safer before an emergency occurs.
- * **Reaction.** Know the resources that are available in case of an emergency.

How Ready Are You?

Think you're prepared for any situation? Take our quiz and find out. (There may be more than one correct answer!)

*** You wake up in the middle of the night and realize your house is on fire. After warning everyone, what other steps can you take?**

- A. Run out of the house as fast as you can.
- B. Open all the doors and windows to improve ventilation.
- C. If there is smoke in a room, crawl across the floor.
- D. If a closed door does not feel hot, it's safe to open it and walk through.

Answer: The only correct answer is "C." Do not run. Stay calm and walk quickly out of the house. Open doors and windows can cause a draft that can fan the flames and make them stronger. Even if a door doesn't feel hot, you should still duck to one side and open the door slowly, bracing it with your foot to keep it from opening too fast.

*** Your family makes a mistake and tries to drive home at night through a snowstorm. You get stuck on a road that's far from any shelter and rarely traveled. What do you do?**

- A. Stay with the car and wait for help.
- B. Keep the car running all night if you have to.
- C. Keep the windows shut to keep the warm air in.

D. DO not leave the inside car light on, as it will drain the battery.

Answer: The only correct answer is "A." Never try to walk through a blizzard; it's too easy to get lost; To conserve gas, run the car 10 minutes every hour just to take the chill out of the air. Crack open a window on the side of the car away from the wind for ventilation. Keep the dome light on, Since It barely drains the battery and makes the car easier to see at night

The Rule of Three

Remember, the best way to prevent injury or death on a backcountry hike is to travel in a group of at least three. That way if somebody gets hurt, one person can perform first aid while the third person goes for help.

*** You're at home; and a flood watch has been issued for your neighborhood. There's no need to evacuate yet, but which of the following steps can you take immediately?**

- A. Bring outside equipment indoors or tie it down.
- B. Pile sandbags against the foundation of your house to prevent water from entering.
- C. Unplug all electrical appliances and equipment.
- D. If you are trapped in your home by rising waters, swim for safety if you're a strong swimmer.

Answer: "A" and "C" are correct answers. There's no need to pile sandbags against the foundation of your house; it's actually good if water gets into the cellar because it equalizes the pressure inside and outside the foundation. No matter how strong a swimmer you think you are, don't try to swim through floodwaters. Move to the second floor or the roof if you have to.

*** The first step in staying safe during a tornado is to know when one is coming. Which of the following are signs of a tornado?**

- A. Heavy rain or hail.
 - B. Sky turns dark green.
 - C. Clouds appear to be bulging downward instead of upward.
 - D. The wind dies and everything becomes still.
- Answer: All of the above can be signs of a tornado. If you hear of a tornado warning (which means a tornado has been spotted) in your area, move your family to an area of safety. A storm cellar or an interior room without windows are good spots. Cover yourself with blankets or pillows.

*** Earthquakes are most common on the West Coast and in Alaska and Hawaii, but they can also happen in other areas. If an earthquake strikes, which of the following should you do?**

- A. If you're inside, get outside as fast as you can.

- B. If you're outside, take shelter near the strongest building you can find.
- C. If you're in a car, pull over, but stay in the vehicle.
- D. Wait until the tremors are over before returning to structures weakened by the earthquake.

The only correct answer is "C." If an earthquake strikes while you're inside, stay away from windows and outside doors and instead duck underneath an object that can provide overhead support. If you're outside, stay away from buildings and look for the largest open space you can find. When the tremors are over, beware of aftershocks -- they can knock down anything that was weakened by the initial quake.

Turn the page and take our emergency preparedness quiz.

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By Aaron Derr

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