

# A p a r t m e n t

## SAFETY NOTES



SPOKANE FIRE DEPARTMENT

SEPTEMBER 2010

### September is National Preparedness Month



As you read this, “someone, somewhere” is trying to survive a major disaster. We tend to think that we will never be that “someone” despite our awareness of how wildfires and major snowstorms can impact the Spokane area.

September is National Emergency Preparedness month and the opportunity to check our individual capacity for surviving a community-wide disaster that could last three or more days.

For most families it is difficult enough to keep day-to-day requirements in balance, let alone try to prepare for a “maybe-it-might-happen” community crisis. In multi-family apartment complexes, there are additional concerns for persons who may be more vulnerable in an emergency situation, e.g. those with limited mobility, persons requiring oxygen, latchkey kids, individuals who would not be able to hear emergency warnings or who speak a language other than English. The Washington Department of Emergency Management also

has emergency preparedness materials available in 18 languages at [www.emd.wa.gov/publications](http://www.emd.wa.gov/publications).

If you have interest in working on the issue of “Emergency Preparedness for Persons with Specific Needs”, please contact Spokane Fire at (509) 625-7058.

Too many people still believe that traditional “first responders” (i.e. firefighters and police) will immediately be able to help everyone in peril. In reality, individuals need to be ready to be their own “first responders” because the relatively few uniformed personnel available will be addressing the most essential aspects of the threat as it affects the whole community.

Fortunately there are resources in our community and online that offer suggestions to help us better prepare for large-scale emergencies. The following sites offer guidance on individual preparedness:

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov),  
[www.spokaneprepares.org](http://www.spokaneprepares.org),  
[www.spokaneredcross.org](http://www.spokaneredcross.org)  
[www.homesafetycouncil.org](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org).

Preparedness is easier to accomplish if you gather a few items at a time in a systematic manner. The American Red Cross has a listing that suggests a few specific items and actions that, done over several weeks, will assure you have adequate survival materials at hand. Seattle’s Office of Emergency Management has excellent information on storing emergency drinking water at [www.seattle.gov/emergency](http://www.seattle.gov/emergency).



Over the years some people have associated “emergency supplies” with candles, ornamental fireplaces and charcoal barbecues. Before any major snowstorm causing power outages, please remind your tenants of these safety tips:

- (1) Unattended candles cause fires, so please use flashlights if the power goes out.
- (2) Decorative fireplaces were never intended to warm the house for a long period of time. They often cause fires in the wooden construction parts behind the walls.
- (3) Never use a power generator or charcoal-burning barbecues and hibachi indoors. They release poisonous carbon monoxide gases that will kill without warning. (These appliances prompted WA legislation requiring carbon monoxide detectors in all rental units by July 1, 2011.)

In some emergencies, we need to “shelter in place”. In others, we need to be able to quickly grab the most essential items and move everyone to a safer space. (As some stranded Seattle residents found out during a major storm system, this is a good reason for always keeping your car’s gas tank more than half-full.)

## Ready-to-Go Kit

- ✓ Identification papers, phone contact for out-of-State family or friend in case local calls are impacted by the emergency, insurance information
- ✓ 1 gallon of water per person in household for 3 days
- ✓ Non-perishable food
- ✓ Manual can-opener
- ✓ Prescription medications
- ✓ Glasses, hearing aids, extra batteries, etc.
- ✓ Soap, toothbrush, toothpaste
- ✓ Wind-up flashlight or light with extra batteries
- ✓ Battery-powered or wind-up radio
- ✓ Extra cash and change
- ✓ Pet food, kennel, leash, vet records
- ✓ Change of clothing
- ✓ Towel
- ✓ First Aid kit
- ✓ Whistle to signal for help
- ✓ Paper, pencil
- ✓ Plastic bags, eating utensils, cup, plate
- ✓ Car with at least half-full tank.



You can sign up for this monthly newsletter, ask a fire-related question or suggest a specific safety topic by contacting Jan Doherty at [jdoherly@spokanefire.org](mailto:jdoherly@spokanefire.org) or by calling 625-7058.

Access this edition of Apartment Safety Notes as well as back issues at [www.spokanefire.org](http://www.spokanefire.org) under “Prevention”.



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