



*Ensuring a safe and secure homeland for all North Dakotans*

## **Evacuation Tips**

Evacuations are more common than many people realize. Hundreds of times each year, transportation and industrial accidents release harmful substances, forcing thousands of people to leave their homes. Fires and floods cause evacuations even more frequently. And almost every year, people along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts evacuate in the face of approaching hurricanes.

When community evacuations become necessary, local officials provide information to the public through the media. In some circumstances other warning methods, such as sirens or telephone calls, are also used. Government agencies, the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other disaster relief organizations provide emergency shelter and supplies. To be prepared for an emergency, you should have enough water, food, clothing and emergency supplies to last at least three days. In a catastrophic emergency, you might need to be self-sufficient for even longer.

The amount of time you have to evacuate will depend on the disaster. If the event can be monitored, like a hurricane, you might have a day or two to get ready. However, many disasters allow no time for people to gather even the most basic necessities. This is why you should prepare now.

### ■ **Planning for Evacuation**

- Ask your local emergency manager about community evacuation plans. Learn evacuation routes. If you do not own a car, make transportation arrangements with friends or relatives.
- Talk with your household about the possibility of evacuation. Plan where you would go if you had to leave the community. Plan where you would go if you had to leave the community.
- Plan a place to meet your household in case you are separated from one another in a disaster. Ask a friend or relative outside your town to be the checkpoint so that everyone in the household can call that person to say they are safe.
- Find out where children will be sent if schools are evacuated.
- Assemble a disaster supply kit. Include a battery-powered radio, flashlight, extra batteries, food, water and clothing.

- Keep your fuel tank full if evacuation seems likely. Gas stations may be closed during emergencies and unable to pump gas during power outages.
- Know how to shut off your home's electricity, water and gas supplies at main switches and valves. Have the tools you need to do this (pipe or crescent wrench).

### ■ **What to Do When You Are Told To Evacuate**

Listen to the radio and follow local instructions. If the danger is a chemical release and you are instructed to evacuate immediately, gather your household and go. Take one car per household when evacuating. This will reduce traffic congestion and delay. In other cases, you may have time to follow these steps:

- Gather food, water, clothing, emergency supplies and insurance and financial records.
- Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts and a cap.
- Secure your home. Close and lock doors and windows. Unplug appliances. If a hard freeze is likely during your absence, take actions needed to prevent damage to water pipes such as:
  - Turn off water main.
  - Drain faucets.
  - Turn off inside valves for external faucets and open the outside faucets to drain.
- Turn off main water valve and electricity, if instructed to do so.

**Source:** FEMA. [Are You Ready: A Guide to Citizen Preparedness](#). 2002.