

# Disaster Preparedness: What to do BEFORE "The Big One" Hits

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The week Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, a computer networking journal ran two maps. One showed highly likely places for hurricanes; the Gulf of Mexico coast was clearly marked. The other showed likely places for earthquakes to hit. Included were significant parts of Washington State. Disaster preparedness, therefore, is a topic worthy of our consideration.

Knowing the current weather predictions is always a good idea and you will find them on the National Weather Service site at <http://www.weather.gov> or <http://www.nws.noaa.gov>.

Starting close to home, the Pacific Northwest Seismographic Network offers Preparedness and Mitigation Information for Pacific Northwest Geologic Hazards at <http://www.pnsn.org/HAZARDS/prep.htm>.

California's experience with earthquakes has been distilled by the Southern California Earthquake Center into a file called Putting Down Roots in Earthquake Country available online at <http://earthquakecountry.info/roots>.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has produced an excellent document on preparedness called Are You Ready? An In-Depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness. It is available online at <http://www.fema.gov/areyouready>. It provides a step-by-step approach to disaster preparedness by walking the reader through how to get informed about local emergency plans, how to identify hazards that affect their local area, and how to develop and maintain an emergency communications plan and disaster supplies kit. Other topics covered include evacuation, emergency public shelters, animals in disaster, and information specific to people with disabilities. In addition, it also provides in-depth information on specific hazards including what to do before, during, and after each hazard type. The following hazards are covered: Floods, Tornadoes, Hurricanes, Thunderstorms and Lightning,

Winter Storms and Extreme Cold, Extreme Heat, Earthquakes, Volcanoes, Landslide and Debris Flows (Mudslide), Tsunamis, Fires, Wildfires, Hazardous Materials Incidents, Household Chemical Emergencies, Nuclear Power Plant, and Terrorism (including Explosion, Biological, Chemical, Nuclear, and Radiological hazards).

The U.S. Small Business Administration has a good disaster planning checklist at <http://www.sba.gov/disaster/getready.html> and the Department of Homeland Security has its document available at <http://www.ready.gov>.

Once familiar with the situation, use the principles and checklists on the Florida Courts website ([http://www.flcourts.org/gen\\_public/emergency/index.shtml](http://www.flcourts.org/gen_public/emergency/index.shtml) click on Reports, Publications and Templates and then Templates for Plan Development). Included there are checklists and templates to help you ask the right questions to get ready. You will start with a Continuity of Operations Plan to provide an overview of the process. Then you define the Mission Essential Functions that you absolutely must accomplish to stay in practice. You make your list of alternative facilities so that you know where to go or set up your practice and how you will be reached. (Cell phones are not reliable; cell phone towers can be wiped out in an earthquake.) Personal and practice disaster plans can then be drafted and maintained.

More data and help are available on the website of the National Center for State Courts <http://www.ncsconline.org>. The FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section provides substantial amounts of material on data recovery and business continuation.

For specific instructions on how to secure your Microsoft Windows XP systems, check the XP Survival Guide at <http://www.cablemodemhelp.com/xpsurvivalguide.pdf>.