

## Cool, Calm, and Prepared

Recent events in the world underscore the need to plan for emergencies. It is important to have different plans for unexpected events. A quick response depends on clear understanding of the steps to take in an emergency. Because the steps taken may be unique to a specific situation, a plan is critical. Use the letters of PLAN to help prepare for an emergency.

## **P** – Post Emergency Numbers and Information in Easy to See Locations.

Post important phone numbers and action steps in visible places. Some important emergency numbers may include local poison control, local health departments, social services, police, and any others specific to your center. Also post the address of the center. In the event of fire, save precious time in a 911 call by knowing and giving the address clearly and calmly. Consider saving emergency numbers in a cell phone or the auto dial feature of a land line.

Where does everyone gather in the event of a fire? Have an evacuation plan with a site map. Adults help children gather away from

the building in the event of fire. Use the day's attendance list to verify everyone is safely evacuated.

Make an individual plan for any child with a medical condition or allergy. Contacts may include specific medical professionals, parents or guardians, and supervisors.

## **L** – Let staff know their roles and responsibilities through training and practice drills.

Devote staff meeting time to emergency plans. Build staff confidence for responding to emergencies with regular practice drills. The time to know the plan and how to put it in place is before the emergency happens. Larger centers may need to delegate responsibilities among the supervisors to ensure that all areas are covered.

Be sure to hold practice drills on a regular basis and include the children. Children need to understand the need to follow directions and act quickly when an emergency strikes.

Check the emergency equipment to assure it functions properly. A smoke detector with dead batteries will not sound an early alert.



**A** – Ask parents to keep records up to date for emergency contact information. Have current contact phone numbers (home, cell, business) for all children.

Consider having emergency contacts, including email, for relatives living outside of the area. In the event local phone service is down, getting word that children are safe to someone in the family can help speed the message along and ease worries.

Social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, are useful ways to spread word quickly. If parents ‘follow you’ on Twitter, one tweet can convey peace of mind. Create a list of 140 character tweets that could be used in an emergency. Again, plan ahead so actions can be done with speed and ease.

**N** – Note outcomes and adjust as needed.

During trainings and drills, make note of how well steps were followed. Have staff give ideas for improvements.

Check emergency numbers – but not by calling the numbers. Check with agencies to make sure the numbers on file are up-to-date. Web sites may also be a good place to verify numbers.

Finally, know your local risks. What natural disasters are more likely to happen in your area? Dealing with the aftermath of a flood may be very different than an earthquake. With the addition of caring for several young children until they are reunited with family, the need for specific plans becomes obvious.

Remember to have a business emergency plan, too. Where do you store critical records off-site to avoid loss in a disaster?

For more information on emergency preparedness, check these resources:

Local Fire Department  
Local Police Department  
Poison Control Center  
Local Health Department  
Child Care Sponsoring Organization  
State Child Nutrition Agency  
Ready.gov



The National Food Service Management Institute has several resources on food safety during emergency conditions. While the target audience of the fact sheet may be school nutrition programs, the information often applies to other child feeding programs.



June 2011, continued

Selected topics include

### ***Keeping Food Safe During Power Outages***

<http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20090210032555.pdf>

### ***Salvaging Food After a Flood***

<http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20110128013510.pdf>

New items are added frequently; check [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org) often for updates.

This fact sheet is titled "Food Safety Fact Sheet" with the subtitle "Reopening Your School Kitchen after a Flood". It features the NFSMI logo in the top right corner. The main heading is "Here Are the Facts" next to a photograph of a person in a kitchen. The text explains the school nutrition manager's responsibility for ensuring food safety after an emergency. It includes an "Introduction" section and a "Clean Facilities" section with bullet points: "Wash all interior surfaces of the facility, including floors, walls, and ceiling using potable water and a hot detergent solution. Rinse with clear water to remove detergent and residue and then treat with a sanitizing solution." and "Have the facility checked for mold contamination. If there is mold, it may be removed by cleaning and disinfecting, removing and replacing surfaces, or recaulking." There is also a photograph of a person in a kitchen at the bottom left.

This fact sheet is titled "Food Safety Fact Sheet" with the subtitle "Salvaging Food after a Flood". It features the NFSMI logo in the top right corner. The main heading is "Here Are the Facts" next to a photograph of a metal can. The text explains the school nutrition manager's responsibility for taking actions to ensure food safety after an emergency. It includes an "Introduction" section and a "Determine Food to Keep after Flooding" section with bullet points: "Discard any food that is not in a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water. Food containers that are not waterproof include those with screw caps, snap lids, pull tops, and crimped caps (like those on carbonated beverage bottles). Also, discard cardboard juice/milk/baby formula boxes because they cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized." and "Inspect canned foods or foods packaged in airtight pouches and discard any that are damaged. Damage is shown by swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, and crusting/denting severe enough to prevent normal sealing or opening with a manual, wheel-type can opener." There are three small circular images at the bottom: a gold lid, a blue lid, and a red lid.

### **Sources**

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Care (n.d.). *Emergency preparedness checklist for child care and development fund administrators*. Retrieved April 11, 2011, from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/initiatives/emergency/docs/ccb\\_emergency\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/initiatives/emergency/docs/ccb_emergency_checklist.pdf)

National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (2006). *What's the plan?* Retrieved April 11, 2011 from <http://www.naccrra.org/disaster/docs/ParentBroch.pdf>