

Be Prepared for the Next Big Storm

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It seems like there have quite a few serious storms roll through our area lately, and when the most recent sirens sounded and we headed for the basement, it was good to know we were ready. Be prepared for the next big storm BEFORE it happens in your area. That means having a safe place, with a supply of food, water and other items ready to use when and where you may need them.

As for the place, the Community Emergency Management Team with University of Missouri Extension recommends moving to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement. If an underground shelter is not available, move to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor. Stay away from windows.

When you head for your shelter, you may be there for a while. Have enough food for everyone in the house for several days, even up to a week's supply. The storm may only last for hours, but if power goes off, you will still need to eat. Choose ready-to-eat foods that store well in your shelter. Some suggested foods include canned meats, vegetables and fruits (with pop-tops or a manual can opener), peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola, nuts, dried fruit; cereal, fruit cups, juice boxes, and snack bars. If storing instant meals that require adding water, be sure to include enough water in the emergency kit to reconstitute them. Avoid very salty foods since these increase thirst. Mark food and replace and rotate into regular daily use every 6 months, or more often if "best if used by" dates indicate it. Include paper or plastic plates and cups, napkins and plasticware for in your shelter kit.

Store water for emergencies in clean, well-sealed plastic containers. Keep bottled water sealed in its original plastic containers. Or use plastic pop bottles that have been carefully washed out. Don't use milk containers for storing water, because they are difficult to get clean and because they often do not have secure tops. Store one gallon of water per person per day for cooking and sanitation.

On the MU Extension website (at <http://extension.missouri.edu/> click on the Emergency Management tab at the top right), there are resources for learning more about preparing for storms, tornadoes and other emergencies. For example, MU Extension publication, [EMW1011, Family Disaster Plan](#), is a fillable .pdf file that can be customized for your family's particular needs. There is also a full list for a [Disaster Supplies Kit, EMW1012](#), and [EMW1001, Disaster Recovery Resources for Missouri Families](#), as well as other related topics such as storm shelters, protecting valuable papers, and selecting and safely using generators.

For more information on emergency preparedness, or any other topic, contact your local [University of Missouri Extension office](#). University of Missouri Extension is your one-stop source for practical education on almost anything.

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