



Dear Neighbors:

The world changed for all of us with the tragic events of September 11. For the past two months, we've worked to prepare for additional terrorist attacks, including bioterrorism. We've put heightened security into place everywhere from NIH to the Metro. We've readied our public health system and emergency medical personnel.

People should be confident that the Montgomery County government is doing all it can do to prevent terrorism. We are also working together with the other governments in the region and with the federal government to be prepared for the new realities of living in the Washington metropolitan area.

There are also a number of things that you can do at home to prepare for an emergency – whether it's a bioterrorism event or a severe winter storm. This guide to Public Health Services and Emergency Preparedness offers a variety of information and resources to help you successfully plan for most home emergency situations so that preparation, not panic, is the order of the day.

*Douglas M. Duncan*

Douglas M. Duncan,  
County Executive

## Montgomery County, Maryland

# Public Health and Emergency Preparedness





## What should make me suspect a piece of mail?

- It's unexpected or from someone you don't know.
- It's addressed to someone no longer at your address.
- It's handwritten and has no return address or bears one that you can't confirm is legitimate.
- It's lopsided or lumpy in appearance.
- It's sealed with excessive amounts of tape.
- It's marked with restrictive endorsements such as "Personal" or "Confidential."
- It has excessive postage.

## What should I do with a suspicious piece of mail?

- Don't handle a letter or package that you suspect is contaminated.
- Don't shake it, bump it, or sniff it.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Notify local law enforcement authorities.

## Bioterrorism: Frequently Asked Questions

The mailing of anthrax spores to a few federal officials and news media has prompted concern among many citizens. Montgomery County has been working closely with federal, state and regional health and public safety agencies to respond quickly to any bioterrorism threat.

To answer residents' concerns about recent bioterrorist threats, the county has established a 24-hour taped message—at **240-777-4200**—in English and Spanish. Information on bioterrorism is also available on the County's web site at [www.co.mo.md.us](http://www.co.mo.md.us).

Since September 11, we have all experienced additional stress. Information on coping with this stress, can be found on the County's website by clicking on "Bioterrorism." Mental health professionals suggest that striking a balance between keeping up-to-date on current events and spending time pursuing enjoyable activities can be an effective way of dealing with stress. Get plenty of rest and exercise. Spend time with family and friends. Take a break from the news when needed.

Following are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about bioterrorism:

### Q. **Is anthrax contagious?**

A. No, anthrax is not spread from person to person.

### Q. **What are the symptoms of anthrax?**

A. Inhalation anthrax symptoms are similar to a bad case of the flu, with a high fever, muscle aches and difficulty breathing. You would probably not have a runny nose or nasal congestion. Skin anthrax starts with an itchy bump like a mosquito bite, which blisters, and then breaks open and turns black. So far, in this area, anthrax has been found only in a small number of individuals who work in

specific federal mailrooms. The Bioterrorism Information Line can help determine if it is likely that you have been exposed to anthrax. Call your physician for treatment of any unusual flu or rash symptoms.

### Q. **How can I get tested for anthrax?**

A. Buildings, not people, get tested for anthrax. When preliminary tests show evidence of anthrax spores in a building, individuals who work in the affected area are put on preventive antibiotics until the final test results are available several days later. If the final test is negative, antibiotics are stopped; if positive, then treatment is usually continued for 60 days. While federal health officials initially took nasal swabs, they have since learned that this is not an accurate test and are no longer doing it. Blood tests to identify the presence of the anthrax bacteria are not helpful unless a person is sick and the symptoms appear to be anthrax.

### Q. **Should I keep my own supply of antibiotics?**

A. No. There is no reason to obtain or take antibiotics unless prescribed. An adequate supply of antibiotics from the emergency national stockpile will be available if needed.

### Q. **Can I get an anthrax or smallpox vaccination?**

A. The federal government is working to make these vaccines available as soon as possible.

### Q. **Is there anything else I should do to protect myself?**

A. Hand washing after handling your mail is likely to prevent cutaneous (skin) anthrax in the rare event of contaminated mail. Hand washing is also useful in preventing many other respiratory and food borne illnesses. Suspicious mail should be handled according to the instructions mailed to every household by the U.S. Postal Service (see sidebar at left).



## Preparing Your Home for an Emergency

Planning for any emergency requires considering scenarios that could disrupt your daily life, affecting electricity, water, heat, air conditioning, telephone service and transportation. Consequently, you should plan to have food, water and other essentials to get you through the emergency. Most emergency planning experts suggest having enough supplies to last you and your family for three to five days for weather-related events or community-wide emergencies that require shelter-in-place.

## Your Emergency Preparedness Kit

The seven basic items that should be stored in your home are water, food, first-aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools, emergency supplies and specialty items. Keep the items that you would most likely need at home in one easy-to-carry container such as a clean, watertight can, camping backpack or duffel bag. Store it in a convenient place and put a smaller version in your car. Keep items in airtight plastic bags. Remember to change the stored water and rotate the food supplies every six months (place dates on containers). Check the supplies and re-think your needs every year. Consult your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications, and maintain copies of your prescriptions.

### Water

Store water in plastic containers or purchase bottled water, avoiding containers that will decompose or break, such as glass bottles. Plan for one gallon of water per person per day. Water should be stored in a cool, dark place with the date labeled on the container. Tap water generally may be stored up to two weeks without further disinfection. Use 2-3 drops per gallon of standard household bleach to disinfect and store water in sterile containers.

### Food

Store a supply of three to five days' worth of nonperishable food per person. Foods should require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking and little or no water. Examples include: ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables; canned or boxed juices, powdered milk and soup; condiments such as sugar, salt and pepper; high-energy food like peanut butter, jelly, low-sodium crackers, granola bars and trail mix; vitamins; foods for infants or persons on special diets; cookies, hard candy, instant coffee and sweetened cereals. Bulk food items such as wheat, powdered milk, corn and soybeans can be stored for long periods of time.

### First-Aid Kit

Assemble a first-aid kit for your home and each vehicle. Items should include sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes, gauze pads, hypoallergenic adhesive tape, triangular bandages, sterile roller bandages, scissors, tweezers, needle, moistened towelettes, antiseptic, thermometer, tongue blades, tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant, safety pins, cleansing soap, latex gloves, and sunscreen. Include aspirin and non-aspirin pain medications, cough syrup, anti-diarrhea medication, Syrup of Ipecac, activated charcoal (to counter poisoning) and laxatives.

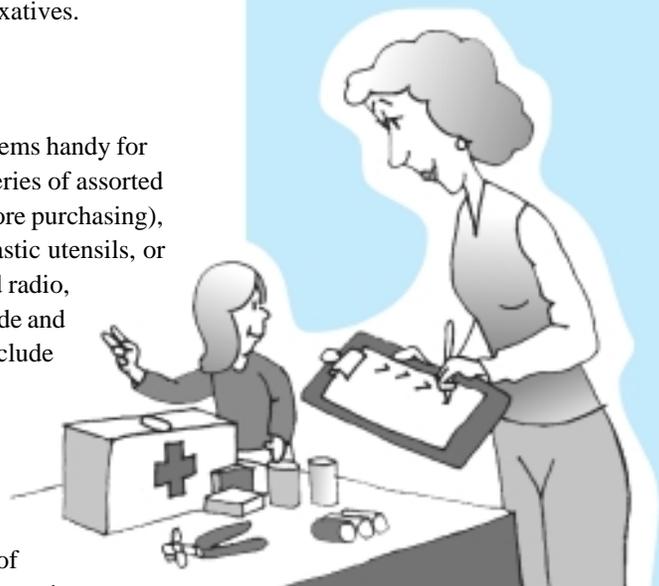
### Tools and Supplies

Keep the following items handy for all-around use: extra batteries of assorted sizes (check shelf life before purchasing), paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, or mess kit; battery-operated radio, flashlight, carbon monoxide and smoke detectors, cash (include change) and/or traveler's checks, non-electric can opener and utility knife, small ABC fire extinguisher, tube tent, pliers, compass, waterproof matches, plastic storage containers,

## Special Needs

Additional copies of this publication are available in public libraries or by calling Montgomery County's Emergency Management Office at 240-777-2300.

Alternative formats of this publication can be made available for persons with special needs.



signal flares, paper and pencil, needles and thread, medicine dropper, shut-off wrench for house gas and water, whistle, plastic sheeting and local map. For sanitation, pack toilet paper, soap and liquid detergent, feminine hygiene supplies, plastic garbage bags with ties, a plastic bucket and lid, disinfectant and household chlorine bleach.

### **Clothing and Bedding**

Assemble one or two complete changes of clothing per person, sturdy shoes or work boots, rain gear, blankets or sleeping bags, hat and gloves, thermal underwear and sunglasses.

### **Specialty Items**

**Babies** - formula, diapers, bottles, powdered milk and medication.

**Adults** - medications, prescriptions, denture needs, eyeglasses and/or contact lenses, and related supplies.

**Entertainment** – games, books and several quiet toys for children.

**Important Family Documents** - wills, insurance policies, driver's license, contracts, deeds, passports, stocks and bonds, immunization records, important phone numbers, credit card accounts, social security cards and other personal family records.

### **Public Emergency Shelters**

When conditions warrant, Montgomery County's Emergency Management Office may establish community-based shelters for local residents. Normally, shelters are set up in public high schools, recreation centers or other appropriate facilities where residents can seek refuge, as well as sleep and eat. The Montgomery

County departments of Health and Human Services and Recreation, the Montgomery County chapter of the American Red Cross and Montgomery County Public Schools staff and operate the shelters. Persons needing shelter are asked to bring a change of clothing, bathing and sanitary supplies, pre-filled prescription and other medical needs, denture and eye care materials, and special dietary supplies or requirements. With the exception of guide dogs, pets are not permitted in the shelters.

### **What To Do For Pets in Emergencies**

Emergency planning should include all members of the family, including pets. Pets are not permitted to stay in the same Red Cross shelters as people, but alternate facilities may be established for short-term care for your pet. If possible, arrange for someone to board the animal, or locate a relative or friend who can check on its well being on a regular basis. If you place a dog or cat in a kennel, make sure that the facility meets all requirements for long-term care and has an adequate disaster plan. Put together a basic disaster kit for your pets, in case you must leave home quickly and leave your pet at a safe location. Recommended items include:

- An airline-approved carrier for each dog or cat, or other pets, with ID, photo, vaccination records, registrations, special needs list, sufficient medicines and a muzzle/leash.
- An extra supply of pet food (for dogs a lower protein dog formula will produce less stool, a benefit when the dog is kept indoors).
- Plenty of clean water.
- Bowls (disposable containers if you must leave your home), can opener, kitchen trash bags, bleach (disinfectant and water purification), blankets, towels, paper towels, and other waste disposal supplies.



### **Pet Info**

For more information on emergency preparedness for pets, call the Montgomery County Humane Society at 301-279-1823, or the Humane Society of the United States at 202-452-1100.



## What To Do When Electrical Power is Lost

Disruption of electrical service can occur as a result of many things, including lightning, high winds, ice and heavy snow, and equipment failure. For the most part, service is normally restored within a short time. However, major power outages can occasionally last for extended periods. When power is lost, you should:

- **Check to see if your neighbors have power.** Loss of power may be due to a blown fuse or a tripped circuit. If your neighbors are also without service, call your local power company (see phone numbers). If you must go outside to assess the situation, take a flashlight and watch for downed power lines that could still be energized. If downed lines are located, don't go near them or touch anything that may be in contact with the lines. Report downed power lines immediately.
- **Turn off all major appliances.** Only leave your front porch light and a couple of light switches on in the home. When major appliances – refrigerators, electric water heaters, air conditioners and pumps – are left on, they could overload electric lines when power is restored causing a second outage.
- **Refrigerators and freezers.** Food can be kept cold enough for a day or two, if the doors are kept closed. During the winter, you may be able to store some items outside in a proper container. If temperatures are below freezing, it's possible to freeze water outside in containers and place them inside your refrigerator to help keep food cold. Try to consume perishable



foods first. Some partially frozen foods can be refrozen as long as they contain ice crystals or are no warmer than 40°Fahrenheit. Consider purchasing a thermometer for both the refrigerator and freezer. Don't refreeze seafood, poultry, ice cream, cream sauces or anything susceptible to spoilage. When in doubt... throw it out.

During times of prolonged outages, your power company may provide dry ice at a designated location; bring an ice cooler or suitable container to transport it. As a rule of thumb, 25 pounds of dry ice will keep a 10-cubic-foot freezer at the proper temperature (32°F) for three to four days.

- **Flashlights or battery-powered lanterns** should be used to illuminate the home. Candles and kerosene lanterns are not recommended for lighting because of inherent fire safety hazards.
- **Portable emergency generators** can be used to provide limited electrical power during an outage. But, take care to ensure that they do not pose a threat to you and your family. Never fuel or run a portable generator in the home or garage, as gas-powered generators pose a serious fire and carbon monoxide threat. Generators should be installed in compliance with

## Alternative Language Translations

Copies of this Home Emergency Preparedness Guide in Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, French, Farsi, Cambodian and Chinese are available at the following locations:

**Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center**  
4805 Edgemoor Lane  
Bethesda  
301-986-4325

**Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center**  
3300 Briggs Chaney Road  
Silver Spring  
240-777-8400

**Executive Office Building**  
Lobby Information Desk  
101 Monroe St.  
Rockville  
240-777-1000

**Mid-County Regional Services Center**  
2424 Reedie Dr.  
Wheaton  
240-777-8100

**Silver Spring Regional Services Center**  
962 Wayne Ave.  
Silver Spring  
301-565-7300

**TESS Community Services Center**  
8513 Piney Branch Rd.  
Silver Spring  
301-565-7675

**Upcounty Regional Services Center**  
12900 Middlebrook Rd.  
Germantown  
240-777-8000



## Safety Note

Never use gas ovens or stovetops to heat homes. Charcoal or propane grills should not be used inside the home. They pose a serious threat of fire and poisonous carbon monoxide. Kerosene heaters should always be used in a well-ventilated room, and never refueled inside the home or in an attached garage, or refueled when still hot. When removing ashes from the fireplace, make sure that the ashes have been cooled, and are placed in a metal container outside and away from the home.

your local utility's guidelines. Make sure the generator is equipped with a double-throw transfer switch that protects your equipment and prevents feedback on power lines. Always operate according to the manufacturer's instructions. For additional information on the proper use of emergency generators, call your power company.

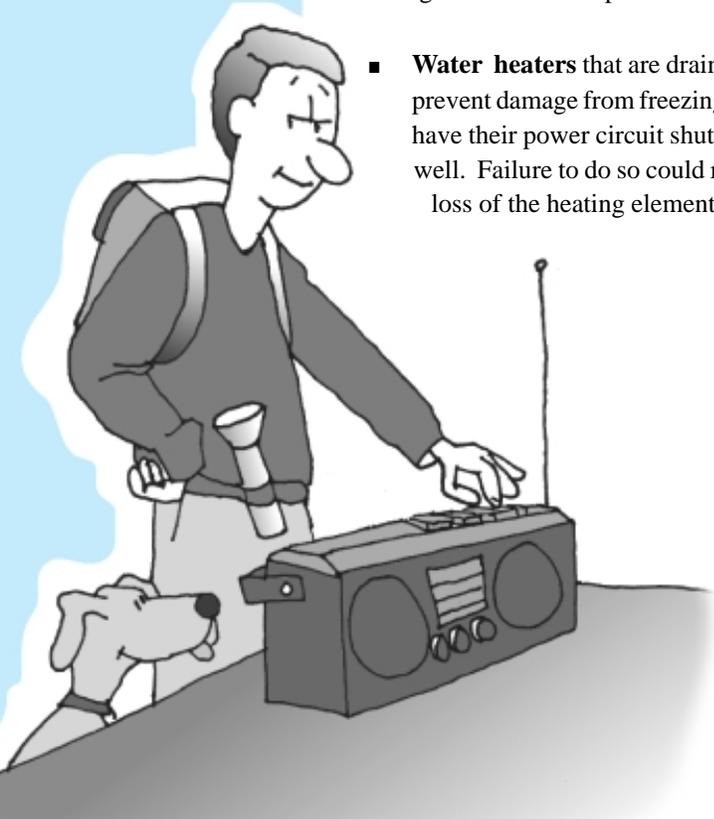
- **Car fuel tanks** should be kept at least 3/4 full at all times, since power loss may affect gasoline pumping stations.
- **Water systems with electric pumps** such as wells or cisterns – will not operate when the power is out. Use alternate sources of water until power is restored.
- **Gas appliances** may not work if the electricity is off because the equipment may require electricity for ignition or valve operation.
- **Water heaters** that are drained to prevent damage from freezing must have their power circuit shut off, as well. Failure to do so could result in loss of the heating element when

power is restored. Never turn on a water heater unless the tank is full.

- **Plumbing** can freeze when power is lost during cold weather periods. Drain pumps, supply lines, water heaters, boilers and traps in drains of tubs, sinks, commodes, washing machines and dishwashers. To avoid major flooding when temperatures rise, turn off supply lines to outside spigots.
- **Life Support Equipment** required for family members who depend on these devices (respirators, ventilators, oxygen equipment or other life-sustaining devices) should be listed with the power company, with your doctor's approval. You should have a contingency plan that always includes an alternate power source for the device and for relocating the person.
- **Fallen trees** are the primary cause of power outages. Power companies regularly trim trees. When planting and/or trimming trees on your property, always seek professional help in trimming limbs or branches that are close to power lines.

## Keeping Warm When Electrical Power is Lost

Select a single room in the home or apartment building where families can gather to stay warm; ideally a room which gets sunlight during the daylight hours. Use fireplaces and wood-burning stoves with care and always supervise them when burning. Make sure the fireplace is in proper working condition and has been inspected before use. Wear layers of clothing, including sweaters and coats, which entrap warm air and helps to maintain body heat for longer periods, and change quickly out of wet clothes. For homes with natural gas heaters, keep meters and vents clear of ice and snow.



## Keeping Updated On an Emergency

Getting information during an emergency situation is vital, especially at the height of the event, when evacuation may be required or you are asked to stay at home. Radio and television stations provide the quickest means to obtain information. If you have electrical power and cable television, turn to County Cable Montgomery (channel 6) for frequent updates. Have a battery-operated radio tuned to a local all-news or talk-radio station.

## Contingency Planning At Work

Ask your employer what preparations are in place for an emergency evacuation. Are fire exits clearly marked and an evacuation plan clearly posted? What steps will be taken to assist mobility - challenged individuals? Is there a plan that designates a fire warden for each floor or work location, or a buddy system to account for all personnel if evacuated? If security measures are needed, what training is provided to employees? Are employees trained in the proper handling of packages and mail? Are automated systems equipped with virus protection, and are all critical business records backed up off-site?

Answers to questions such as these will help you and your employer better prepare for any type of emergency. Every business should have a Business Continuity and Contingency Operating Plan, which assumes that there may be computer glitches or potential viruses. These plans provide a road map for ways to cope with problems, should they occur. Finally, inquire if your company has a policy in place regarding your status as an employee should disruptions result in temporary closing of your employer's business.

## Financial and Personal Records

Keep all your financial records in order and up-to-date. Bank statements, credit and debit cards, investment portfolios, medical, prescription and insurance information, taxes, and other records that show transactions related to your accounts should be stored in a safe, dry place. Important records like driver licenses, marriage, birth, vaccination and pet health certificates, as well as passports and identification cards need to be stored in watertight containers. Keep copies of important records in your disaster kit to take quickly for use if evacuated or to help make applications for disaster assistance if you are unable to return home promptly.

## Travel

If your plans include traveling by airplane, train or ship, inquire about the carrier's emergency planning and security efforts, including contingency plans for alternate travel should a problem develop. Also, consider taking some extra cash or travelers checks (preferred) in case of problems related to ATM machines and credit card verification systems.

## For More Info

There is plenty of good information available on the World Wide Web regarding emergency preparedness. A search will elicit information on what governments and businesses are doing as well as helpful suggestions for your individual and family needs. Montgomery County, Maryland, offers a variety of information and links at its website - - [www.co.mo.md.us](http://www.co.mo.md.us).

## Emergency Radio Stations

WMAL .....	630 AM
WTOP .....	1500 AM
WTOP .....	107.7 FM
WASH .....	97.1 FM
WAMU .....	88.5 FM
WBIG .....	100.3 FM
WMZQ .....	98.7 FM
WRC .....	1260 AM
WTNT .....	570 AM



## Useful Phone Numbers

### Emergencies

(Fire/Rescue, Police)  
911

### Police Non-emergency

301-279-8000

### Fire Non-emergency

240-777-0744

### Allegheny Power

1-800-255-3443

### American Red Cross

301-588-2515

### Verizon

Telephone repair:  
301-954-6260

### BG&E

1-800-685-0123

### Crisis Center

(24-hour hotline)  
240-777-4000

### PEPCO

To report outages:  
1-877-737-2662

To report downed wires:  
202-872-3432

### Poison Center

202-625-3333

### Washington Gas

To report gas leaks:  
1-800-752-7520

Emergencies:  
703-750-1400

### WSSC

Maintenance (24 hrs)  
(1-800-828-6439) (x4002)

### Montgomery County Emergency Management

240-777-2300

## Check on Relatives And Neighbors

During storms and other emergency events, check to see how your relatives and neighbors are coping, especially the frail elderly and persons with disabilities. If possible, consider helping them plan or locate resources for assistance.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services' Aging and Disability Services Information and Assistance Unit can be reached at 240-777-3000 (voice) or TTY (for hearing impaired) 240-777-4815.



## Stay Informed

**Bioterrorism Information Line ..... 240-777-4200**

**Montgomery County Website ..... <http://www.co.mo.md.us>**

**County Cable Montgomery** - which can be found on channel 6.

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