



New York State Senator **Rubén Díaz, Sr.**

32nd Senatorial District

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



District Office: 900 Rogers Pl., Bronx, NY 10459 Tel: (718) 991-3161

Albany Office: 307 Legislative Office Bldg., Albany, NY 12247 Tel: (518) 455-2511

E-Mail: diaz@senate.state.ny.us • Website: diaz.nysenate.gov

Applying for Assistance from FEMA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) can help those who have been affected by disasters. The Individuals and Households Program (IHP) provides money and services to people in the disaster area when losses are not covered by insurance, and property has been damaged or destroyed.

The IHP provides money for temporary housing, repair, replacement of destroyed houses, permanent housing construction and other needs including medical, dental, moving, storage and transportation expenses.

If you reside in a home that is in a Presidentially-declared disaster area, you may apply by phone to

FEMA for assistance. Call 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) (hearing and speech impaired individuals should call 1-800-462-7585).

Be ready to give the person who takes your call your social security number, a description of the losses that were caused by the disaster, insurance information, directions to your damaged property, and a phone number where you can be reached.

You will be contacted within ten days to determine if an inspection is required to assess the damage to your property. The inspector is not a FEMA employee, but a contractor who has FEMA identification. You will need to show the inspector

proof of ownership (deed, tax records, mortgage payment book, or an insurance policy) and proof of occupancy (driver's license, utility bills, or any first class government mail sent to you).

Within ten days of the inspection, you will receive a letter from the Program. If it approves your request, you will then receive a check or transfer of cash to your bank account, with instructions on how to use the money. If the letter denies the request, a reason will be given. The letter may refer you to the Small Business Administration. If so, you will receive further information from that agency.



A Message From Senator Rubén Díaz, Sr.

Dear Friend:

The past few years have taught us that while we live in a wonderful state and nation, we are not immune to disaster, whether man-made or natural.

From national disasters like the 9/11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina, to events closer to home like the Northeast Blackout of 2003, we are reminded that while we may not be able to prevent a disaster, a few simple steps will protect our families. What is most important is that these steps be taken now; preparing for disaster when one is imminent is too late.

Disaster preparedness may seem long and involved, but the peace of mind that comes with being prepared is, in reality, the result of a few simple tasks.

This brochure provides details on what you can do to be prepared, as well as the phone numbers of several relief agencies to which you can donate to help people affected by natural disasters.

As you take the necessary precautions to keep your family safe, please know that my colleagues in the State Senate and I will work to ensure that New York as a whole remains prepared for future disasters. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A stylized orange signature of Rubén Díaz, Sr.

Rubén Díaz, Sr.
New York State Senator
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Coming Together in Times of Crisis

In 2001, New York State passed Chapter 358, a law authorizing paid leave for State and local government employees to volunteer for Red Cross disaster relief assignments. The following year, Chapter 505 extended that law to include school district employees.

In your community, you and your neighbors can take numerous steps to ensure preparedness. Meet with them to plan how you can work together after a disaster until help arrives. If you're the member of a neighborhood organization, include disaster preparedness as a new activity. Know which neighbors have special skills (medical, technical), and consider ones that have special needs, including those who are elderly and disabled.

Neighbors should also plan for child care in case some parents can't get home.

If you take preparedness seriously, share this information with neighbors. The more everyone prepares, the greater your groups overall resources will be if and when a disaster strikes.

Protecting Your Family

With many families having two working parents and children who might be at school, with their peers or elsewhere, it is unrealistic to expect your entire family to be at home at the time of an emergency. Planning in advance will save you a great deal of worry later.

Families should establish a meeting place in the event of a disaster. In case of a fire, it's best to meet outside the home. If a family member can't return home, establish a meeting place outside the neighborhood. In addition, asking an out-of-state friend to be a contact is a wise plan. After a disaster, it is often easier to call long-distance.

Families should also keep enough supplies in their homes for at least three days. Provisions should include a three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that won't spoil; one change of clothing and footwear per person; a first aid kit containing your family's prescription medications; emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries; an extra set of car keys, a credit card, cash or traveler's checks; sanitation supplies; special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members and an extra pair of glasses.

Be sure to rotate your food supplies every six months and change your water supply every three months. Keep important family documents in a waterproof container, and prepare a smaller kit for the trunk of your car.

Helpful Hints in the Event of a Disaster

Our first instincts are often helpful to us.
In the event of a disaster, they may be harmful.
Think about what you would do in these instances:

1. You hear an explosion. Should you immediately cover your nose and mouth with a cotton shirt or dust mask?

Yes. Covering your nose and mouth will reduce the possibility of toxic particles or radioactive dust.

2. If authorities warn that an explosion has released radiation, where is the safest place to be?

In a basement. Being sheltered by thick walls below ground offers the best protection.

3. You are trapped beneath a building after a tornado or another disaster. You hear rescuers in the area. Should you shout to alert them?

Only as a last resort. You may inhale dust or other harmful substances. You should first use a flashlight if one is available, or tap on a pipe or wall.

4. You are not completely sure if your local water supply is safe. Can you find or create safe water by boiling it, adding bleach, or using water from a hot water heater if it isn't damaged, or from a radiator?

Never drink water from a radiator. Hot water heater water is safe. Boiling water for three to five minutes is the safest method. If you are unable to do that, adding 1/8 of a tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water is acceptable, but will not kill parasites.

Safety in the Workplace



It may be a fire, a blackout, or a storm. Or a co-worker may fall seriously ill. If you work eight hours a day, you spend 40 hours a week at work, which means there is ample opportunity for any such instance to occur. Preparing for emergencies can save a co-worker's life. The American Red Cross offers courses in first aid, CPR, use of automated external defibrillation machines and injury control. For more information, contact your local Red Cross chapter, visit www.redcross.org.

Informing Authorities

If you see a disaster and are near a phone, call 9-1-1. Never think that authorities have already been alerted.

Be sure to provide the following information:

- Your name, and the phone number from where you are calling
- What happened
- Your exact location, including nearby intersections, landmarks, the building name and/or apartment number
- How many people are injured and their conditions
- What help if any is already being administered.

Do not hang up on the dispatcher until you are told to do so. If the dispatcher says authorities have already been alerted, hang up immediately to allow other emergency calls to get through.

How To Prepare for Specific Disasters

Before a hurricane strikes:

Secure outside objects or bring loose objects inside; trim trees and bushes; check roofs and house structures; secure your boat; shutter, board or tape windows; make sure your car is fueled so that you could evacuate if necessary.

When there is a tornado watch or warning:

Try to get to a storm shelter if one is available. If not, follow the tips listed below.

If outdoors...

- If possible, get inside a building.
- If shelter is not available, or there is no time to get indoors, lie in a ditch or low-lying area, or crouch near a strong building.
- Be aware of the potential for flooding.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.

If in a car...

- Never try to outdrive a tornado in a car or truck. Tornadoes can change direction quickly and can lift up a car or truck and toss it through the air.
- Get out of the car immediately and take shelter in a nearby building.
- If there is no time to get indoors, get out of the car and lie in a ditch or low-lying area away from the vehicle.
- Be aware of the potential for flooding.

If in your home...

- Go to the basement; if possible, hide under the stairs, a table, or an old mattress.
- If you do not have access to a basement, use a small, windowless room on the first floor, such as a closet or bathroom.
- If none of these options are available, try to put as many walls as you can between you and the tornado.

In a severe snow or ice storm:

Stay indoors, avoid unnecessary travel, and stay tuned to local radio or television stations to receive weather updates. If you must go outside, wear several layers of lightweight clothing rather than a single heavy coat. Wearing gloves and a hat, and covering your mouth, protects you from extreme conditions.

During a thunderstorm:

Seek shelter in a building or vehicle. Avoid using a landline telephone, and turn off and unplug electrical appliances. Avoid taking a bath or shower or washing dishes – wires and water are conductors of electricity.

If you are caught outdoors during an electrical storm, keep away from trees and hills. Make yourself the smallest target possible by squatting low to the ground, placing your hands on your knees with your head between them.

If a flood threatens your area:

Listen to local radio and TV stations for updates and possible evacuation plans. Move furniture and valuables to higher levels in your home. Move to higher ground, away from streams, storm drains and rivers. Do NOT attempt to drive through areas of deep water. If your car stalls in rapidly rising water, abandon it immediately.

Disaster-Related Relief Organizations

The American Red Cross

1-800-RED-CROSS

www.redcross.org

AmeriCares

1-800-486-HELP

www.americares.org

Feeding America

1-800-771-2303

www.feedingamerica.org

ASPCA

1-212-876-7700

www.asPCA.org

Habitat for Humanity

1-866-292-7892

www.habitat.org