



## Food Safety When the Power Goes Out see inside



Spring/Summer 2009

# Living WELL

A Newsletter of  
**Family and Consumer Sciences**

<http://sites.ext.vt.edu/livingwell/>

**Virginia  
Cooperative  
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## Emergency Preparedness: Does Your Family Have a **Disaster Kit?**

By Jillian Davis

Natural disasters and threatening situations such as fires often come without notice, and you and your family may need to jump and run when a warning is sounded. Planning ahead with a disaster supply kit can give you some peace of mind and help your family adapt to a temporary living situation, if necessary. A portable kit in a sturdy, easy-to-carry, water-resistant container should contain supplies for three days. The Red Cross also recommends having at least two weeks worth of supplies at home, and a smaller kit in the trunk of your car.

**Think first about the basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air, and warmth.**

This list is a starting point for preparing your disaster kit— every situation is unique.

**Water** – one gallon of water per person per day for three days for drinking and sanitation.

**Food** – at least a three-day supply of nonperishable food that can be eaten cold (canned tuna, peanut butter, crackers, canned fruit, and juice boxes are all good choices).

**Can opener.**

**Battery-powered or hand-crank radio** and a NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) weather radio, with tone alert and extra batteries for both.

**Flashlight and extra batteries.**

**Fire extinguisher and matches.**

**Basic first aid kit**, including prescription and nonprescription medications.

**Dust mask** to help filter contaminated air, and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place.

**Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties** for personal sanitation.

**Wrench or pliers** to turn off utilities.

**Extra set of house and car keys.**

**Sleeping bag or warm blanket and clothing.**

**Clothing** – an extra long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and sturdy footwear for each person.

**Family records and financial documents.** Place important documents such as insurance policies, power of attorney, passports, social security cards, birth certificates, and bank account records in a waterproof container. Add cash or traveler's checks and change.

*Jillian Davis is a Family and Consumer Sciences Extension agent serving Albemarle County.*



## Plan for Your Pets

Include supplies for your pets – food, water, and medications – in your disaster kit. Pets may not be allowed in the nearest shelter. Contact your local humane society or veterinarian for suggestions should evacuation become necessary. Although thinking about a disaster can be frightening, having a plan in place can help your family feel more secure and prepared to successfully cope with any disaster or other dangerous situation that should occur.

Source: American Red Cross. [www.redcross.org/](http://www.redcross.org/)



# Be Prepared For the **Unexpected!**

By Jane Henderson, M.Ed.



## Do You Know Where Your Insurance Papers Are?

Life situations can change in an instant. Storms, fires, and other natural disasters can damage or destroy your home. Being prepared can minimize the impact and avoid some of the stress that can come with unexpected emergencies. Below are some steps to follow when organizing your papers and communicating with trusted individuals about the location of these documents:

- Delegate a responsible person to handle your affairs if you are not able. Prepare a will, a living will, and a durable power of attorney to decrease the burden on your family should they have to make decisions on your behalf.
- Prepare a file of important documents. Keep the originals in a safe place and a copy in a separate location, in case the originals are damaged or destroyed. Store in a safe-deposit box or a portable fire safe box, or scan the items into a computer and save a copy on a portable storage device.

## What information do I need to keep?

- Sales receipts, contracts, pictures of valuables, warranties, and other items needed when reporting an insurance claim.
- List of credit card numbers with the necessary contact information, so lost or stolen cards can be reported quickly.
- Bank statements, cancelled checks, and tax records in case you need to establish your credit history or declare your assets for accessing funds while insurance claims are in process.
- Mortgage papers, family birth certificates, insurance policies, and rental agreements.



Family members or the person designated to handle your financial affairs in the case of injury or death must know where to find these important papers. They should also have contact information for your lawyer, insurance agent, financial advisor, primary doctor, or dentist who could provide helpful advice in time of emergency. (See **Clip and Save** for further information.)

*Jane Henderson is a Family and Consumer Sciences Extension agent serving Amelia County.*



National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences

The **Living Well** newsletter was developed by the Family and Consumer Sciences Program, Karen Roth Gehrt, associate director. The **Living Well** editorial board, co-chaired by

C. Sprenger, Augusta County; and E. Schlenker, Virginia Tech; includes A-C Carrington, Central District; D. Baskfield-Heath, James City County; J. Henderson, Amelia County; A. Jewell, Lancaster County; and K. Poff, Shenandoah and Frederick Counties.

Other reviewers for this issue included R.R. Boyer, C.R. Hayhoe, and I.E. Leech, all of Virginia Tech.

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# Food Safety

## When the



# POWER GOES OUT

By Jeannie M. Mullins

Hurricanes, floods, and ice and snow can cause families to be without power for an extended period of time. Knowing how to determine if food is safe and how to keep it safe can reduce the potential for foodborne illness and help minimize the amount of food that has to be discarded.

**Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.**

- ◆ Food will keep safely for about four hours in an unopened refrigerator. If the temperature in the refrigerator gets above 40°F, bacteria that cause foodborne illness will multiply rapidly. Food that reaches a temperature above 40°F remains safe to eat for two hours; after two hours, the food should be discarded. If it looks like the power will be off for longer than four hours, move the perishable foods from the refrigerator to an insulated cooler filled with ice or frozen gel packs. Keep a thermometer inside the cooler

and make sure the food temperature stays at or below 40°F.



**WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!**

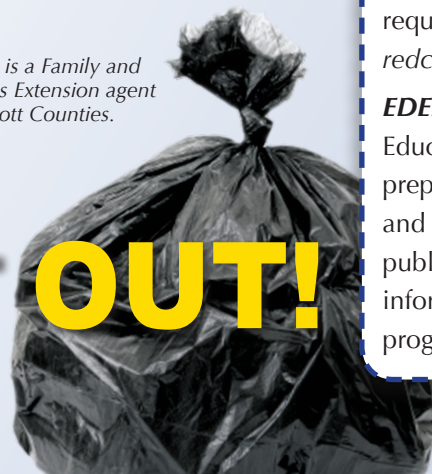


- ◆ A full freezer will hold its temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours for one that is half-full) if the door remains closed. If you have an appliance thermometer in the freezer, read the temperature when the power comes back on. If it is 40°F or below, the food is okay. If you didn't have a thermometer in the freezer, you should check each package to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals or the temperature is 40°F or below, it is safe to refreeze.

**Never taste food to determine its safety.**

- ◆ Food that looks and smells fine can still contain illness-causing bacteria if it has been at room temperature for longer than two hours. Don't risk serious illness – or worse – in an effort to save money.

*Jeannie M. Mullins is a Family and Consumer Sciences Extension agent serving Lee and Scott Counties.*



**Clip and Save**

**Emergencies: Are You Prepared?**

Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 354-141. <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/354-141/>.

**In Case of a Disaster: Home Inventory or Information You Need to Take the Time to Complete but We Hope You Never Need to Use.**

Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 2903-7023. <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/2903-7023.pdf>.

The website of the **American Red Cross** offers information on all aspects of emergency preparedness, appropriate responses when handling ongoing disaster situations, and opportunities to volunteer and assist others in your community who may require emergency assistance. [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

**EDEN**, the Extension Disaster Education Network, offers advice to prepare for and cope with natural and manmade disasters, providing publications, videos, and contact information for state Extension programs. [www.eden.lsu.edu](http://www.eden.lsu.edu).

# Welcome to Living Well

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2009 edition of *Living Well*, coming to you from the Family and Consumer Sciences Program of Virginia Cooperative Extension. This issue focuses on emergency preparedness and steps we can take to minimize the stress and potential dangers to our families when storms or other natural disasters threaten our homes. We hope this information will help you and yours *Live Well*. If you have comments or suggestions about this newsletter, you can reach us at (540) 231-2450; [livingwell@vt.edu](mailto:livingwell@vt.edu); or Editor, 101 Wallace Annex, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va., 24061-0228. We love to hear from you!

**NOTE:** We also want to remind you to renew your subscription to *Living Well*. To ensure that you will continue to receive this newsletter, you must call, write, or e-mail the Virginia Cooperative Extension office in your city or county. You can find contact information at <http://offices.ext.vt.edu>.

**Would you like to be a corporate sponsor or private donor for the Living Well newsletter?**

Contact Karen Gehrt at [gehrtk@vt.edu](mailto:gehrtk@vt.edu) or (540) 231-9347.

Keeping a Healthy State of Mind:

## Helping Your Children Through a Disaster

By Brittany Wilkins

As adults, we become scared and stressed when a disaster strikes, so think about how your children are feeling. Even though adults handle most of the arrangements, such as getting the family to safety and gathering supplies, children sense the tension and know that something is wrong. To help your children cope with disaster, sit down with them before there is an event and make a family game plan, letting everyone know what they need to do to cope with the situation.

To make children feel included and help them understand what might happen in an emergency, include them when you put together your family disaster kit. Allow them to pack a small comfort item, such as a stuffed animal, baby blanket, or photograph along with essentials; even something small can help with a child's mental state during and after an emergency. Children should also know where the family meeting place is should you happen to get separated. Establish a family contact person, either a relative or friend, that family members can

Artwork by  
Grace FisherPoff



contact with their whereabouts should an emergency occur at a time when they are away from home. Be sure that children have this information with them at all times and know how to use it.

Disasters affect adults and children in different ways, but having a plan will help everyone deal with the stress regardless of the circumstances presented. Be sure to include your children in the preparation for an emergency to help them feel safe and part of the team.

*This article was developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Emergency Communication System, and accessed at [www.bt.cdc.gov/preparedness/mind/middleschool](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/preparedness/mind/middleschool).*

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[www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu)