

STEP 4: How will you communicate during an emergency or disaster?

Create a family communication plan so you can get in touch with family members. Give copies of contact information and meeting locations to everyone in your family

Options are available: telephones, cell phones, Facebook, and e-mail are all great ways to get in touch with family members.

Make sure you know the emergency plan.

Make a decision about where you will meet in case you can't get home during an emergency.

Understand that it may take time to get through to everyone. Try to be patient.

Needs of your pets should be kept in mind. Keep a pet carrier for easy transport.

Inter yourself. Watch news broadcasts, read online news updates or listen to a battery-operated radio for official guidance during an emergency, but also prepare in advance. The City's radio station is AM1690.

Copies of your emergency plan should be in your emergency supply kit in case you need to leave in a hurry.

Ask all family members to discuss their concerns and feelings. Do they understand the family plan?

Take everyone to visit the "meeting spots" so that they are familiar and feel comfortable finding them on their own if necessary.

Emergencies take many forms. Categorize different types of emergencies and discuss the level of concern related to each and how that is reflected in your family plan.

Have an Out of region contact: It is a good idea to ask an out of region (think Northern California) or out of state friend or family member to be your family's emergency contact person. If an emergency or major disaster happens, local networks may be down, but a call or text message **may** get through to someone outside the affected area.

During an emergency, **your cell phone** may be the best way to communicate when the power is out if cell towers are intact and functioning. Here are some tips to remember:

- Cordless phones require electricity and won't work when the power is out. So, the next time you are at the store consider purchasing an old fashion phone that has a cord because it only requires the telephone line to be working. Place the phone in your emergency kit!
- Receive information and updates on your smartphone thru CodeRED and Nixle. You will need to sign-up for these alerts. See below on how to sign-up for these alerts.

1. **Learn ways to make your cell phone last longer** in case you are not able to charge it for a few days. Here are some tips to follow!

- Fully charge your laptop, and save that charge for your phone. You can plug your phone into your laptop's USB port to charge it.
- When the power goes out, turn off all the functions on your phone you are not using: WiFi, Bluetooth, etc. Put the phone in "Airplane mode" or turn it off entirely if you aren't using it and aren't anticipating incoming calls or texts.
- Turn down the brightness on your screen.
- Send text messages instead of making phone calls.
- Restart your phone to stop any unnecessary apps that may be running.
- Use a cell phone car charger or what about a solar charger.
- Use the USB port on a solar or hand cranked portable radio.
- Turn off all "push" notifications on your phone.

2. Other ways to use your phone

- Add Red Cross and FEMA apps to your smart phone. You can get information and assistance from RedCross.org and Ready.gov.
- Get an app and turn your smartphone into a flashlight. Caution: this app will quickly drain the battery so only use it as a last resort.
- See the resource list for other great apps.

Radio

Radios for emergency kits are essential. Receiving AM and FM radio signals for local news, weather and music could be just what is needed to keep your sanity during an emergency! There are many different sizes and kinds of radios to consider. Emergency radios can have a variety of power sources including batteries, a hand crank, high powered solar, AC adapter for using with household power and a USB port for connecting to and charging from a computer. There are radios that have all of these power sources in one inexpensive unit. A USB port, gives you the capability to charge a cell phone, MP3 player or iPod. Solar and hand crank power generation will also recharge batteries in some models. Consider other options connected to your emergency radio: powerful flashlight, reading lamp and flashing emergency lights. Find one that will meet all your needs!

Ham radio

During an emergency or major disaster, cell towers, land lines and the Internet may go down so consider another source of communication such as a ham radio. Ham radio operation depends on a radio and transceiver, a good antenna, a battery and short wave radio frequency bands. Amateur radio operators have been an important part of emergency communication for more than a century. Ham Radio classes are available on line and also offered by local groups. Now would be a great time to consider getting your license!

CodeRED and Nixle

What is CodeRED? CodeRed is a mass notification system that can be used to send emergency information and instructions to anyone who lives or works in the City of Palm Springs. CodeRED will send messages to registered phone numbers included in the emergency 911 and 411 directory listings. In addition, by registering, you may provide additional contact information to receive messages on other devices such as—texts on your cell or email.

What is Nixle? Nixle is a community information service dedicated to helping you stay connected to the City of Palm Springs and the Police Department. There are four types of messages; Alerts (many would refer to this as an emergency type alert), Advisories (less urgent need-to-know information), Community Information (day-to-day neighborhood to community-level information), Traffic (very localized traffic information). These messages are sent to via text or email depending on the option selected when you signed-up.

You need to register for both of these programs. It takes about 3 minutes. Go to www.ci.palm-springs.ca.us (City website). Once on the web site, at the top of the page click on "Police". On the Police Department page, you will see the CodeRED and Nixle buttons on the right side of the page.

What about an Emergency at home?

How many times have you heard stories about people who are home alone, slip, fall and are not able to get up? If you are lucky enough to have a phone close by to call for help but how will emergency services get to you when your house is completely locked up. Valuable time is lost when Police and Fire/EMTs have to figure out how to get into your house with the least amount of damage to property. A reliable alternative is a Knox Rapid Entry System. The forms to purchase a Knox-Box are available at the Palm Springs Fire Department-Administration, 300 North El Cielo, during business hours. Knox-Boxes are heavy duty; high security boxes that are securely attach to the outside of your house and contain your house key. Only authorized agencies like Palm Springs Police and Fire have access to the Knox-Box.

How is your emergency preparedness process going?

Consider adding items for your preparedness kit to your gift list for holidays, birthdays, etc.—for giving and receiving!

Let's get ready Palm Springs! Step by step, house by house, neighborhood by neighborhood!