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If You and Mother Nature Come Face-to-Face

There are a lot of factors that come into play when trying to minimize our risks against Mother Nature. Despite regular reminders, we seem to continually forget, that she will always have her way. Our only protection is to be prepared.

An Easy Place to Start – Should I Stay or Should I Go

It is important to develop criteria and a decision process for determining if you are going to ride out a situation or leave.

However, in order to always have that choice available to you, the resources required to do either must always be ready and available.

As an example, if an approaching hurricane unexpectedly intensifies and the safe choice is to leave:

- Do you have enough gas in your vehicle to reach a safe distance/destination?
- Have you pre-defined and assembled the most important items you must take?
- Leaving by your aircraft? How much time is there before air traffic is closed?
- Can you communicate and coordinate with family members so no one is left behind?
- What about a disabled family member?
- What about pets?

The list gets quite involved and if a family is not properly prepared to quickly and safely evacuate, for better or worse, they are forced to accept the only alternative. (Or end up unknowingly putting everyone in greater peril by leaving anyway.)

While major storm systems may give us the luxury of choice, things like earthquakes don't. In fact, with Mother Nature being who she is, quite often there really is no time to make a decision. She comes at us right where we are. Unfortunately, where we and our family members are...may not be in the same place.

Communicate a Plan

It seems that when Mother Nature comes at us hard, invariably the first things to go are the things that we rely on the most—power and communications. So, what's the game plan? In the face of major devastation what should each family member do? Should they try and get back home? Or go with whomever they're with? You see it in every disaster, family members searching for loved ones in shelters, posting signs—hoping, but not knowing.

The key is to communicate a simple plan to all family members so that once the crisis has passed, everyone is thinking and acting in a similar fashion. If you've developed a plan you can be executing versus others who are simply reacting without a plan. A key to this plan is the phone number of a relative or friend who lives somewhere not likely to be impacted by a situation affecting you. Calls initially go to that number as everyone tries to reconnect. Alternatively, some people respond to this concern by issuing everyone satellite phones which do not rely on local telecommunications infrastructure.

If you have younger children, it becomes your responsibility to find out what the emergency preparedness game plan is at your children's schools and integrate that plan into yours.

Identify Risks and Deal with Them

No matter where you live, Mother Nature likely has something real special for your area. Earthquakes. Tornadoes. Hurricanes. Wildfires. Flooding. Landslides. Know what those risks are, understand their nature and prepare your homes and vehicles accordingly. From soil composition, to terrain to adjacent vegetation, Mother Nature can quickly turn beautiful surroundings into death traps.

You can prepare by identifying the risks that your properties face and develop an action plan to bring them up to a level of preparedness and safety with which you have confidence.

If, for example, flooding is a risk, a prepared home might include barriers, well-maintained pumps and a boat on the property. If a home is on a mountainside preparation could include tree thinning, regular clearing of ground cover, and attention to exterior, non-flammable building materials.

Safe, Sound and Hungry

Assuming our home is able to sustain the worst that Mother Nature has to offer, what about our surrounding community and its infrastructure? Roads, power lines, water supplies, fuel deliveries and sources of food could all be severely disrupted. Even in the military, the weakest link has always been the vulnerability of supply lines.

Government agencies say that 72 hours is all they need to overcome such issues. They say that if you have enough food and water to last three days you can consider yourself prepared.

But we would suggest a different timetable (especially if you have residencies outside of North America). Katrina is certainly one reason why. The challenges of government agencies to respond in general, is another. The Washington Post reports that nearly \$50 billion of the country's emergency preparedness resources are overseas as a part of the fight against terror. Quite simply, 72 hours is not enough.

You should prepare for a window of vulnerability of 180 days by putting the following measures in place:

Food: Have enough food on hand to support a daily 2500 calorie diet per person. Formula: Number of meals (Unit Calorie Count = 2500) x Number of Persons x 180 Days = Total Food Required. As noted earlier, with Mother Nature's unpredictability there's no telling when these food stores may be called upon to help your family through. So, when stocking up, storage and shelf life need to be considered, which may include a strategy of regular food rotation.

Water: Water needs to be used for drinking, hygiene and sanitation. At a minimum you should calculate one gallon per person per day. Formula: Number of Persons x 1 Gallon x 180 Days = Total Gallons Water Required. This can be accomplished through storage and rotation of properly treated water (in 55 gallon drums as an example) and/or through a carefully prepared filtration and purification strategy for locally available water (i.e. swimming pool, ponds, streams etc.)

Medications: Events can quickly draw down on your typical "medicine cabinet" supplies such as pain medications, bandaging supplies, antiseptics, diarrheal medication etc. An extra supply of these things, (keeping in mind they carry expiration dates) is recommended. Perhaps more importantly are the prescription medication requirements of anyone in your household. There may be value in working with your medical provider in order to establish an ongoing sufficient supply.

Power: As noted earlier, power is usually the first thing to go. A multi-tiered strategy for back-up power through portable or permanent generators can be helpful, especially in extreme temperature zones (hot or cold) when members of the household include those who are very young or elderly. Additionally, power can be important for medical equipment being used in a home and for keeping certain medications refrigerated.

Of course, there are many other needs and issues that need to be addressed when creating and carrying out an emergency preparedness plan – especially for those with multiple residences and/or dispersed family members.

When time is the only commodity you can't afford, let CECURUS take care of everything. Utilizing 'best in class' experts and resources we'll develop a plan, implement preparedness supplies/resources and maintain it. It's almost as simple as turning on a switch. Sound interesting? Give us a call.