

Individual Preparedness

Advice Note



Individual Preparedness Guide

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Introduction

If an emergency happens in your community, it may take the emergency services some time to reach you. This is because they may need to help other more vulnerable people first. You should be prepared to take care of yourself and your family for a minimum of 72 hours. By looking after yourself and your household, you'll also be helping emergency services focus their limited resources on the people who are most in need.

Using this guide, you can learn how quick and easy it is to become better prepared to face a range of emergencies – from creating your own emergency plan, to building a 72-hour emergency kit. These basic steps will help you take care of yourself and your loved ones during an emergency.

Know the Risks

Aberdeenshire is a safe and stable place to live, where we expect infrastructure to function as intended. Still, life here depends on power, water supply and the internet, which in turn makes us vulnerable. Across Aberdeenshire, we may face hazards, such as blizzards, storms and gales, flooding or wildfires. In addition to natural disasters, there are other types of risks, such as industrial or transportation accidents, acts of sabotage or terrorism.

Understanding the risks we face will help you to better prepare should the worst happen. Details of local risks and some of the steps you can take can be found in the Community Risk Register [Community Risk Register](#)

Talk About the Impacts

While it is important to stay informed on the risks to your community, the consequences of various emergencies can be similar in impact. Any emergency can result in society not functioning in the way we are used to. In just a short time, your everyday life can become problematic:

1. The heating stops working.
2. It becomes difficult to prepare and store food.
3. The shops may run out of food and other goods.
4. There is no water coming from the taps or the toilet.
5. It is not possible to fill up your car.
6. Payment cards and cash machines are not working.
7. Mobile networks and the internet are not working.

8. Public transport and other means of transport are at a standstill.
9. It becomes difficult to obtain medicines and medical equipment.

Make a Plan

Having a basic plan in place will keep you safer, let you connect with your loved ones faster and protect some of your most important assets. You may wish to use the Home Emergency Plan Template or create one yourself. By engaging everyone in the household with planning for an emergency you will be more prepared and confident to handle a crisis if it occurs.

Work Out What Supplies You Need

Ideally, you should be self-sufficient for 72 hours. However, don't forget neighbours can help each other out by sharing resources, such as gas for camping stoves, food supplies etc. A checklist of suggested supplies can be found in the Home Emergency Plan Template, however you may wish to consider the following:

Water

During emergencies all water supplies, but especially private water supplies can become contaminated or disrupted during prolonged events. It is therefore advisable to store enough water for at least 72 hours. The NHS recommends you need 2 litres per person per day for drinking and hygiene purposes. Even if you don't have much space, the more water you can store – the better. If you have received advanced notice of a predicted weather event, you may wish to fill a water container ahead of time.

Food

You should have enough food that won't spoil, such as canned food, energy bars and dried foods to last 72 hours for the entire household.

According to the Food Standards Agency during a power cut:

- A refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if the door is kept closed.
- A full freezer will keep temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if half-full).

After these times food may be unsafe to consume and therefore it is important to ensure you have alternative food for your family. It is recommended you consume first chilled, then frozen then cupboard food to maximum your supplies and reduce waste.

It is important to consider food preparation safety during an emergency to prevent you and your family from becoming ill. Take care to ensure, when using portable cooking equipment or BBQs, meat is cooked thoroughly. Similarly, any food preparation surfaces that have been impacted by flood water should be thoroughly cleaned before use. For more information visit [Food safety after a flood](#).

Please remember camping stoves, portable barbeques, lit charcoal and generators are designed for outdoor use only and should not be used in an enclosed space, such as indoors, due to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. For more information on staying safe during a power cut please see the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services [Heating and Gas - Home Fire Safety \(firescotland.gov.uk\)](#).

Use any stored food or water before its expiry date and replace.

Medicine

Most households will keep basic over the counter medication such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. It is useful to ensure you have a ready supply of suitable painkillers for your family, and know where these are kept.

If you rely on additional medication or medical aid, you should talk to your doctor or pharmacy about the possibility of having a reserve, but remember to check the shelf life of the medication, and use before the expiry date and replace. You should also keep a copy of your prescription, as medical records may be difficult to access in a disaster.

It is also useful for each household to have a basic first aid supply, including everyday items such as plasters and antiseptic cream. The NHS have provided a list of suggested items that you may wish to consider: [What should I keep in my first aid kit? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Lights

Think about lighting and heating your home during a power cut. Torches and spare batteries are the easiest solution. A head torch can be useful to allow you to keep your hands free. Take care if using candles indoors to ensure this is done safely and are extinguished before going to sleep.

Keeping Warm

Items you may already have such as blankets, duvets, warm clothing and sleeping bags can help keep you warm. In cold weather gather together in one room, and if you can hang blankets over the windows and cover the floor with rugs.

Emergency Grab Bag

Your household should assemble and maintain an emergency grab bag, in case you are instructed to evacuate, or if you feel that it is no longer safe to remain at home. It's also a good idea to have some form of a kit in case of an emergency. Items could include:

- Birth and marriage certificates (copies)
- Drivers' licences and passports (copies)
- Insurance policies (copies)
- Family photos (copies)
- Water and food
- Essential medication and copies of any prescriptions

Make Your Home Safer

Before you can consider what would make your home safer it is a good idea to ensure you know your home well. Find your gas main valve (if you have gas), mains power switch, mains water valve, and learn how to turn them off. Mark them clearly so you can find them quickly and tell others in your household what to do. Damaged utilities (gas, electric and water) can be dangerous and prevent you from staying in your home.

You should also check your insurance to ensure you have adequate coverage for the likely risks within your area.

In the event of an extreme weather warning being issued such as a storm, it is a good idea to ensure that your home is as secure as possible. Put away garden furniture and other loose items, and secure larger items that could be moved in high winds e.g. trampolines.

If safe to do so inspect your roof for any loose slates or tiles or unstable chimneys. Remove or repair any that could be blown off.

During a storm remember to stay inside as much as possible, and only drive if absolutely necessary. For more information please visit: [Stay safe in a storm - Met Office](#)

The responsibility for the protection of a property from flooding lies with the homeowner. If your home is routinely at risk of flooding, there are products on the market that can help reduce the risks of damage. The Scottish Flood Forum have created a guide that explains the types of products available for households: [SFF-Flood-Protection-Guide-Web-min.pdf \(scottishfloodforum.org\)](#)

Aberdeenshire Council also retains a stock of products available to purchase at cost price. For more information visit: [Flood protection products - Aberdeenshire Council](#)

Sandbags can be used as a last resort in an emergency, however these are not as effective as other property level protection products available, and it is not recommended that you rely on these to prevent flooding. Aberdeenshire Council will make every attempt to ensure sandbags are available from the Main Roads Dept and through arrangements with Community Councils to use local storage distribution points. Please contact the Community Council for your area [Community council contacts - Aberdeenshire Council](#) for further information.

Stay Informed

During an emergency it can sometimes be difficult to know exactly what is going on, especially when traditional communication channels are affected. While social media can be a useful source for local updates be wary of misleading or false information. Ask yourself: who has shared this information? Is it a trustworthy source? Is it fact or opinion? Is it up to date and does it reflect the current situation? And always remember do not add to the confusion by spreading rumours or unconfirmed information.

You can help keep yourself informed by signing up for various reliable notifications.

Weather

Sign up to receive the latest [UK weather warnings](#) in your area directly from the Met Office. Or download their [App](#) for the latest information where you are. To help get the most out of their advice, you may wish to [learn more about their warning system](#) e.g. what the colour of each type of warning means.

Traffic

If you're travelling by road, Traffic Scotland [host an interactive map](#) which provides information on all incidents, roadworks, travel warnings and more on Scotland's major roads. You can also check [Live traffic cameras](#) across the country to monitor road conditions before you set off.

Flooding

If you live in an area at risk of flooding, you can sign up for free flood messages from SEPA's Floodline Service. Call 0345 988 1188 or visit the [Flooding Sign Up – SEPA Floodline](#)

Utilities

All utility companies have arrangements in place to support individuals and families when disruption occurs. Those who consider themselves vulnerable, including those with specific medical conditions (both long-term and temporary), disabilities, those over 65 and families with young children, can register as 'Priority Services Customers' with SSEN, Scottish Water and SGN. You can register for all three PSR Schemes at one place 'Psrscotland.com'. This will ensure you are afforded additional support based on your circumstances during any disruption in service.

Communication

Depending on the severity of the emergency information bulletins may be available via local radio stations. During widespread power cuts only analogue FM radios would work, with BBC Radio 2 and 4 broadcasting updates.

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| Radio 2 | |
| South East Aberdeenshire | 89.4 |
| Aberdeenshire | 88.7 |
| Dee Valley, Aberdeenshire | 90.1 |
| Moray | 88.2 |
| Radio 4 | |
| South East Aberdeenshire | 95.9 |
| Aberdeenshire | 95.3 |
| Dee Valley, Aberdeenshire | 104.5 |
| Moray | 94.8 |
| Buchan Radio | |
| Peterhead | 107.9 |
| Deveron FM | |
| Turriff & Aberchirder | 105.3 |
| Portsoy & Cornhill | 105.9 |
| Banff | 107.4 |
| Mearns FM | |
| Portlethen Area | 105.1 |
| Stonehaven Area | 105.7 |

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Inverbervie | 106.2 |
| Laurencekirk | 107.3 |
| Northsound One | |
| East Aberdeenshire | 96.9 |
| Aberdeen Area | 97.6 |
| Peterhead Area | 103.0 |
| Original 106 | |
| Aberdeen | 106.3 |
| Peterhead Area | 106.3 |
| East Aberdeenshire | 106.8 |
| SHMU FM | |
| Aberdeen | 99.8 |
| Waves Radio | |
| North East Aberdeenshire | 101.2 |

Emergency Alerts

During an emergency the UK Government may use the emergency text alert system, which will send an alert to your mobile phone or tablet. This will be used to warn you if there is a danger to life nearby for example during flooding, fires or other extreme weather. For more information on the emergency alerts please see [About Emergency Alerts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)