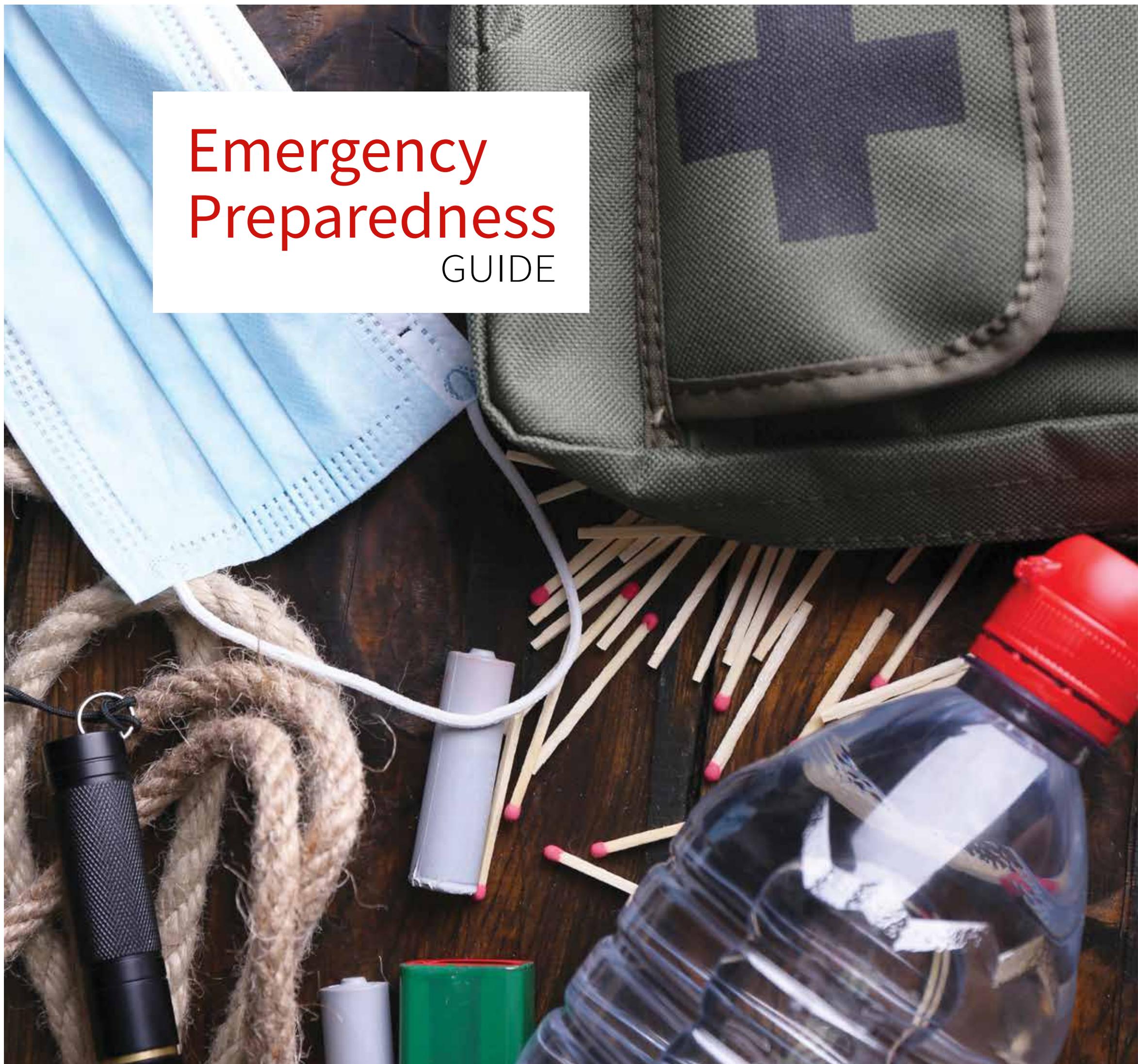


# Emergency Preparedness

## GUIDE



# Severe Weather Warnings

You're likely familiar with the scrolling words of warning during television programming. Do you know how officials deem that storm conditions are worthy of seeking shelter?

There are many factors that go into these communications plans by major federal and local agencies.

## THE STORM PREDICTION CENTER

The SPC is an important part of the National Weather Service and the National Centers for Environmental Prediction.

They are the officials in charge of providing timely and accurate forecasts by monitoring the threat of severe thunderstorms and tornadoes over the United States.

In addition to warm-weather emergencies, the SPC also reports hazardous winter weather and fire-weather events. The National Weather Service uses information to issue common severe-weather watches and warnings.

Here is how the two differ.

**Watch:** This is an alert to be prepared for, as a threat of a serious weather event.

Generally, a watch will cover large areas of land, counties and sometimes even states. Take precautions and be ready to initiate your emergency plan.

**Warning:** When your community is under a severe-weather warning, it's time to act. Find a strong



The first step to being prepared for a weather emergency is understanding the methods professionals use to warn you.

structure to wait out the storm, ideally in a basement or storm shelter.

## WHEN IS WEATHER CONSIDERED SEVERE?

The National Weather Service defines a severe thunderstorm as any storm that produces one or more of the following elements:

- A tornado;
- Damaging winds or speeds of 58 miles per hour or

greater; or

- Hail with a one-inch diameter or larger.

The risks of a significant severe thunderstorm are associated with a storm that produces one or more of the following elements:

- A tornado that produces EF2 or greater damage;
- Wind speeds exceeding 74 miles per hour; or
- Hail featuring a two-inch or larger diameter.

## STORM RISK COLOR CODE

Have you questioned what the different colors swirling around your local weather's radar mean? They are carefully color coded and show the type of risks associated with an incoming storm, per the SPC.

- **Thunderstorms (light green):** No severe thunderstorms expected.
- **Marginal (dark green):**

Possibility of isolated-severe thunderstorms.

- **Slight (yellow):** Scattered severe storms are possible.

- **Enhanced (orange):** Strong possibility of severe storms.

- **Moderate (red):** Widespread severe storms are likely.

- **High (magenta):** The most serious of risks, widespread severe storms are likely.

# Stocking Food and Water

One part of effective emergency preparation is getting the whole family involved in an escape plan.

Building a quality plan involves designating a safe meeting spot and communicating with one another after an event. Another essential aspect is stocking your safe place with plenty of food and water to wait out the recovery period.

Depending on the size of the emergency, it's possible that your community will be without power or supplies. Make sure your family has plenty to eat and drink until help arrives. It can make the difference between life and death after a disaster strikes.

## STOCK UP THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Depending on the type of emergency, there may not be ample preparation time when a threat is made relevant.

Even if you do have time to react to slow-moving weather conditions, the shelves of your local grocery stores might be bare as your neighbors prepare for the incoming storm.

It is in your best interest to stock your own shelves before the threat of an emergency is even present.

According to the American Red Cross, your safe place should have enough food and water to last each member of your family for at least three days.

## FOOD STORAGE TIPS

Your emergency food supply will require your attention throughout the year, as you discard expired items to replace them with fresh alternatives.

Don't forget these tips from the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention when you are making your supply list.

- Choose foods that have a long storage life and require little or no cooking.
  - Needs of children, pets and family members requiring special needs should all be met.
  - Avoid foods that make you drink more water, like salty or spicy items.
- When storing your food, make sure

it is protected from rodents or bugs and away from heat sources, as this can cause premature expiration.

## WATER-STORAGE TIPS

While you should take note of the suggestion to keep at least one gallon of water per day on hand, you may choose to increase the number in warmer climates where hydration is

more important.

Keep in mind, you'll require water for drinking and sanitation purposes, so plan accordingly.

Don't forget to monitor the expiration dates stamped on store-bought water bottles. According to the CDC, unopened commercially bottled water is the safest and most reliable emergency water supply.



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# Emergencies at Home

Staying ahead of impending emergencies is your best bet in remaining safe and comfortable during recovery efforts. For those who plan to seek shelter in their home, it is imperative to have substantial supplies and knowledge of your surroundings.

To create the best emergency plan for your home, it is important to consider the types of disasters and weather events common to your area.

Get everyone in the household involved when practicing escape routes for severe weather, fires and other unexpected disasters.

When developing your plan, make sure you have a safe meeting spot for everyone in your household. Keep in mind that those with special needs or disabilities might have difficulty reaching some levels of your home, so prepare an alternate route to your safe space during preparation.

## **BUILD YOUR READY KIT**

A safe room should be stocked with the necessities relied on during your daily life. In addition to plenty of food and water for everyone in the

home, you also should stock these items, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- Store at least a three-day supply of the necessary medicines your family members rely on.
- Don't forget your first-aid kit, emergency blanket and a whistle to alert the public, in case you become trapped.
- You will want a radio to stay updated with the situa-

tion and recovery efforts. Other electronics should include a flashlight, extra batteries and an extra cell-phone charger.

- If you have pets, don't forget to include them in your ready kit. They also should have enough food and water in the room they will stay in.

## **LOCATE SHUT-OFF VALVES**

There may come a time

when utilities to your home must be shut off because of an emergency. You are likely familiar with the location of your main breaker used to cut electricity. Do you know where the main shut-off valves are for natural gas and water lines?

If you smell gas around the perimeter of your home or suspect a leak from inside the home, it is imperative to shut your gas valve as soon as it is safe to do so. You can usually

find it on the gas meter outside. If you are unsure how to find it, contact your provider so they can physically show you.

Busted water pipes can lead to a flooded home if the flow is not cut off. Main shut-off valves for these can vary from home to home. It is worth hiring a plumber to inspect the integrity of your pipes and show you how to stop incoming water during an emergency.



# Plan Before Camping

Whether you are an active camper or someone just starting out, emergency preparedness is essential when spending time on the trails.

Outdoor living invites Americans to enjoy fresh air and exercise while camping. The risks involved with staying off the beaten path, however, should be taken seriously.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, common camping hazards include interactions with wild animals, getting lost or suffering physical injury. Learn what you can do to prepare and prevent these emergencies from occurring.

## WHAT TO PACK

Recommended camping gear varies due to the season or climates of the locations you will be visiting. It's crucial to be prepared with heavy clothing and warm blankets when staying outdoors during frigid temperatures and light, breathable clothing when the sun is blazing.

According to the United States Forest Service, make sure to pack these other emergency supplies in your



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backpack.

- **First aid kit:** This kit could prove to lifesaving if a

member of your group suffers a cut or has an allergic reaction to something in nature,

such as a bee sting. Be sure to pack plenty of antiseptics to treat small wounds, bug

spray, snake-bite kit and sunscreen.

- **Emergency supplies:** Bring along a flashlight with extra batteries, knives, a whistle, plenty of food, water and personal shelter.

When your pack is equipped with these crucial supplies, you can enjoy your outdoor experience with peace of mind that you are prepared if disaster strikes.

## PLAN YOUR TRIP

Spontaneously camping at a site without research can have disastrous results. Before heading on an excursion, make sure everyone is familiar with the trails and layout of the site. This is easily achieved by reviewing an overhead map or contacting the park officials.

The US Forest Service also recommends you review local weather conditions before planning a camping trip.

If storms producing rain or lightning are possible, you should consider rescheduling your trip.

It's important to be indoors when these dangerous elements are present.

Another important aspect to proper planning is to inform a loved one of your intended path, when you're leaving and when to expect you back. Follow your intended path closely.

If a disaster happens and you become stranded, they can point professionals to your general location for help.

# Disasters Away From Home

Ideally, you will find yourself facing a natural disaster in a familiar space where you have already developed a solid emergency plan. Unfortunately, it does not always work out that way.

Take the time and get to know your neighborhood and the escape routes of buildings you frequent.

One way to avoid being caught away from home during a disaster is to stay informed of potential warnings. Keep an eye on severe weather alerts and other threats made prevalent by local officials.

Consider keeping a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio on hand. It will warn you of serious events that are associated with your area and provide information on recovery efforts.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

The Department of Homeland Security suggests considering many different factors while developing your emergency plans around your neighborhood. Make sure your entire family is involved when discussing the risks of being away from your safe place.

Different-sized buildings



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will likely enforce the emergency plan that works best for its layout. This is because single- and multi-story buildings will have different alarm systems, shelter and evacuation routes.

Urban and rural locations might have different plans for evacuation if large areas are affected.

Buildings not attached to permanent foundations, including mobile homes, should never be used for shel-

ter during a storm producing high winds.

## ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO LEARN THEIR SCHOOL'S PLANS

Discussing disasters with young children can be a sensitive subject. While it can be hard to have the conversation, it is crucial they are prepared and follow the plans set in place by their local school.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, all

schools should have an organized emergency plan in place to reduce risks or prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from a crisis.

Schedule a meeting with school officials to learn their safety plans and encourage your child to practice with you at home.

## SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

When a disaster strikes while you are in the workplace,

does your employer have a plan in place to keep everyone safe?

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration requires businesses to provide emergency escape procedures, a preferred method for reporting fires and other emergencies and an evacuation policy and procedure.

It's important to know the details of the plan in case you are required to act during a crisis.

# Prepare for a Tsunami

**W**hile a tsunami is most likely to occur near territories with Pacific and Caribbean coastlines, they can strike any United States coast, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

If you reside in a state that could potentially be impacted, it is imperative to know how to prepare for these powerful phenomena.

According to the United States Geological Survey, a tsunami is an ocean wave triggered by a large earthquake, occurring near or under the ocean, volcanic eruptions or even submarine landslides.

Different from normal waves, a tsunami features multiple waves that reach shore with powerful currents.

They can travel farther inland, reaching coastal communities within minutes. This event typically lasts for several hours to days.

## **BASIC PREPARATIONS**

Since tsunamis occur without much warning, emergency preparedness is crucial to remain safe.

One common warning sign is experiencing an earthquake. Make sure to listen to your local weather officials after an event so you can execute your tsunami emergency plan effectively.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration states a tsunami formed in Japan can take more than 10 hours to arrive on the American coast, where one beginning in Alaska will only take three to six hours to crash into Washington state.

Preparation should include building an emergency kit with necessities to last at least three days and devel-

oping a family communication plan.

Keep in mind that your children's school may require an evacuation. You should know the quickest routes to retrieve them and have a successor in line to pick them up if you get stuck in traffic congestion.

The American Red Cross deems the safest place during a tsunami is somewhere 100 feet above sea level or at least 2 miles away. Determine where you will go before the threat turns into reality.

## **LISTEN TO LOCAL OFFICIALS**

This is an event that may require a mandatory evacuation. As soon as orders are given, you should act. Not only will it ensure you get to safety in ample time, you may also avoid heavy traffic when you make your escape.

Don't forget to bring your pets and supplies to last several days. Never return home until local officials deem it safe to do so.

# Be Ready for a Fire at Home

**A**cross the U.S., approximately 1,342,000 fires were reported in 2016, according to National Fire Protection Agency data.

Home structure fires topped the list as the types causing the most fatalities, accounting for 81 percent of civilian fire deaths.

It's unsafe for you and your family to live in a home without a proper emergency fire plan. Learn from the American Red Cross and its nationwide campaign to reduce the number of deaths and injuries from home fires by as much as 25 percent.

## COMMON CAUSES OF HOME FIRES

According to the NFPA, the leading cause of injuries during home fires in 2016 was cooking equipment. It is important you never leave an area until all appliances are turned off.

More than half of these injuries occurred when residents attempted to thwart off the fire themselves. If you notice smoke or flames, call emergency services.

Smoking remains the leading factor of home-fire deaths. It has held the top spot for decades.

The third highest cause of home-structure fires was produced by heating equipment.



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It was involved in one of every five home fire deaths. The main culprits are portable and fixed space heaters.

## CREATING YOUR HOME-FIRST ESCAPE PLAN

Map out your home's floor plans and decide which routes will give your family the best chance of escaping.

These tips from the American Red Cross will help you develop a safe strategy:

- Everyone in your household should know two ways to escape from each room in the home;

- Decide on a meeting spot once you get outdoors; and
- Practice the suggested reaction if clothing catches fire: Stop, drop and roll.

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Now that your escape plan is on paper, regular practice is

the best way to ensure everyone is ready to act during an emergency. When a fire starts, it may only leave you with two minutes to escape safely.

Make sure you time drills and continue executing plans until everyone is comfortable and quick enough.

## CHECKED YOUR SMOKE DETECTORS

In addition to checking your smoke detector's batter-

ies every once a month, the NFPA recommends installing alarms in each bedroom, outside sleeping areas and on every level of the home.

For extra safety, you can choose detectors that are interconnected. When one goes off, the entire system is alerted.

This design helps the entire house to be warned even if the emergency is in a different section of the home.