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Star  Advertiser



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

Disaster can strike when you least expect it.
This guide could help save your family.



DURACELL



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RUE?

Hurricane season is already here and calamity may be just around the corner. The question is:

ARE YOU READY?

We all know that living in paradise has its perks — year-round sunshine, cool trade winds, beautiful beaches and epic waves, to name a few.

But hanging loose in Hawaii can lull many of us into a false sense of security. What happens, for example, when sunshine fades to torrential downpour and flash floods, trade winds are replaced by hurricane gusts, and beaches turn into final destinations for tsunamis?

In many ways, the earthquake and tsunami that rocked Japan earlier this year were just the latest natural disaster reminders that all of us, no matter where we live, are at the mercy of a capricious Mother Nature. The Islands' history proves it. Hurricanes Iwa and Iniki left a path of destruction in their wake after passing through in 1982 and 1992, respectively, while in 1946, an earthquake in the Aleutian Islands off Alaska generated large tsunami waves that eventually smashed into unsuspecting Hilo, leaving 159 of its residents dead. And whether it was last fall's prolonged heavy rains that saturated communities throughout the island chain or 2006's flurry of showers that led to the

Kaloko Dam break on Kauai, where seven people lost their lives, flash floods have proven to be not only common in paradise, but deadly as well.

All of which underscores the point: Residents should be ready for any natural disaster — whether it be hurricane, tsunami, flooding, earthquake or volcanic eruption — by learning how to keep themselves, their families, their homes and their businesses safe.

Or as Harry Kim, former Civil Defense director for the Big Island, says, "It is your responsibility to find out what the hazards and risks are to you, and to prepare and respond accordingly."

This guide is one such way you can begin preparing yourself and your loved ones. Brought to you by the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, the guide covers easy and practical tips to developing an emergency plan, including assembling food, water and basic living supplies for you, the family and your pets.

Here are a few tips from the **Red Cross** to get you started:

PLAN AHEAD

A first step is to make a plan ahead of time so that you and your family can respond to an emergency in a calm way. Set up an evacuation plan and make sure that you allow for family members who will be at work, at school and elsewhere. Practice going over this plan with the entire family.

START A SURVIVAL KIT

Get a sturdy, easy-to-carry tote bag to



store your emergency supplies that will last from five to seven days. Keep in mind any babies, seniors or others with special needs in your household. It is a good idea to keep a mini-kit in your automobile or van. Don't forget to check your supplies every six months, in case food items have expired.

GET INFORMED

Learn about first aid and other skills, such as CPR. Classes are available from the Red Cross. A wide range of subjects is covered, for free, with training offered online and in the classroom.

You can register online, or you can contact your local Red Cross office:

Oahu: (808) 739-8147

Hawaii County: (808) 935-8305
ext. 174

Maui County: (808) 244-0051 ext. 159

Kauai: (808) 245-4919 ext. 161

Above all, make sure you begin emergency preparations today. After all, it's never a question of if, but when the next big disaster will strike.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

By Rochelle Smolinski/Special Report for Disaster Preparedness Guide

It's 8 at night, the warning siren blares, and people scramble for their cars to load up on gas, water and provisions before hunkering down. And this being an island chain of resources limited by boat shipments, there is a real chance someone will not get their fair share of gasoline, bottled water, ice, canned food or toilet paper.

Natural disasters are infamous for interrupting our home luxuries, so a little preparedness before disaster strikes will go a long way. Emergency food preparedness can take as little as outlining a list, reading space and shopping.

Emergency food supply options range from a canned stock, freeze-dried items, or Meals Ready-to-Eat, with the best food collections being a combination of the three. Because of



Hawaii's isolation, the American Red Cross Hawaii State chapter recommends families have prepared emergency stores lasting between five and seven days rather than 72 hours.

The objective of emergency food stores is its ability to store well and keep you feeling full, but because of Hawaii's temperate climate, humidity, and storage space limitations — storing and rotating one year's worth of food may be impractical. Two weeks to one month of food stores should suffice for short-term disaster relief.

Canned goods have a number of advantages: They are safely sealed, contain vital nutrients and are convenient and diverse. Plan to stock up an assortment of canned fruits, vegetables, beans and meats. You may also want to have a couple of 10-pound bags of flour or rice, pasta or noodle packages, a few pounds of sugar, and some kind of hibachi or camping stove to cook on — but just be sure to have an adequate supply of respective fuel sources.

Peanut butter, energy bars, dehydrated fruits and powdered milk also store well and make great snacks.

Aside from canned goods, Meals Ready-to-Eat (MRE) are a great resource to stock food stores. MRE's are relatively compact, portable, come individually prepackaged with a variety of foodstuffs and cost around \$7.50 apiece. MRE packages usually contain an entree, dessert, mix drink, and condiment pack

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WHEN FOOD TURNS DANGEROUS

By Carolyn Ayon Lee/Special Report for Disaster Preparedness Guide

Taken from HECO "Handbook for Emergency Preparedness," which adapted material from "Food Safety During and After a Power Outage," from the state of Hawaii Department of Health. Also based on personal knowledge of the writer, who holds a national certification in food safety for food managers, known as ServSafe certification.

Q. Is food in the fridge safe during a power outage?

A. The food should be safe, as long as the power is off for no more than four hours. If you have any doubts, throw the items out! You cannot detect bacteria that cause food poisoning by sight, smell or taste. Try not to open the refrigerator door, to keep the contents as cool as possible. Each time you open the door, you are letting in warm air, which cools down the inside of the fridge. Throw out anything that may have been contaminated by the juice from dripping raw meat. Some food will have to be discarded if the outage lasts for more than two hours. This pertains to especially perishable food items such as protein-rich products like meat, poultry, fish and eggs.

Q. What can probably be kept unrefrigerated, in a cool place, for a few days?

A. • Fresh, uncut fruits and vegetables. Check them to make sure they remain firm. Toss if they become slimy.
• Dried fruit • Fruit juices • Opened jars of jam, jelly, ketchup, mustard, pickles, relish, barbecue sauce.

Q. How long will frozen foods stay frozen in the freezer?

A. It depends. If your freezer is jam-packed with food, they might stay frozen for one to three days. If you have a half-full freezer, maybe one day. The more food you have in your freezer, they can more easily "share" their frozenness to keep one another frozen. Another factor is having a well-insulated freezer, which will keep the food frozen longer.

Q. How about using dry ice to keep food frozen?

A. Care must be taken if you are using dry ice, which can be purchased. Once power to your freezer returns, be sure to remove the dry ice. Dry ice is frozen carbon dioxide. It has an unusual property. It doesn't have a liquid state. When it melts — say, when you open the freezer door — the dry ice changes into a gas. So stand back from the refrigerator when you open the door of a freezer that has dry ice because you need to allow these carbon-dioxide fumes to vent. Fifty pounds of dry ice can keep an 18-cubic-foot freezer frozen for two days. Do not touch dry ice with your bare hands.

Q. What if a frozen-food item has thawed out completely, but it still feels cold?

A. Refreezing food that has thawed can be done, in some cases, but the food quality will decline. You should cook and consume the food item as soon as possible. If you cannot detect any ice crystals, do not refreeze vegetables and seafood. Do not refreeze ice cream and frozen dinners.

Q. What if the food smells and looks safe to eat?

A. Do not try to test it further by tasting it. Food spoiled by food-poisoning bacteria cannot be detected by sight, smell, touch or taste. It is far better to play it safe and discard questionable food items, than to run the risk of food poisoning. In a disaster, food poisoning is definitely something you don't want to get, because your access to bathrooms and medical attention may be limited.

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totaling around 1,350 calories a package, so two MRE packages per person, per day easily exceeds a 2,000 calorie diet. Meals can be eaten cold or hot, provided the MRE includes a water-activated chemical heating element.

One gallon of drinking water per person, per day is the general rule of thumb on a daily basis; never mind miscellaneous water use during a crisis. One five-gallon water storage unit per person and a separate water storage unit

for cooking, bathing or brushing teeth should last five days. Water purification drops or tablets and filters are other viable options for prepping emergency drinking water. According to www.practicalsurvivor.com, urban water collection sometimes contains chemicals that render otherwise potable drinking water useless. The site recommends boiling and distilling water to rid it of contaminants. When in doubt, half a teaspoon of chlorine bleach will purify five gallons of clear water.

No single storage plan fits all, but the beauty of food storage is that most all our sustenance comes prepackaged. Invest in yourself. A little bit of preparation before that warning siren

blares may save time, energy and lives.

For further information on emergency preparedness, please visit www.hawaiiredcross.org/index.html or your local Yellow Pages for a brief disaster preparedness guide.



Photo courtesy of Hammel Foods



SAFETY ALERT: HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

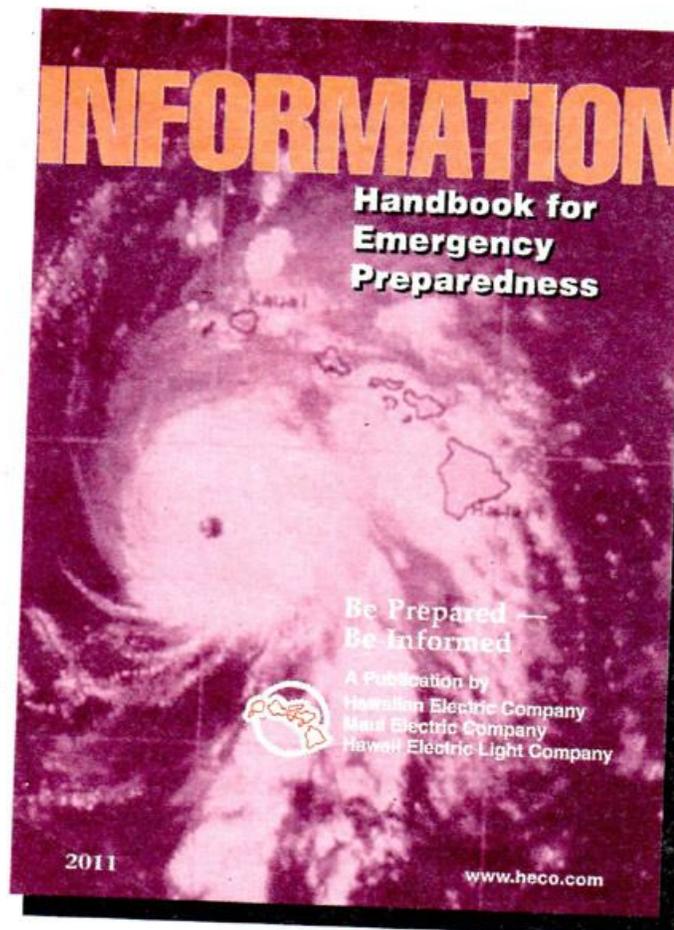
Be Prepared this Hurricane Season

Hurricane season runs from June through November, but the best time to prepare for an emergency is before it happens.

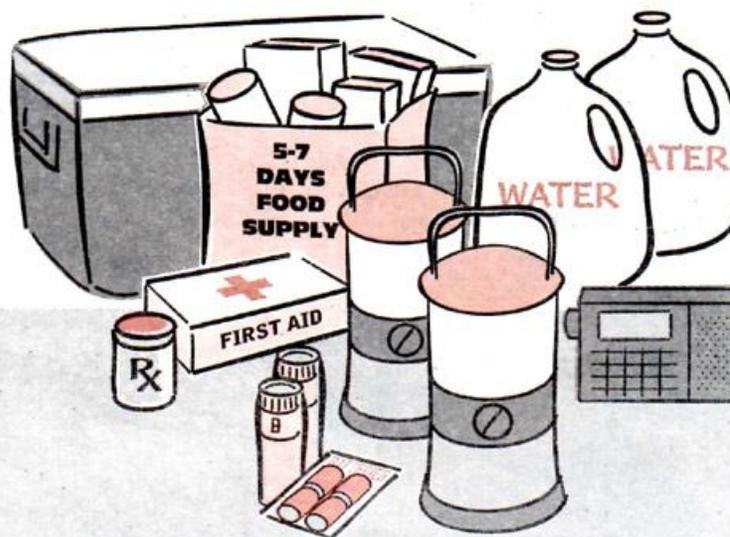
At Hawaiian Electric, we care about our customers' safety. To be prepared, remember to:

- Check and restock your emergency supplies. A home survival kit and emergency food and water supply for 5 to 7 days are essential during disasters or extended power outages so you will be safe and comfortable if you and your family are confined to your home.
- Review evacuation plans ahead of time. Call your local emergency management agency for information on special assistance programs and/or evacuation assistance.
- Check back-up facilities for any electric-powered life sustaining equipment in advance. In the event that you need to evacuate, remember to take your medical equipment with you.
- If you or someone in your care has a condition which requires continuous or special medication or if your medications require refrigeration, contact your doctor beforehand to find out how to deal with emergencies and power outages.
- If there is advance warning about a storm, turn off any cooking appliances and remove any pots and pans from burners. Unplug any unnecessary electrical equipment and sensitive electronics.
- Stay away from downed utility lines. Assume they are energized and dangerous. If you see someone injured after touching a downed power line, call 911 for help; don't try to rescue them as you could become a victim yourself. Report downed power lines by calling Hawaiian Electric at 548-7961.

For more emergency preparedness tips, visit www.heco.com.



Download our free handbook for emergency preparedness at www.heco.com



A public safety message from

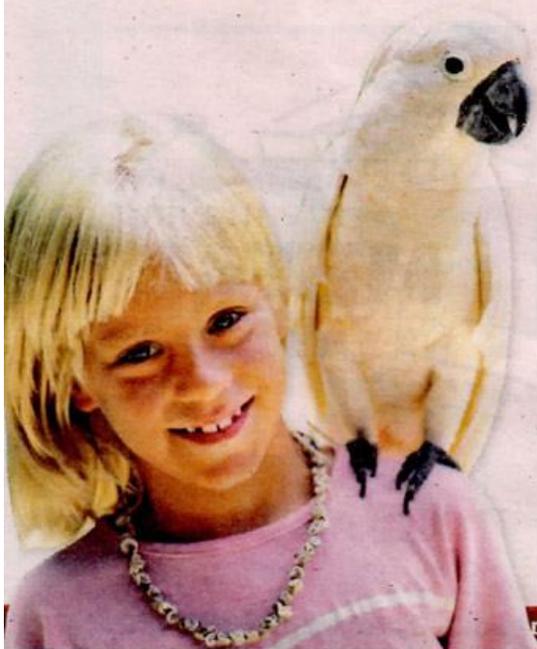
Hawaiian Electric Company

EVEN BUDDY AND FLUFFY NEED A PLAN

By Christina O'Connor/
Special Report for Disaster Preparedness Guide



In post-disaster photographs, it's fairly common to see a stray dog or cat wandering alone amid the aftermath. During an emergency situation, it may be easy to lose track of pets. But FEMA has some tips to help ensure that furry and feathered friends are not left behind.



DISASTER KITS

Since pets are part of the family, the first step is to involve pets in your family's disaster preparedness plan. Just like people have disaster kits, animals need one, too. Make Fluffy her own, separate kit stocked with at least three days' worth of food in airtight, waterproof containers, three days' worth of water, and pet medicine. Also include a first aid kit specifically for an animal that has cotton bandage rolls, bandage tape and scissors, antibiotic ointment, flea and tick prevention, latex gloves, isopropyl alcohol and saline solution. Consult with your veterinarian for more personalized suggestions for your pet.

The kit should contain important documents for your pet such as registration information and vaccination and medical records. A photo of you and your pet together might also be useful to document ownership. Also add a backup leash, collar and ID tag inside the kit. And keep a pet carrier on hand.

Finally, the stress of an emergency situation can make pets anxious. Help make them as comfortable as possible by incorporating sanitation supplies in the kit. These should include newspaper, paper towels and trash bags. Household chlorine bleach — but not bleach that is scented, color safe, or contains added cleaner — can be used to disinfectant wounds or to purify water. Favorite items also can help calm an animal's nerves, so having their favorite toys, treats and bedding in the kit is important.

EVACUATION PLAN

Next, make sure that pets are discussed in the family's emergency evacuation plan. Talk about what you will do with your pets if you have to evacuate. At many public shelters, pets are not allowed, so plan alternate lodging for them at animal shelters. Contact your nearest kennels, hospitals and hotels to find out if these facilities allow pets before an emergency strikes. It's a good idea to compile a list of contact information of nearby animal services ahead of time.

Coordinating lodging and care plans for your pets with neighbors, friends or relatives is also an alternative.

JUST IN CASE

Even with these precautions, it's best to prepare for the worst — if you can't evacuate with your pet. That's one reason why animals should wear their collars with an ID tag at all times. Another way to keep track of your pet is with microchipping, a permanent implant that registers your pet in a recovery database. This technology can help shelters identify your animal to increase the chance of reuniting you with your pets if they are lost.

For more information on disaster preparedness for pets, visit fema.gov or talk with your veterinarian.



Letter From Harry Kim

Aloha Friends,

I am so very glad that the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* is presenting to its statewide readers this special 16-page section on disaster preparedness.

Whenever I read about natural disasters that occur and of personal tragedies, some common denominators always seem to be there. Yes, many losses could not have been prevented, but often, devastating financial and precious property losses did not have to be.

I well remember the helplessness when victims' pain of losses were so magnified when they found out that home or business losses caused by water (floods, high surf, tsunamis) were not covered by homeowners insurance. You will not get a penny! Only federal flood insurance can help you. FEMA makes it so easy and reasonable. All you have to do is call your insurance agent as they are obligated to help you with the federal flood insurance program.

All records of Hawaii or the Mainland will show that the vast majority of flood victims do not have federal flood insurance. The last tsunami that impacted Hawaii earlier this year clearly demonstrated this. I believe records will show that less than 10 percent of tsunami victims on Hawaii Island had flood insurance.

The federal insurance programs extend also to farmers and ranchers. Perhaps this is the best insurance protection on production losses available anywhere in the world. Thankfully, some ranchers who have suffered heavily because of the long drought are having some losses covered by the USDA Farm Service Agency insurance program. I knew too many hard-working farmers and ranchers whose losses need not have occurred.

I urge these businesspeople to just call the Farm Service Agency and inquire about the available insurance policies. I am absolutely sure they will be very surprised at the affordability, and wonder why they did not get it before.

Most of all, I want to let people of this state know that no Hawaii insurance policies protect anyone from earthquake damages.

At this time, the only protection against quake damages is taking your own preventive measures. Perhaps this special section can help someone be aware and prevent the loss of precious heirlooms.

So many times in the past after devastating losses, I have heard people say:

"I wish I had ..."

"I wish I knew ..."

"I didn't think it would happen ..."

Maybe with the newspaper's help we will hear more often, "Thank goodness I did!"

Mahalo,

Harry Kim

Hilo, Hawaii

Former Big Island Civil Defense Chief

Former two-term Big Island Mayor



A FAMILY SURVIVAL KIT

By Carolyn Ayon Lee & Christine O'Connor/Special Report for Disaster Preparedness Guide

Nobody likes to think about disasters, but statistics suggest that disasters are a much more common phenomenon than many of us would like to think. In fact, the number of natural disasters has seen an astounding spike in the past few decades, according to data from the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. Hawaii is vulnerable to natural disasters including hurricanes and tsunamis. And the worst thing that could happen in a worst-case scenario is being unprepared for what comes next.

After a disaster strikes, you and your family may be house-bound until emergency response teams can reach you. Or, you may have to evacuate the area. In any case, there is a chance that you may have to survive on your own for some time. But since disasters often strike suddenly and unexpectedly, you may not have time to gather the necessary supplies. Taking some time beforehand to assemble a basic survival kit can increase your chance of survival and decrease stress after a disaster.

Your pack should be able to accommodate any type of survival scenario — whether you have to stay put or evacuate quickly. One suggestion is to use a large, zippered, insulated tote bag with handles. Supermarkets sell them for under \$10. Or you could use a piece of lightweight carry-on luggage with wheels and a handle.

Hardware stores, or the camping section of a sporting-goods supplier, are good places to find equipment and supplies for your survival kit.



FEMA provides the following tips for what to include in your emergency survival kit:

FOOD. A survival kit should include at least three days' worth of non-perishable food items. FEMA states that it's best to have ready-to-eat foods that do not require refrigeration. And since water supplies may be limited, these foods should ideally require little water for consumption.

FEMA suggests canned meats, fruits and vegetables, fruit bars, dry cereal, canned juice, crackers and peanut butter.



If storing **CANNED FOOD**, don't forget to include a manual can opener. This ultra-portable can opener was purchased at Foodland. Two openers came in the package, for only \$3.

WATER. The recommended amount of water to store is a minimum of one gallon per person per day, for at least three days. You will need water not only for drinking, but also to cover other needs, such as cooking, washing and cleaning.

Use clean, **NON-BREAKABLE CONTAINERS** for the water. It's also handy to get a personal-sized water-filtration drinking bottle. This one cost under \$10 from Safeway.

You may want to consider including more than this minimum amount of water because of Hawaii's warm weather.



FIRST AID KIT. You can get a pre-assembled first-aid kit, or put one together yourself, by including Band-Aids, bandages, antibiotic ointment, over-the-counter painkillers and insect repellent in a plastic, sealed bag, or some other waterproof container. Also include Latex gloves, sterile dressings, cleansing agent or soap, antibiotic towelettes, eye wash solution and burn ointment.

Be sure to pack any special medications required by family members. Basic drugs like laxatives, antacids, anti-diarrhea medication and aspirin may also come in handy.



PORTABLE RADIO. Radios are important because they allow you to get hear the latest Civil Defense announcements during an emergency. Longs Drugs/CVS offers this hand-cranked American Red Cross model radio that does not depend on electricity for \$20. There are other radios that are hand-cranked, solar-powered or, of course, battery-powered; some even have dual sources of power.



LIGHT SOURCES such as flashlights, lanterns or chemical lightsticks. This floating lantern costs about \$7 at Safeway. A chemical lightstick was just \$1 at Ace Hardware. Don't forget to include extra Duracell batteries for your flashlight.



WHISTLE. After a disaster, phone lines could be down. If you need to call for help, having a whistle on hand could allow you to do so.

TOOLS. Include a wrench or pliers in the kit to help you turn off household utilities like gas and water.

CELL PHONE with charger.

After you have gathered these survival items, FEMA notes that you also may want to include some additional items:

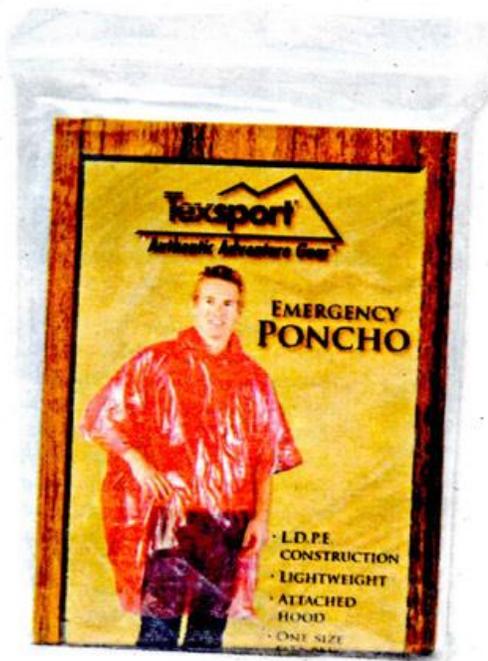
SANITATION. A portable kit for solid human body waste can be purchased for \$3 from Ace Hardware. Or



you can improvise by putting aside some large garbage bags and a plastic bucket. If needed, simply line the bucket with a garbage bag and *voila!*, you have your own personal toilet.

Other sanitation items include feminine products, hand sanitizer, soap and toilet paper.

A PLASTIC PONCHO in case of a down-pour. This one, available in clear plastic, yellow, blue and other colors, cost just \$1 from Ace Hardware.



MATCHES. Store these in a waterproof container. You may also consider a stove lighter. The Coleman Utility Lighter is available at Walmart, and is sold as a pack of two for \$7.

CHLORINE BEACH AND MEDICINE DROPPER. Bleach — but not bleach that is scented, color safe or contains added cleaner — can be used as a disinfectant or to purify water.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS. Store copies of bank records, insurance policies and personal identification in a waterproof container.

COMFORT ITEMS. If you have to wait for assistance for a few days, it may be nice to have a items to help pass the time and relieve a little of the stress. Consider books or games for the keiki.



The Hawaii State Civil Defense recommends that you re-evaluate your needs and update your pack if necessary at least once a year. Don't forget to regularly insert items such as new batteries and sets of clothing, and new food and water need to added every six months.

For more information on how to build an emergency preparedness kit, visit ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html or scd.hawaii.gov/dp_kit.html.

AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL SEASONS

A well-organized plan allowed **Four Seasons Resort** to quickly evacuate guests and avoid disaster

By Carolyn Ayon Lee/Special Report for Disaster Preparedness Guide

Thousands of miles away from the epicenter of the March 11 Japan earthquake, the hotels on the Big Island braced for a quake-roiled tsunami to strike at about 3 a.m. local time.

On the Kohala Coast, Four Seasons Resort at Hualalai was ready.

As many as 500 guests that night were evacuated to a secure, safe facility on hotel property that was amply stocked with linens, towels, pillows, blankets, food and beverage supplies. During those early morning hours, hotel staff instructed the guests about packing up their necessities and directed them to vans, which shuttled them to the golf clubhouse facility.

There, all the comforts of hotel and home awaited them, including the aroma of freshly baked chocolate-chip cookies made on site by the hotel's food service staff. Everything went smoothly, thanks to plans put into place way ahead of time by the hotel's director of security, Amy Regidor.

"It really is sort of like an orchestra," she said about the hotel staff. "Every section has its own responsibility, and we work together, we communicate, we have a number of meetings in our command center, and then everyone gets their instructions as to what they are responsible for."

As multiple departments fulfilled their tasks simultaneously, their goals were "to be timely, be coordinated and get everyone to the evacuation loca-



tion," Regidor explained.

"We also realized that it was an experience that many had never had before (being evacuated from their hotel rooms), and we wanted to make it as pleasant as possible," she added. When the guests woke up at the clubhouse, they could smell bacon from the full breakfast buffet that awaited them.

The clubhouse facility was designated years ago as the hotel's evacuation center. It was ideal because it was located only a mile away on hotel property, and

thus under the full control of hotel management with operational electricity, water, bathrooms.

But it wasn't until February 2010 that it was actually used as temporary shelter for hotel guests in an evacuation, under the tsunami warning sparked by the Chile quake. That experience prepared the Four Seasons staff for the March 2011 evacuation of guests. But this year's tsunami response also imposed additional hardship: Four Seasons was shut down for six weeks because of damages, and wasn't able to reopen until the end of April.

Without revenue from occupants for that period, the hotel incurred millions of dollars in losses as it repaired the tsunami damage to about a dozen oceanfront hotel rooms, the shoreline of the property and other physical assets.

"The owners and resort management decided that in order to open back up to the five-star, five-diamond level, they would close the hotel for as long as it would take to open back up at that perfect level," said Four Seasons spokesman Brad Packer. During this period of shutdown, the hotel kept all of its employees on payroll. They worked on the repairs and also got time to attend training courses conducted by the hotel. Four Seasons Hualalai finished with some pluses bestowed by the tsunami.

"King's Pond, a 1.8-billion-gallon aquarium with over 3,000 fish from 75 different species, got a kind of odd benefit," Packer said. "The waves brought additional fish (species) into the pool."

"We wanted to make it as pleasant as possible," said Amy Regidor, director of security at Four Seasons Resort at Hualalai on the Big Island, about evacuation efforts for hotel guests following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

Leah Friel photo

HOW TO WEATHER THE NEXT BIG STORM

One of the pioneers in Hawaii's solar industry, Poncho's Solar Service, has been installing solar water heating systems in Hawaii since 1988. Now also a leading photovoltaic contractor, the company has announced the availability of a unique new power generating and storage system designed to operate critical appliances during power outages.

"With hurricane season approaching, we have been installing the system we call our 'Hurricane Kit' in homes throughout Hawaii," said Poncho's co-owner Terrie SaFrana.

"We have one in our own home that can generate power for refrigeration and lighting when power failures occur. It's a relief to know that all your food won't be spoiled and you won't have to resort to candles and flashlights to read or find your way around the house.

"As for cooking, you can always make use of a gas grill or fire up a barbecue. If you want to be able additionally to continue using radios, TVs and computers, the Hurricane Kit package that includes a DC/AC inverter might be the one to choose. Of course, the more the package contains, the more it will cost ... the good news is that it's eligible for state and federal tax credits."

According to estimator Kirby Mack, the Hurricane Kits after-tax credits cost as little as \$2,700. The minimum system, Hurricane Kit Category 1, includes a freezer/refrigerator, two direct



current lights, two 135-watt solar panels, a storage battery and a charge controller. The larger systems include more of the same plus an inverter.

"We expect this kit to be in great demand because it includes the essentials at a very reasonable price," Mack said. "The refrigerator/freezer and lights are powered by batteries that store the energy produced by the photovoltaic panels. The refrigerator freezer can be controlled to maintain temperatures equivalent to those in a deep freeze or standard refrigeration unit. The lights are powered by direct current produced by the system."

SaFrana noted that, with the photovoltaic industry expanding by leaps and bounds, it's important for the consumer to be sure they are working with a reliable company that is on top of all the latest advancements in the tech-

nology. Additionally, the company should be one that will not only sell and install the system, but also will maintain it and be available to add panels as needed.

"When someone contacts us regarding either a solar water heating system or photovoltaic system or both, the first thing we do is take a look at their electric bill and find out what their needs are. Our estimator checks the size and condition of the roof to determine the placement of the panels. We also need to establish the capacity of the existing electrical system.

"What we find is that many of the homes already have solar water heating systems, many of them installed by Poncho's, and so are taking advantage of the energy savings and tax credits available. With both a solar water heating system and a photovoltaic system, which can supply elec-

tric power for all household needs, it's possible to reduce an electric bill to the minimum service charge from the electric company.

"We have many customers who are paying only the minimum service fee. Poncho's has helped numerous households throughout Hawaii reach that goal."

SaFrana pointed out that anyone building a new home or remodeling should incorporate solar power installations in their plans and factor the cost into their budget.

"With today's economic uncertainties, escalating electricity costs, and the potential of natural disasters such as hurricanes, tropical storms, typhoons, and earthquakes, it makes sense to be prepared. Power outages essentially bring our normal daily activities to a standstill. We advise anyone who is not already 'powered up' to contact us for a no-obligation assessment of what their up front costs would be for both minimum and maximum capacity systems. They can then take that figure to their financial adviser or accountant to find out how they can benefit from the existing state and federal tax credits and whether any rebates currently apply," SaFrana said.

Poncho's Solar Service has an A-Plus rating from the Better Business Bureau and has been named "Top Solar Installer."

For more information, call Poncho's Solar Service at 422-4266 (Oahu) and 1-855-417-6527 (Big Island, Maui, Kauai and Lanai).