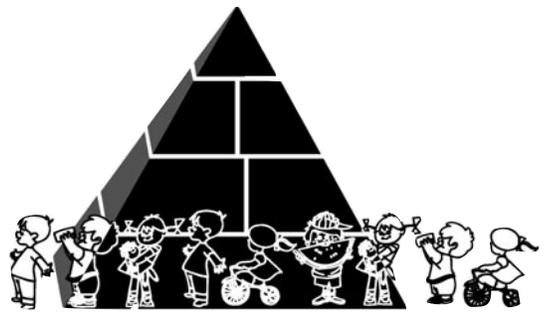


Mealtime Memo

FOR CHILD CARE



2003

Are You Ready for an Emergency?

Many unforeseen situations can occur in a child care center or in home day care. Think about it. Would you be ready if you lost electricity in the middle of the day? How would you keep the children and food safe? What if your building needed to be evacuated due to a chemical spill on the highway or a fire in a building on your block? What if you lost access to telephone or cellular service?

Emergencies come without warning. An emergency readiness plan provides a foundation for what actions to take in the event of disruption. Preparing a plan, teaching your staff, and informing the child's caretaker of the procedure will minimize the surprise element.



When developing an emergency readiness plan, consider the following questions:

- Who needs to be contacted?
- What are possible disruptions?
- Where should the plan be posted?
- Who needs to be familiar with the plan?
- When will the child's caretaker be notified?
- How will you practice before an emergency occurs?
- When will the plan be updated?

Step One

Determine who will do what in the event of an emergency and develop a contact directory.

To reduce possible confusion, determine the chain of command early in the development stage. Post the chain of command in a common location.

Think about who may be able to assist in the event of an emergency. The child care director may be required to take on additional responsibilities and need additional help to manage the disruption. Perhaps a local restaurant or community building could provide food supplies or serve as a shelter. How will the children and staff be transported to a safe location? Could individuals in the community provide assistance?

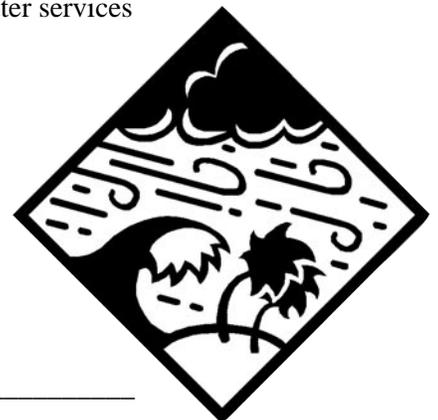
Step Two

Identify disruptions that may hinder an operation.

Check all disruptions that may affect your operation and add any that are not included.

- Electrical outages
- Gas outages
- Water line break
- Food or supply delivery cancellation
- Telephone or computer services interruption
- Blizzards
- Droughts
- Earthquakes
- Floods
- Ice storms
- Hurricanes
- Tornado
- Wildfire

- Other _____
- Other _____



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Step Three Develop an emergency readiness plan.

Now that you have established the chain of command, developed your contact directory, and identified possible disruptions, it is time to actually write the plan. A well-conceived plan will help reduce confusion and ensure health and safety to those affected by the disruption. Creating the plan may take some time up front, but in the moment of need it may prove to be a worthwhile tool.



Step Four Teach components of the plan to staff and inform the child's caretaker of the procedure.

A crucial element of successful emergency management is teaching the individuals involved the components of the plan. Discuss the plan step-by-step and identify responsibilities and tasks.

Clear and precise directions can help prevent confusion in the event of an emergency. Pre-planning who is responsible for routine tasks provides for a more efficient operation.



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Step Five Practice emergency readiness drills.

Conduct emergency readiness drills that address several of the disruptions identified in Step Two. For example, under the direction of the supervisor, designate a specific date or time and pretend phone service is unavailable.

Emergency Inventory

Consider the following items as part of the foodservice emergency inventory:

- Bottled water
- Canned juice
- Nonfat dry milk
- Canned beef, tuna, chicken, or pork
- Peanut butter
- Canned fruit
- Canned vegetables
- Pasta
- Spaghetti sauce
- Disposable forks, knives, and spoons
- Disposables plates, cups, and bowls
- Disposable gloves
- First aid kit
- Flashlight and batteries
- Manual can opener

Step Six Evaluate the plan's effectiveness and update as needed.

The key to successfully managing a disruption depends on having accurate information in the emergency readiness plan.

A well-conceived plan provides the groundwork for what action to take in the event of a disruption. Update and evaluate the plan on a routine basis. Write the emergency readiness plan today, for tomorrow may be too late.

Adapted from: National Food Service Management Institute. (2003) *Emergency readiness plan: guide and forms for school foodservice operation*. University, MS: National Food Service Management Institute. Retrieved September 20, 2003, from <http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/e-readiness.html>