

Your Emergency Gathering Place by KI5UAJ

When disaster strikes, it's helpful to know that you can gather with others at a temporary physical location, for help with your needs, to help with

their needs, for information, and for moral support, even when it's not necessary to evacuate.

There's comfort in knowing that others near by

understand what you're going through and might be able to vocalize what you yourself are thinking. Depending on the situation, it might not always.

be practical or even possible for a group of people to gather at one specific location, but if it is, you should. Of course, that opens a lot of

questions, like where you should gather, where to go if your meeting place is no longer accessible, and who determines all of that.

Predetermined Gathering Place

To keep things simple, you should have a place to gather near your home, and another near your workplace or school for your family and those close to you.

This could be in the event that the smoke alarm goes off in the middle of the night or that heavy rains and flooding, tornados, wildfires or even civil unrest are occurring. This may

Use the safety of your home for that time period until you are able to assess the situation more.

Unplanned Place to Gather

Some situations require some quick thinking and a little pre-planning on your part, such as when you're shopping or traveling. When a disaster

strikes, it might be up to you to designate a safe place to gather. People will find a little peace-of-mind, knowing that somebody has taken the

initiative to do something for their safety. If another person steps up and devises a plan or location different from the one you had proposed, unless

it's clearly dangerous, use your leadership skills in a different way by supporting the other person, instead of insisting that your way is the right way

or the only way to do things. We are in the rural communities where we have major highways and rail lines that are used to transport many forms of

hazardous materials and these themselves can create havoc during an accident during their transportation.

Make a Contingency Plan

In the event that your primary home, work, or school gathering place becomes inaccessible for one reason or another, it's often wise to ask about or

pursue a secondary meeting location. Downed tree limbs or power lines, broken-up roads, flooded landscapes, or even pathways that have been

closed down for emergency vehicles, might prevent you and your neighbors from collecting at your predetermined meeting place. Have a Plan B in

mind, just in case.

What To Take With You

Keeping in mind that this gathering place is temporary, but somewhat close to home or work or school, there are a few things you might want with

you, but you don't want to go overboard either. Here are some ideas (smartphone and keys to your home and vehicle are assumed):

Your grab-and-go bag, which might include bandages, water, toilet paper, lighter, headlamp, and batteries

Warm clothing and jacket

Laptop with important documents and passwords, thumb drives etc

Your handheld radio, programmed with important frequencies, such as your Area frequency, your City frequency, the local ARES frequency, and

the most popular local repeater frequency. If you have the time and luxury, toys and games for the little ones, mementos (such as photographs, jewelry, and sentimental keepsakes),

snacks to tie you over for a while.

Your Two-Minute Warning

You hear a loud knock at your door, Fire department...you have two minutes to leave your house!

What Would You Take With You?

People and animals first

Your first concern is for the people in your household, and then your animals. Your animals can be domesticated pets, work animals, or livestock. Plan

a way for people and animals to escape quickly. Take into account age and disabilities, and how long it will take to evacuate people who might need

extra assistance.

Essential medications

A grab-and-go bag is essential.

Stored in a closet right by your front door is your grab-and-go bag, which contains all the personal and family items you had planned for an

evacuation just like this, long ahead of time. You've stored away bandages, water, toilet paper, over-the-counter medicine, lighter, headlamp,

batteries, clothing, ham radio, and other things you and your family need. The convenience of such a bag cannot be overstated, since all your

essentials can be picked up in that bag and taken with you in seconds. Remember to rotate out expired medicines and perishables every six or so

months.

Maintain a Communication Method

Taking your smartphone with you goes without saying; it's going to be your primary lifeline to the rest of the world. In a widespread disaster,

however, cell towers become easily overloaded, so you need to have a backup plan, which should include ham radio. Be sure to take a handheld ham

radio with you as you evacuate your property. And if you've already stashed one in your grab-and-go bag, that's one less thing to think about taking

with you. Many of us have our mobile units already installed.

Other important items to take along

Here are some things to think about:

Keys to your house and vehicle

Warm clothing and jacket

Laptop with important documents and passwords

Cash, credit cards, other forms of payment

If you have the time and luxury, toys and games for the little ones, mementos (such as photographs, jewelry, and sentimental keepsakes),

snacks to tie you over for awhile

You'll probably have a lot more than two minutes

In a widespread disaster, you and your family will most likely have known about the disaster and the ensuing general evacuation order, long before the two-minute warning is sounded. If you haven't

already collected the things you need for your evacuation, those warnings alone should give you a chance to re-adjust your priorities and start

gathering your needed items. And if this training topic will do any good at all, it'll help you get a start on that list of items today, plenty of time before any such disaster has occurred.