

Town of Charlton

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS HANDBOOK

Preparing for the First 72 Hours of an Emergency or Disaster



BOARD OF HEALTH



TOWN OF CHARLTON
37 MAIN STREET
CHARLTON, MA. 01507
508-248-2210

Dear Charlton Resident:

In a continuing effort to provide meaningful and user-friendly documents to residents, I am pleased to present the Town of Charlton's Emergency Preparedness Handbook. This Handbook contains a significant amount of useful information and resources to help residents successfully plan for an emergency event.

It is our hope that all Charlton residents take a proactive approach to Emergency Planning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin L. Craver".

Robin L. Craver
Town Administrator

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Your Key Emergency Contact Information

Out of Area Contact:

Name:
Address:
Phone # (day):
Phone# (night)
Cell:

Local Contact:

Name:
Address:
Phone # (day):
Phone# (night):
Cell:

Family Contact:

Name:
Address:
Phone # (day):
Phone# (night):
Cell:

Family Alternate Contact:

Father:
Mother:
Other:
Other:
Other:

Emergency Management

Director #:
Carl Ekman – (508)248-2284

Utilities:

Electric:
Gas:
Water (public):
Oil:
Telephone:
Cable TV:
Internet Provider:

Other Important Information:

Emergency: 911
Town Clerk: (508)248-2249
Police: (508)248-2250
Fire: (508)248-2299
Board of Health: (508)248-2210
Poison Control: (800)222-1212
Doctor:
Pharmacist:
Medical Insurer:
Medical Insurance No:
Home Insurance:
Auto Insurance:
MASS 2-1-1 Information: 211
Hearing Impaired: 711

Schools:

Address:
Phone#:
Address:
Phone#:

Town Website:

www.townofcharlton.net

Reasons for Emergency Preparedness

This Emergency Preparedness Handbook has been prepared for your community by the Town of Charlton. This guide was created to help residents learn how to protect themselves and their families in the event of an emergency. This booklet serves as a guide on emergency preparedness, response, and recovery actions.

In the event of a disaster or emergency, you may need to survive independently for some time before outside assistance is available. Basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewer, telephone, and communication systems may be unavailable for extended periods of time. In order to be prepared, one should have a supply of water, food, medications and emergency supplies for a minimum of 72 hours. You may have to evacuate at a moment's notice and take essentials with you. You will probably not have the opportunity to shop or search for the supplies you need. Assembling emergency supplies ahead of time is essential.

Hazards Facing Our Community

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency charged with ensuring the state is prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters, including natural hazards, accidents, deliberate attacks, and technological and infrastructure failures.

- Fires
- Civil Disorder
- Dam Failure
- Earthquakes
- Drought
- Extreme Cold
- Extreme Heat
- Floods
- Wildfires
- Hazardous Materials Incident
- Hurricanes
- Pandemic
- Power Outages
- Terrorism
- Thunderstorms
- Tornadoes
- Transportation Emergencies
- Utility Emergencies
- Water Supply Emergencies
- Winter Storms
- Wild Fires
- Public Health Emergencies

Creating an Emergency Action Plan

It is important to plan for the following situations:

Town Shelters: In an emergency, the Town of Charlton may designate an emergency shelter depending on the incident. Listen carefully to Town Officials for shelter locations and important information.

Evacuation (Please refer to page 11)

Shelter-In-Place (Please refer to page 13):

Depending on the emergency, it may be safer to stay home and shelter-in-place.

Be Sure To:

- Practice your Emergency Action Plan.
- Ensure that your entire family knows and understands your plan.
- Talk about how you will communicate with your family during an emergency.
- Think about making an out-of-town family member or friend a point of contact should you get separated for any reason.
- Be familiar with the Emergency Plans at your child's school and your place of business.

Preparing an Emergency Supply Kit

Everyone should have an all-hazards disaster supply kit. You could become isolated in your home for up to a week without power. Below are some suggestions of items that you may want to include in your kit. It is best to keep items in a waterproof, portable container. Every kit will differ, depending upon what items your family considers essentials. Check expiration dates and rotate items on a regular basis.

Recommend Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

Water for drinking and sanitation (one gallon of water <u>per person per day</u> for a minimum of three days)	Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
Food (at least a three day supply of non-perishable food)	Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both	Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
Flashlight and extra batteries	Local maps
Whistle to signal for help	Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air
First Aid Kit	Plastic sheeting and duct tape to cover doors and windows when sheltering-in-place

Gathering Vital Information

It is important to stay calm during an emergency.

In the case of an actual emergency the Town of Charlton will make available information to all residents through the following media:

Town-wide Emergency Notification System – CodeRED

This is a phone and email based notification system that allows the Town to contact residents and notify them of an emergency situation in a relatively quick timeframe. You can register for notification via CodeRED on the **Town of Charlton web-site**: www.townofcharlton.net

Charlton Cable Access Channels:

Local Television Stations:

191

192

Local Radio Stations:

WTAG (580AM/94.9FM)

WESO (970 AM)

NOAA Weather Radio Stations:

Worcester (162.550)

Boston (162.475)

Providence (162.400)

Local Newspaper Website:

www.telegram.com

Charlton Council on Aging:

(508) 248-2231

Creating an Emergency Communication Plan

Develop an Emergency Communication Plan in case family members are separated from one another during an emergency (i.e. during the day when adults are at work and children are at school). This plan should also address reunification processes after the immediate crisis has passed.

Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the Family Emergency Communication Plan contact person. During, and immediately after a disaster occurs, it is often easier to access a long distance telephone number than a local one. Calling outside a disaster area is usually easier than calling into or within the same area.

Make sure everyone knows the name, address and telephone number of the Family Emergency Communication Plan contact.

An Emergency Communication Plan can help assure safety and minimize the stress associated with emergencies.

When cell phone lines are overwhelmed during an emergency, phone calls to and from landlines or cellphones may be limited. Sometimes emails and text messages are more likely to be transmitted properly.

Emergency Evacuation

During an emergency, always follow the direction of your local Public Safety Officials to know which evacuation routes and shelters will be utilized during that particular emergency.

If you do not have personal transportation, make arrangements with friends or your local government.

Those requiring special assistance, such as transportation or alternative forms of communication, should notify the Charlton Emergency Management Director of these requirements.

Designate two meeting areas for family members – one within your community (your primary location) and one outside of your community (your alternate location). Sometimes an emergency could impact your neighborhood or a small section of the community, so a second location outside of your community could be more accessible to all family members.

Develop a Family Emergency Communication Plan (see page 10).

Assemble a Disaster Supply Kit (see page 8).

Keep your car fueled if evacuation seems likely. Gas stations may be closed during an emergency or unable to pump gas during power outages.

Know how to shut off your home's electricity, gas and water supply at main switches and valves. You may want to do so prior to evacuating your home.

After meeting your family's needs, check on elderly or disabled neighbors and, if necessary, call for assistance on their behalf.

What To Do If Asked To Evacuate

Gather all persons in the house.

Do not pick up children at their schools, unless instructed to do so. In many cases, school children may be taken to a pre-designated host school outside the impacted area where you may pick them up.

Household members located outside the area, when the emergency occurs, may be advised not to return to their residence or community during an evacuation. They may be re-directed to a reception center or mass care shelter where you can be reunited.

Do not call your local fire or police departments for information. These telephone lines must remain open for emergency use. If you need special assistance, contact your local Emergency Management Department.

Stay tuned to your Emergency Alert System (EAS) radio stations.

Turn off lights and unnecessary appliances.

If a hard freeze is likely during your absence, take actions needed to prevent damage to water pipes, such as turning off the water main, draining faucets, turning off inside valves for external faucets and opening outside faucets to drain.

Close and lock windows and doors.

Check with neighbors to see if they need assistance. Offer to share transportation.

Shelter livestock if you are unable to take them with you. Leave at least a three-day supply of stored food and water that has been protected from potential contamination.

Shelter-In-Place

Sheltering-in-place is a standard protective action utilized in emergencies in which hazardous materials have been released into the atmosphere. Local officials may instruct you to “Shelter-In-Place” to reduce your exposure to these hazardous materials. The purpose is to prevent the hazardous material from reaching an enclosure’s occupants.

The following are steps to be taken only when instructed to “Shelter-In-Place”, not to be completed ahead of time:

You should immediately proceed indoors. Keep children and pets indoors.

Close and lock all doors and windows. Locking is preferred as this ensures that doors and windows are shut tight.

Turn off air handling systems such as window fans, kitchen and bath exhaust fans, air conditioners, and other sources of outside air. Shut off clothes dryers and seal exhaust vents with plastic and duct tape.

Close the fireplace flue if it is not in use (PLEASE NOTE: a structure with a burning fire in the fireplace is not a good candidate for sheltering-in-place).

Seal off any cracks that could cause leakage from the outside (e.g. a damp towel in door jams).

If you have livestock, shelter them as well. Provide them with stored feed and water from a covered source.

Go to an above ground room with the fewest windows and doors (a below ground room during a tornado or hurricane).

If sheltering-in-place is recommended during school hours, children will be sheltered in their school building and cared for by school personnel. When the emergency is over, you will be directed where and when to pick them up.

If Traveling When Shelter-In-Place Is Ordered

If you are traveling in a motor vehicle, close the windows and air vents.

Turn off the heater and air conditioner.

Keep the radio tuned to an Emergency Alert System (EAS) station for the official messages and instructions.

Proceed to the nearest enclosed shelter. If none are available, leave the area immediately.

Stay inside your vehicle or building until officials say otherwise.

Do **NOT** use your telephone unless you require special assistance.

Do **NOT** call "911" unless it is a true emergency.

Preparedness for Populations With Special Needs

Emergencies can present challenges for many citizens with physical, medical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities, as well as the elderly and other populations with unique needs.

Create a disaster supply kit. Depending upon your needs, you may want to include extra eyeglasses, hearing aid batteries, wheelchair batteries, oxygen, the style and serial number of your medical devices, a list of your medications (including dosage), a list of your allergies, medical insurance information and medical cards. If you utilize a manual wheelchair, include heavy gloves to help you evacuate over glass and debris (see page 8).

Make an Emergency Plan and create an Emergency Communication Plan. If you receive regular support services from a provider, Home Health Care Attendant, or Personal Care Attendant (PCA), speak with them about their disaster plans and their services during times of emergency. Work with them to identify back-up services.

Complete a Personal Assessment of what you can do for yourself and what assistance you may need to face the challenges of an emergency. Consider the environment during and after an event, your capabilities, and potential barriers.

Create a 'Personal Support Network' or 'Self-Help Team' who can help identify and acquire resources, and assist you before, during and after the emergency. Your Team should include roommates, relatives, friends, neighbors, and co-workers as disasters might strike when you are at home, school, work, a volunteer site, or wherever you spend a lot of time.

Teach others on your Team to operate any special equipment you may require, as well as where you keep your emergency supplies.

If asked to evacuate, inform your Team where you are staying, as it may not always be the first choice in your Plan (a public shelter, relative's or friend's home, hotel, etc.).

Become Informed

Learn your community's Emergency Management Plans including potential evacuation routes and accessible shelter locations.

Learn about Charlton Alerting/Warning Systems.

Some communities have developed procedures for people with disabilities to register for specific alert and notification systems, transportation assistance, power or oxygen support, and other programs in the event of an emergency. Contact the Charlton Board of Health to learn more about Charlton Special Populations Registry. All information gathered through such a program will be kept confidential and used only in case of emergency.

Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to help identify your disability or health condition.

Label any special equipment including wheel chairs, walkers, or canes with your contact information.

Most individuals who normally live independently should be able to function well at a universal public shelter. Individuals requiring higher levels of medical support or assistance might be transferred to an alternate shelter where they can receive a higher level of care.

While at a shelter, ask personnel for any specific accommodations you may require.

Making Your Home Safe

Make sure all of your equipment and hazard detector devices (i.e. fire alarms) are approved and certified by a nationally recognized testing institute, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL). Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the proper use, installation, maintenance and testing procedures.

Be able to differentiate between your Smoke Detector and Carbon Monoxide detector sounds.

Replace batteries in all devices at least twice per year or more frequently. Develop a schedule for changing batteries (e.g. when changing Daylight Savings Time). Test all detectors on a monthly basis.

Smoke Detectors

Have a minimum of one (1) smoke detector installed on each level of your home (including the basement) and outside each sleeping area.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Have at least one (1) Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector on each habitable floor of your home, and also within ten (10) feet of each sleeping area.

Do not place a CO detector in a garage, furnace room, or near a stove or fireplace. Doing so may cause high incidents of false alarms.

Do not place CO detectors near open windows or doors, excessively hot, cold, or damp areas and 'dead-air spaces' such as corners of rooms and peaks of ceilings. Doing so may minimize the effectiveness of the detector.

Fire Escape Plan

Have at least two (2) escape routes from each room, a primary and an alternate. Never use an elevator. If you cannot use stairways, make special arrangements for help in advance.

Make sure everyone can easily unlock and open doors utilized in the escape plan.

If you must go through a smoky area, crawl. The coolest, cleanest air will be up to 18" from the ground.

Designate a family meeting area located a safe distance from the house (e.g. across the street).

Safely leave the building before contacting the fire department. Never return into a burning structure.

If you are in a wheelchair or cannot get out of your home, stay by the window near the floor and signal for help.

Practice your Fire Escape Plan at least twice a year. For assistance in designing your own plan, visit "Family Fun" with Sparky the Fire Dog on the National Fire Protection Association web page: www.NFPA.org.

Parents with children should attend a Fire Safety Day in Charlton or visit their local fire station to help promote fire safety awareness.

Fire Extinguishers

Have at least one (1) multi-purpose (ABC) fire extinguisher located near an escape route.

Ensure that the fire extinguisher is cared for and maintained properly according to manufacturer's instructions, which you should keep with your extinguisher.

Ensure everyone understands how to properly and safely use the extinguisher. Although fire extinguishers come in a number of shapes and sizes, they all operate in a similar manner. An easy acronym for fire extinguisher use: PASS (Pull, Aim, Squeeze, and Sweep).

Recharge or replace all fire extinguishers immediately after use.

Empower Yourself

Immediately following a disaster, emergency crews cannot respond everywhere at once. Make it a practice to check on elderly neighbors and those with disabilities. Get some invaluable training on life-saving techniques. Check a few of the resources available to you on page 23 of this booklet.

Utility Shut-Off and Safety

In the event of a disaster, you may be instructed to shut utilities at your home. Below is some general guidance for shutting off utility service. You should modify the information provided to reflect your shut off requirements as directed by your utility company. Please refer to the utility company directly with any questions regarding when utilities will be restored during a power outage.

Natural Gas

Natural gas leaks and explosions are responsible for a significant number of fires following disasters. It is vital that all household members know how to shut off natural gas.

If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone out of the house quickly. Turn off the gas, using the outside main valve if you can, and call the Gas Company and fire department from a neighbor's home.

CAUTION: If you turn off the gas for any reason, a qualified professional must turn it back on. NEVER attempt to turn the gas back on yourself.

Electricity

Electrical sparks have the potential of igniting natural gas if it is leaking. Locate your electrical circuit box and teach all responsible household members how to shut off the electricity to the entire house.

CAUTION: Always shut off all individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit breaker.

NOTE: IF you plan to use a generator, be absolutely sure that the connections to the street electrical supply wires have been disconnected. It is strongly recommended that you have a professional electrician complete this task.

Helpful Tips to Protect your Animals

Taking your pets along is the most important thing pet owners can do for their animals during an evacuation. Pets can be injured, lost or killed if left behind during an emergency. Pet owners should include their animals in their Emergency Action Plan.

Prepare an emergency kit for your pets. Include a photo of yourself with your pet, collars and leashes, a three-to-five-day supply of food, a can opener, bottles of water, bowls, litter boxes, plastic bags, and a week's supply of medications (with instructions) that your pet may be taking (in case you and your pet are separated).

Have copies of your pets' vaccinations, medical records, prescriptions and your veterinarian's phone number.

It is now state law that all public emergency shelters allow pets. However, if you wish, make plans ahead of time to take your pet to stay with relatives, friends or a kennel outside the affected area.

Know the locations of pet-friendly hotels and motels and prepare a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter your animals in an emergency; include 24-hour phone numbers.

Make sure your pets wear collars with current license and rabies tags, as well as identification tags that include information on where you will be staying during the emergency.

Use a pet carrier for each of your pets for transportation and sheltering purposes.

Birds should be transported in a secure travel cage or carrier. During warm weather, carry a plant mister to mist the birds' feathers periodically.

Exotic and dangerous pets are dealt with on a case-by-case basis in order to ensure that they are handled, transported and cared for by properly trained personnel at an appropriate facility. Owners of these pets should have advanced planning preparations ready for their pet's special needs.

After a Disaster

If you have evacuated, do not return to your home until you have been directed to do so by state or local officials.

Keep tuned to local Media for information on applying for financial assistance, power outages, etc.

Do not become a spectator. Unnecessary travel into the impacted areas could hinder the efforts of public safety officials.

Drive only when necessary. Streets may be filled with debris or flooded. Avoid closed roads as they may be weakened and could collapse.

Upon returning to your home, do not turn on any electrical equipment until the electricity has been safely restored.

Be sure to check all electronic equipment for water damage. If you are uncertain, throw them away. It is better to be safe than risk electrocution.

Watch for loose or dangling power lines. Assume any downed wire is a live wire! Be careful when clearing fallen trees with a chainsaw.

Use caution if there is structural damage to your home or downed trees in the yard.

Use caution after a flood as wild animals, insects, and sewage may have entered your home. You will likely need mold remediation services after a flood as well. Throw out anything touched by floodwaters.

If public safety officials determine that your home is safe, open doors and windows to ventilate your home.

Use bottled water until local officials have determined the safety of the water supply.

Guard against spoiled food. If the power was disrupted, food in the refrigerator may have spoiled. Freezers can keep food for several days, if unopened.

Do not refreeze food once it begins to thaw. When in doubt, throw it out.

Use generators outdoors, in well ventilated areas only.

For specific assessment and clean-up remedies, contact the appropriate Town of Charlton Departments.

Maintaining Your Plan

Once you have developed your plan, you need to practice and maintain it. Have a conversation with household members about meeting places, phone numbers, and safety rules. Conduct drills and create theoretical scenarios and see how family members respond.

Online Resources/Links

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency www.mass.gov/mema
Executive Office of Public Safety & Security www.mass.gov/eops
Department of Homeland Security www.dhs.gov
Federal Emergency Management Agency www.fema.gov
Are you ready? www.Ready.gov
American Red Cross www.redcross.org
National Weather Service www.nws.noaa.gov
National Hurricane Center www.nhc.noaa.gov
Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health www.mass.gov/dph
State of MA Animal Response Team www.smart-mass.org
Guide to MA State Services www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cisig/guide.html
Town of Oxford www.town.oxford.ma.us
Worcester Regional Medical Reserve Corps www.worcesterregionalmrc.org
Oxford School District www.OXPS.org
Central Mass Disaster Animal Response Team www.cmdart.org

Call for Charlton Medical Reserve Corp Volunteers

The Town of Charlton, through the Worcester Regional Medical Reserve Corps, has organized a Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) to supplement existing Town resources during emergencies and times of need that may impact public health. The MRC is a volunteer group consisting of persons with both medical and non-medical backgrounds who are willing to help out in a public health emergency. Please consider volunteering to help your community.

MRC volunteers may respond to both emergency and non-emergency events that may overwhelm a community's resources. Remember all participation will be strictly voluntary.

MRC volunteers will receive FREE training on a variety of subjects. **For medical professionals, many of the trainings will count toward Continuing Medical Education hours.**

For more information, please visit the WRMRC web site at www.WorcesterRegionalMRC.org. You may sign-up online.

Your participation is invaluable in achieving our emergency preparedness goals and for helping to promote healthy living in our community.

Please note that in the event of an emergency involving infectious disease and the activation of the Emergency Dispensing Site, responding volunteers and everyone within their household will receive their vaccinations or antibiotics prior to the general public!