



# Family Emergency Plan

A comprehensive guide to disaster preparedness



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A comprehensive guide to disaster preparedness in the Caribbean



Revised Edition 2004

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ur families and the community where we live could be affected by disasters at any time.



How well are you prepared to deal with an emergency?



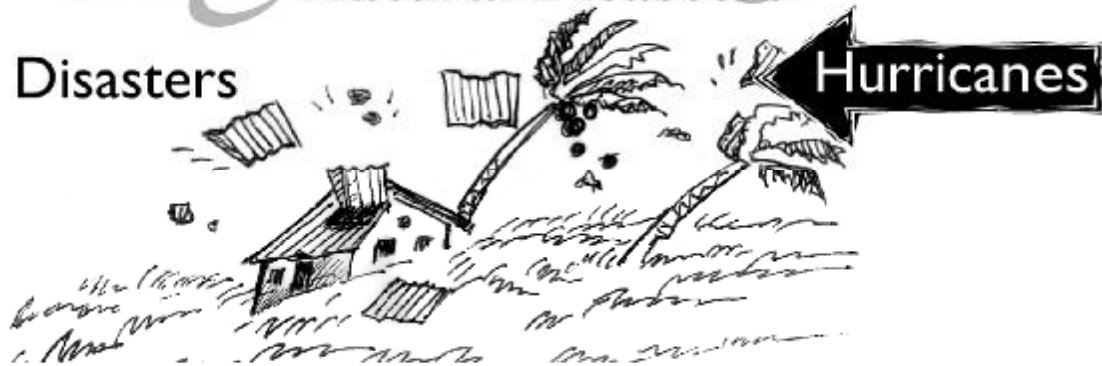
Make sure you have a plan



Disasters can be natural or man-made. What would you do if one of these occurred?

## Natural Disasters

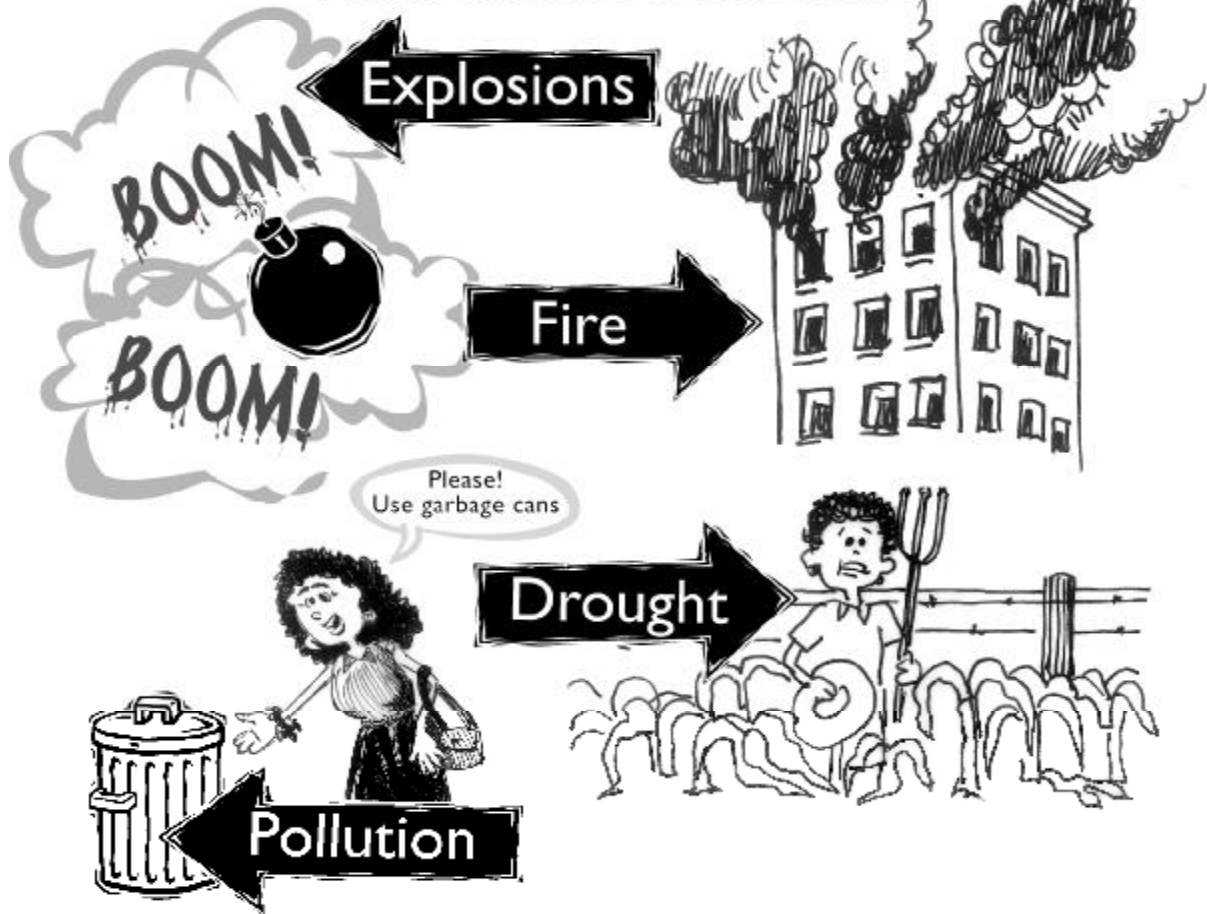
Disasters







## Man-made Disasters



Although things like **drought** and **landslides** are defined as natural disasters, they can also be the result of **improper use of natural resources**.



It is important to **be aware** that our region is exposed to various hazards ...  
So we must **BE PREPARED!**



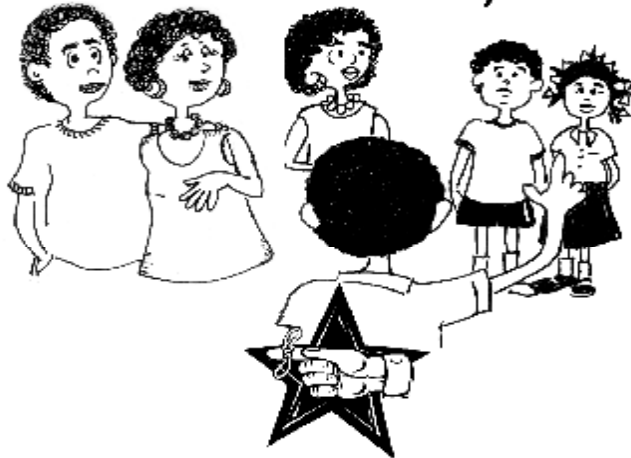
### 1. Don't: *Panic*



### 2. Do:

#### ***Prepare a plan with your family.***

Families can cope with disaster by preparing in advance and working together as a team. This booklet will teach you how.



**Remember -**  
Knowing what to do is your best protection!





# Steps to Safety

## 1. Learn as much as you can



- What **hazards** are you exposed to?
- Do you live in a **flood-prone area**? Near a **volcano**? In the **hurricane belt**? Near a **chemical factory**?
- Find out how to help very young, very old, or disabled persons, if needed.
- Find out how to deal with your pets or livestock, if needed.
- Find out about **disaster plans** at your workplace, and
- at your children's school or day-care centre.

## 2. Create a family emergency plan



### A. Get re-acquainted with your surroundings.

When we spend a lot of time in the same place, it becomes so familiar that we often stop noticing things. Some of these could make you more vulnerable if disaster strikes! Look around you with fresh eyes. Do this with your family; it can be an interesting project!

**Your level of risk can be affected by:** The type of house you live in, your living conditions, and where the house is built. So ...



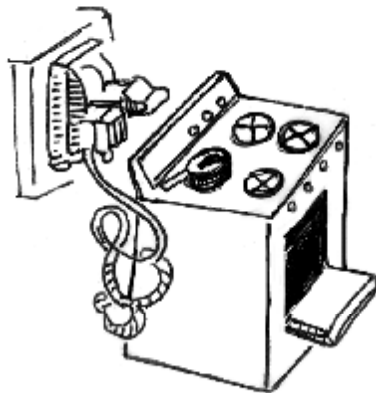
## Check these things:

**Your house's construction.** What is it made of? Is it strong? Is it very flammable? Is the roof attached well, with tie-downs or with beams set into the wall?

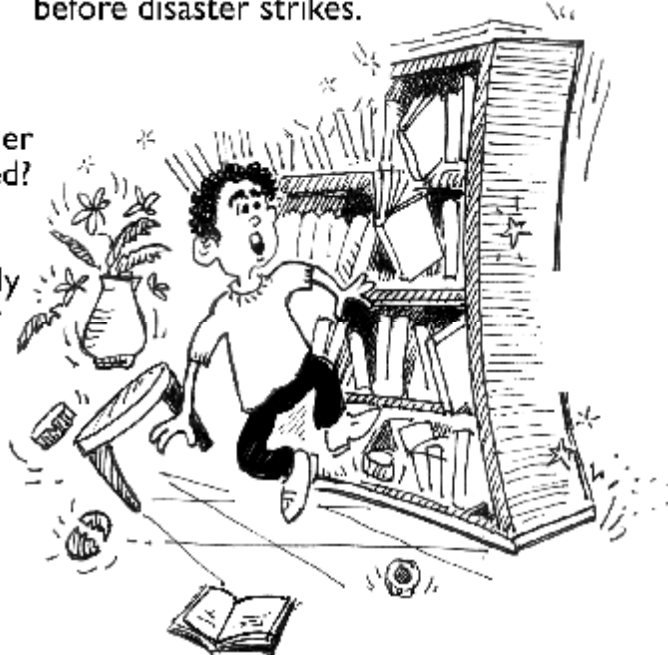
**Condition of maintenance:** Structures, electrical installations, pipelines, location of cooking fuel. Are there dangers here?

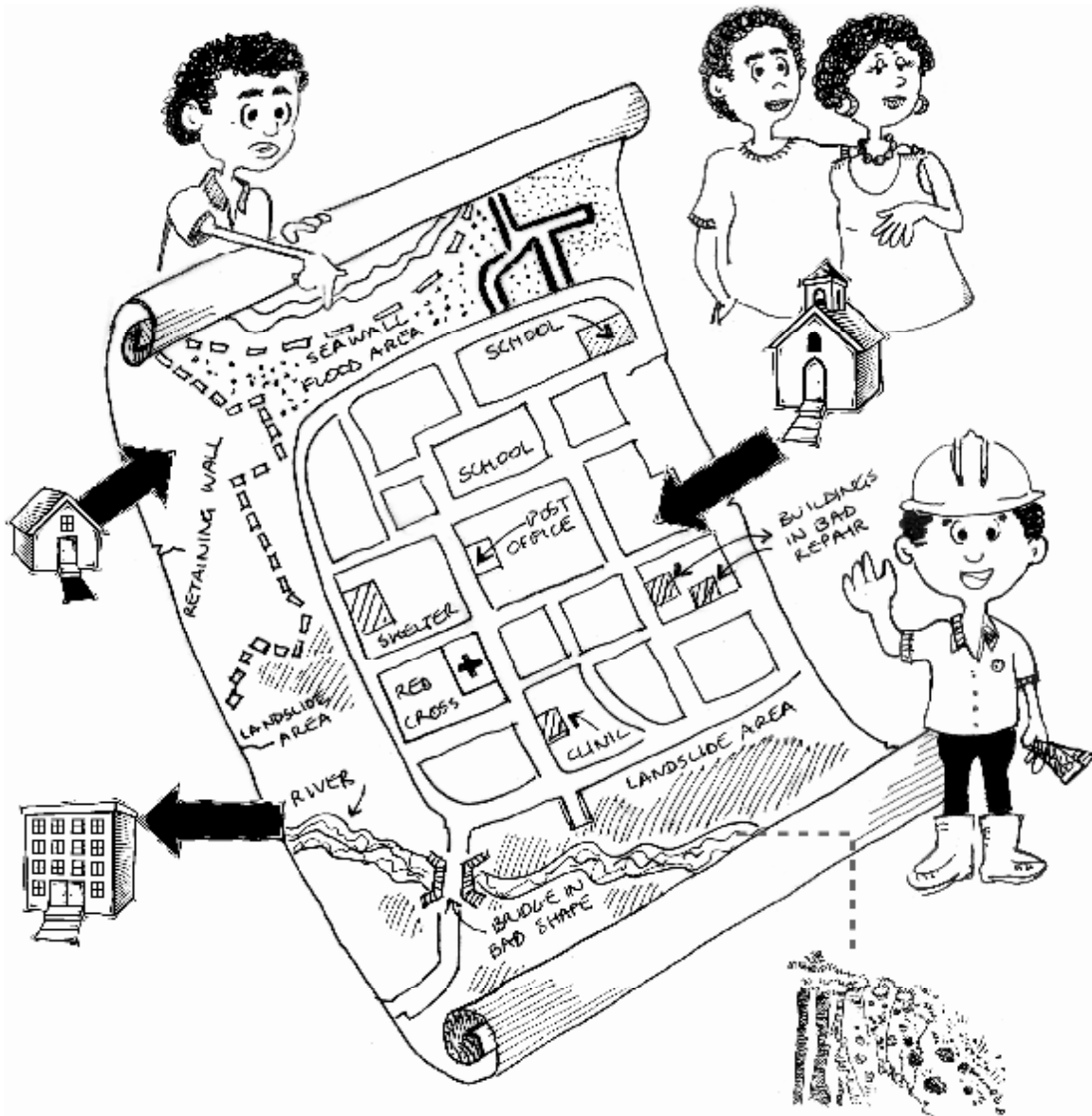
**Distribution of space.** Draw a floor plan that shows all the rooms, hallways, doors and windows. Also show where the fuse box, water main, gas main (if any) and electrical meter are located. Leave room on your paper to draw the potential hazards that may be around the house. When you start to devise your emergency plan, you can use this floor plan to mark places of safety, danger spots, and best exits.

**What's inside?** Anything that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire is a potential hazard. These items should be secured before disaster strikes.



Where are furniture and other large household items located? Also note where dangerous substances and materials are stored. These should normally be kept in places where they will not endanger anyone.

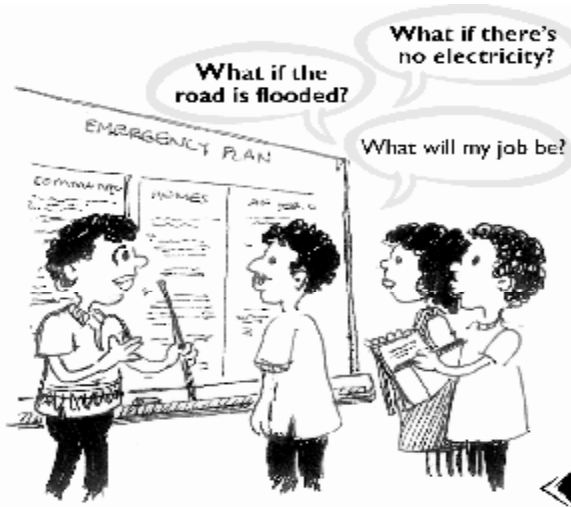




Location of the house.

Look at where your house is situated in relation to hazards with potential danger, such as:

- Rivers, streams and channels
- Factories
- Slopes, hillsides
- Very big trees, or trees in bad condition
- Building or construction sites in bad condition
- Electric cables
- Reclaimed land, or landfill
- Other dangers
- Electric cables
- Reclaimed land, or landfill
- Other dangers



**B. Create a plan of action**  
 This could be a very interesting activity in which the whole family can participate.

Use it to build a stronger family team. Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for emergencies. Discuss the kinds of disasters that could most likely happen to you. Is it a fire, a flood, a hurricane, an earthquake, a landslide? What are the dangers? What will you do in each case?

**Tip:** You do not need to be expert, but you do need a plan!

Plan how you will work together as a team. Be sure to listen too. Let everyone share the responsibilities and contribute his or her 'ounce of prevention

■ **Here are some of the things you should decide:**

How will you leave the house in a safe and orderly manner?

(Use your floor plan to mark best exits.)

■ Assign responsibilities. Remind yourselves not to panic.)



■ What are the dangers you would encounter in your surroundings?



What are the possible **areas of safety** or **protection** in your house?

**Plan what to do if you have to evacuate.**

Would you be **ready**?

Would your **valuables** be ready too?



### 3. Complete these checklists and put them in sensible places

#### Phone numbers and addresses for emergencies:

Emergency services:

Fire

Police

Doctor

Ambulance

Family contact person outside the home

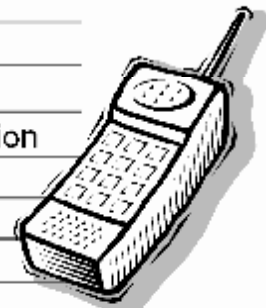
Red Cross or your local disaster organisation

Public Utilities

Water

Electricity

Other





## There is a checklist to help you. See



How will you deal with special needs, such as babies, the elderly, the disabled, or pets?

Where will you meet?

Near your home, in case of a sudden emergency like a fire. Outside your neighbourhood, in case you can't return home. Everyone must know the address and



Write down the shelters



With an organised plan things will run smoothly

Ladies take charge of...

Boys take the hand of the person on your left



How will you get in touch with each other if you are away from strikes?

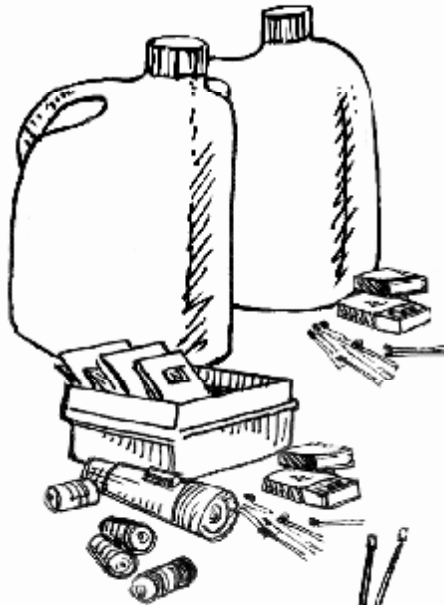
During an emergency, who will be in charge of what?





## 4. Assemble emergency supplies

You should have enough emergency supplies to last at least **72 hours (3 days)**.



- Can opener
- First aid kit
- Canned foods
- Hygiene articles
- Radio
- Torches (flashlights, searchlights)
- Spare batteries
- Bleach to disinfect water



### Recipe:

Use bleach that has sodium hypo-chlorite as its only active ingredient. Use 8 drops per gallon for clear water or 16 drops for cloudy. Then let it stand for 30



- Matches
- Notebook and pencil
- Any **medical needs** you have, such as inhalers, prescription medicine, etc.
- **Water** - at least 1 gallon per person, per day for drinking and cooking. More for bathing and washing. (Do the maths!)
- **Breathing masks**, if you live near a volcano.

**Waterproof box** for your important documents, some cash, and family mementos. (Your important documents should include personal identification such as passport, driver's license, national ID card, etc; medical information such as blood type, conditions suffer from (e.g. diabetes), Ideally, you would also have basic bedding and a change of clothes for everyone)



Kids!

Circle the pictures of the things named in the list, and draw a line to the words





## 5. Other things you should do at home



Help your young children to memorise **important family information** - family name, address and phone number. They should also know where to meet and who to call in case of an emergency. Very small children should carry a small card or paper that lists emergency information to give to an adult or babysitter.



Show each capable family member how and where to turn off the main connections for electricity, gas, and water. (They should be shut off in that order.) Know where the tools are kept, for turning off pipe gas.)

Check to see whether you have adequate insurance coverage.

Install smoke detectors if you live in a very flammable building.

**Who let the dogs out?!** Plan to deal with your animals in the event of a disaster. Often, their barns or pens are the most dangerous place for them to be. Whether stabled, penned or tethered, livestock should be set loose. Untie any yard dogs. If you plan to remain in your home, pets should be secured inside with you. Otherwise, they will have to be set free outside to fend for themselves. Shelters do not accept pets.



**Quiz your children every few months, so everyone remembers what to do.**



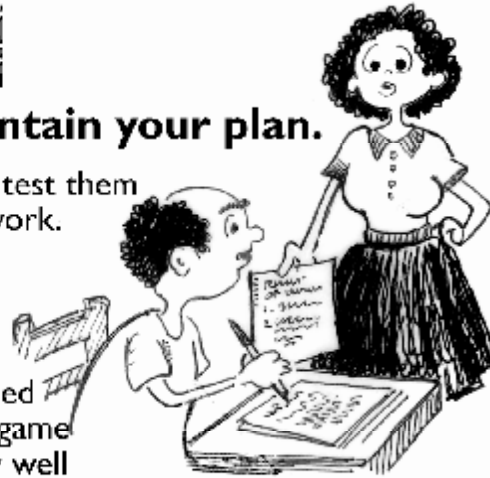
## 6. Practice and maintain your plan.

If you have smoke detectors, test them monthly to make sure they work.



Imagine a disaster situation and what could happen.

Pretend it is happening and practice your plan. This is called a simulation. You can make a game of it, but remember that how well you play is important. Afterwards, evaluate what happened in your simulation.



Did the plan work? What needs to be corrected?

Replace stored water every three months, and check the condition of stored food.



**Do this before you are threatened, to make your home a safer place.**

Reinforce structures. Repair installations.  
Remove or fix accessories.

It is always a good idea to learn basic first aid procedures





## 7. Take a fresh look at your community

- What is there that could be useful in case of a disaster?
- Are there emergency institutions such as Police, Fire Department, health centres or hospitals, or hurricane shelters?
  - Where are they located?
- What are the safest places to be in case of emergency?
- What are the entry and exit routes in your community, and what alternatives can you use?
  - What hazards exist, and where are they located?
- Is there an emergency committee in your neighbourhood?
- If not, is there another kind of organisation in your community that would co-operate in disaster planning?



Know your neighbours,  
and their special skills,  
e.g. medical, technical.

Plan with them how you will work together  
in a disaster, and how you will help neighbours  
who depend on others for help.





## During the emergency

- You must not let fear overcome you! Stay calm, be patient and think clearly.
- Apply the security measures you have designed and practiced.
- Act quickly, but without rushing. Check for injuries, and give first aid to seriously injured people.
- Listen to the radio. Radio stations will provide the correct official information. Follow their instructions.
- Avoid using the phone unless it is urgent, especially land lines. Cell phones are better, if the antennas are not down.
- Evacuate, if advised to do so.
- Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Lock your home!
- Use travel routes advised by local authorities.
- Don't use shortcuts, because certain areas may be blocked or dangerous.
- Avoid doing things that will cause panic, like running or getting hysterical. Panic puts you and those around you at greater risk.





## What to do immediately after the emergency



The first thing to do is ensure that all family members are safe and accounted for.

It is important to help your family **stay calm**. Take into account that emergencies can be very disturbing, especially to young children. See the section on Helping Children Cope.

**Depending on the type of emergency:**

Do not touch broken electrical cables

- If you did not already do it, turn off electricity, water and gas.
- Assess damage to the house. Use flashlights. If you suspect damage, do not light matches or turn on electrical switches.
- Sniff for gas leaks. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly.
- Do not smoke inside the house or use an open flame until you are sure there are no flammable substances.
- Clean up any spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline and other flammable or dangerous liquids immediately.
- Call your family contact. Do not use the phone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.
- Check on your neighbours, especially elderly or disabled
- Secure or confine your animals.
- Contact the emergency committee in your community.





If nothing happened to you and your community, do not be curious and go to see other areas which have been affected.

Try to re-establish your family routine as quickly as possible, even though you may have to do things differently for a while.



### **Helping Children Cope with Disaster**

Disasters can be frightening for adults. Disasters can continue to terrify and confuse children long afterwards. It is important to give children guidance that will help them reduce their fears. Children depend on daily routines. When these are interrupted, they may become anxious. The way you react to an emergency gives them clues on how to feel and act. You need to keep control of the situation and set a good example. Involve your children in your family's recovery activities. It will help them feel less helpless and that their life is returning to normal.

Immediately after the disaster, take time to talk with your children about their fears. Encourage them to describe what they are feeling. Listen and reassure. Children are normally most afraid that:

- The event will happen again.
- Someone will be injured or killed.
- They will be separated from the family.
- They will be left alone.



**Keep the family together as much as possible.**

Calmly and firmly explain the situation.  
Tell them what you know about the disaster.  
Explain what will happen next. Get down to their eye level and talk to them.

# The Ten Commandments for Earthquake Resistant Housing



Thou shall not build closer than 1 meter to another building



Thou shall not build closer than 10 meters to a steep slope



Thou shall not build on landfill or on the edge of a slope which has been bulldozed



Thou shall not build parallel walls of different lengths



Thou shall build doors which open outwards



Thou shall not decorate your roof with things that can fall and block doors and windows in an earthquake



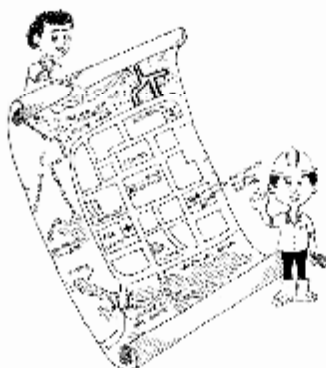
Thou shall build hip shaped roof or flat reinforced concrete or ferro-cement roof



Thou shall use high quality, not poor quality, concrete blocks to build your house



Thou shall not use less than the right amount of steel in your building



Thou shall fasten all timber-framed roofs securely to the rest of the building





## National Disaster Organisations

National Disaster Organization  
Anguilla  
Tel: (264) 497-5666/5667  
Fax: (264) 497-2378  
Email: axaeoc@anguillanet.com

National Office of Disaster Services  
Antigua / Barbuda  
Tel: (268) 460-7075  
Fax: (268) 462-4742  
Email: nods@antigua.gov.ag

Disaster Management Unit  
The Bahamas  
Tel: (242) 322-2805  
Fax: (242) 326-5456  
Email: bahdisoff@bahamas.gov.bs

Central Emergency Relief Organisation  
Barbados  
Tel: (246) 427-8513  
Fax: (246) 429-4055  
Email: cero@caribsurf.com  
<http://www.cero.gov.bb>

National Emergency Management Organization  
Belize (Central America)  
Tel: (501) 8-222054  
Fax: (501) 8-222861  
Email: nemobelize@nemo.org.bz  
<http://www.nemo.org.bz>

Department of Disaster Management  
BVI  
Tel: (284) 494-4499  
Fax: (284) 494-2024  
Email: bviddm@surfbvi.com  
<http://www.bviddm.com/>

Office of Disaster Management  
Dominica  
Tel: (767) 448-2401 ext 3296  
Fax: (767) 448-2883  
Email: j73cs@yahoo.com

National Disaster Management Agency  
Grenada  
Tel: (473) 440-0838  
Fax: (473) 440-6674  
Email: nadma@caribsurf.com

Civil Defense Commission  
Guyana  
Tel: (592) 226-1114, 226-1117,  
Fax: (592) 226-1027  
Email: cdc@sdpn.org.gy

Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management  
Jamaica  
Tel: (876) 928-5111-4  
Fax: (876) 928-5503/8763  
Email: hcarhy@odpem.org.jm  
<http://www.odpem.org.jm>

Disaster Management Coordination Agency  
Montserrat  
Tel: (664) 491-7166  
Fax: (664) 491-2465/7003  
Email: cuittqh@gov.ms

National Emergency Management Agency  
St Kitts and Nevis  
Tel: (869) 466-5100  
Fax: (869) 466-5310  
Email: nemaskb@thecable.net

National Emergency Management Organisation  
Saint Lucia  
Tel: (758) 452-3802/2611 Ext 8035  
Fax: (758) 453-2152  
Email: eoc@canclw.lc  
<http://www.geocities.com/slunemo>

National Emergency Management Office  
St Vincent and the Grenadines  
Tel: (784) 456-2975  
Fax: (784) 457-1691  
Email: nemosvg@yahoo.com

National Emergency Management Agency  
Trinidad and Tobago  
Tel: (868) 686-3808  
Fax: (868) 625-8926  
Email: info@nema.gov.tt  
<http://www.nema.gov.tt>  
NEMA Tobago  
<http://www.nematobago.com>

Disaster Management Unit  
Turks and Caicos Islands  
Tel: (649) 946-2801