



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Talking about emergencies with children can be difficult because no one wants to create unnecessary fear and no one wants to think that an emergency could happen to them. However, the reality is that emergencies can strike anyone at any time, and the best defense is preparation. The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services created a list of activities for children to help them learn about emergency preparedness. These could be used at youth retreats, youth group meetings, or religious classes. Activities are listed below, separated by age group.

Elementary Age

- Conduct scavenger hunts for items that would be included in an emergency kit, such as a flashlight, batteries, battery-operated radio, canned or dried food, water, first aid kit, medicines (for the scavenger hunt, empty medicine bottles will do), toilet paper, and rain gear.
- Discuss different places that emergencies could happen, such as at school, at home, or at church and what you should do to prepare for those different types of situations. Have children write and illustrate a storybook to tell how to prepare for one of those emergency situations.
- Brainstorm words that relate to emergency preparedness, such as tornado, flashlight, plan, first aid, and create and illustrate flash cards to quiz others about the definitions of those words, and discuss how they relate to emergency preparedness.
- Design artwork to decorate the outside of an emergency kit.
- Play a role-playing game where the adult acts as the child and the child acts as the adult. Children should be able to answer your questions about how to prepare for an emergency. You can ask questions such as: *What do we do when a tornado comes? What is an emergency plan? Where is our emergency kit? What do we put into an emergency kit?*
- Make a kit. Arrange a large number of items on a table along with several larger containers. Items should include things needed to make an emergency kit – a blanket, flashlight, batteries, water, and toilet paper. Also have items that you would include in a car emergency kit. Ask children to pick between items they would put into a home emergency kit and items they would include in a car emergency kit. Discuss why they chose each item for each kit.

Middle School Age

- Have children conduct a scavenger hunt for relevant passages in spiritual texts that discuss emergency preparedness and/or safety. There are several stories in many different texts that tell stories of how people have been faced with emergencies and disasters and show how they've prepared for them.
- Adopt a needy family and put together an emergency kit for them to use. Make sure to have enough food and water for each member of the family and pets, if they have them.

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- Write and perform a skit for the congregation on emergency preparedness during worship services. The skit should have a problem (for example, someone isn't sure how to prepare for an emergency) and a solution (a friend tells them about the *Ready in 3* program and where they can go for information).
- Hold a poster contest with the theme – “Helping others prepare for emergencies”. Have parents or group leaders judge the contest.
- Hold a video contest where children create a commercial or television show telling the audience how to prepare for an emergency. Have a viewing party to watch the videos.
- Tour a fire department, or other emergency service providers.

High School Age

- Adopt a needy family and put together an emergency kit for them to use, including all appropriate items. Make sure to have enough food and water for each member of the family and pets, if they have them.
- Create an emergency kit for their car.
- Volunteer to spend time with an older member of the congregation/community and help them prepare an emergency plan and emergency kit that takes their needs into account. They may have trouble moving quickly or have special medical needs, so be sure to take these into account when discussing how to prepare.
- Volunteer with local shelters to help put emergency kits together. In order to assemble kits for a larger group of people, it may also be feasible for the congregation to sponsor a drive for emergency kit items, supplying a list of needed items to members of the congregation.
- Students could write stories for their high school newspapers on emergency preparedness. One particular item to highlight would be the necessity of an emergency kit for the car as most students are beginning to drive. Stories could also include interviews with other teens about their stories with emergencies and the importance of being prepared.
- Brainstorm a community service project that involves working with a local disaster relief organization to help others become prepared for an emergency and put it into action.
- Create content for the church's web site telling members of the congregation how to prepare for an emergency and provide them with other resources. This could direct others to health.mo.gov.

Resources

There are several resources available for children to learn about emergencies. For example, <http://ready.gov/kids> has several links for kids that give information and provide workbook activities for them to measure what they've learned. Additionally, the Family Safety Guide, created by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services can help children learn how to establish a family plan, create an emergency kit, and teach them what information to listen for during an actual emergency. Additional information can be found by visiting health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3.