

**TOPIC:** Emergency Preparedness for Resource Families

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Micro Training Course Developed by  
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When you are a foster parent, fire safety and disaster preparedness are important. This course examines the requirements, rules, and regulations regarding fire safety, disaster preparedness, and emergency drills. If you know this information—you'll be able to ensure a safer environment for your foster children.

**Fire Safety Requirements:**

All foster homes are required to meet basic life and fire safety standards in accordance with 7 AAC 10.1010 (Life and Fire Safety). Each home must be equipped with at least one monitored battery powered smoke detector located in each bedroom. For multi-leveled homes, at least one working smoke detector and a fully charged dry chemical fire extinguisher (2A10BC) is required on each level of the house. For homes using oil, wood, natural gas, or propane as a heating or cooking fuel, a working carbon monoxide detector is required within each sleeping area, or no more than three feet from the entrance to that area. Each level of the home must have at least one working carbon monoxide detector. There must be two means of emergency escape in different areas of the house and include doors and windows which meet the current building codes. Each child needs an operable window in their sleeping area to provide a means of escape during an emergency. There needs to be enough room for a firefighter with equipment to get through the window.

**Remember:**

Inspect windows regularly during winter inspect windows regularly to ensure they are not frozen shut.

If using a wood stove:

- Teach your children safety rules in order to prevent injury.
- Clean the stack regularly.
- Take special precautions to supervise children.

**Emergency Drills:**

Each home is required to have a emergency evacuation plan that is practiced at least once a month. (Exception-- children in care 12 years old or older who have practiced the drill at least three times. Then fire drills must be practiced once every three months.) Every completed drill must be documented including the date, time, participants, evacuation time, and an evaluation of how the drill went. Regulations state the drill must be completed in under 150 seconds, or two and a half minutes.

While it is not a requirement for earthquake drills to be conducted and documented, especially in Alaska you and your children need to respond in your home. Key points to teach your family are: when indoors, immediately duck and seek cover from any sturdy piece of furniture like a desk or table. (Think *DROP*, *COVER*, and *HOLD ON*.) If you are outside, go to an open area away from buildings and power lines. When in a vehicle, stop in a safe location away from bridges, overpasses, and tunnels, and avoid stopping under trees, light posts, power lines, or signs. Be aware of your surroundings. For example, if you are in a mountainous area, keep an eye out for falling rocks and other debris that may have been loosened from

the earthquake. If you are on or close to the beach, move to higher ground and inland immediately. The likelihood of a tsunami occurring increases the more severe an earthquake is, and there may not be enough time for the warning systems to alert people of an impending tsunami.

#### **Important Parts of a Drill:**

- Plan your evacuation route and make sure the entire household knows it.
- Practice drill once a month (see above for exception to this rule).
- Drill must be completed in under 150 sec.
- Document drill.
- For children under 30 months with special needs, you must specify how you will evacuate that child.

#### **Children With Special Needs:**

When it comes to ensuring safety for special needs children in an emergency, special accommodations may be needed. For example, for a hearing impaired child, resource families should consider strobe light smoke alarms, as well as special alarms that vibrate the child's bed when the smoke alarm goes off. Children with cognitive disorders must understand the meaning of a smoke alarm and what to do when they hear it. The parents can teach this by using stories with pictures and ideas the children already

understands. A child may not respond well to the sound of alarms, so consider using a voice recordable smoke alarm to record a familiar voice telling the child to get out of the house. Parents of children with special needs should call the local fire department to let them know of their child's special needs. The Center for Children with Special Needs has a website with an abundance of valuable information pertaining to assisting families with special needs children during an emergency. You can access all of this information by going to their website at: <http://cshcn.org/planning-record-keeping/emergency-preparedness-for-children-with-special-needs/>

#### **Disaster Preparedness:**

Take a moment to reflect on the needs of your children if there was no water, electricity, telephone, heat, or refrigeration, a lack of transportation, confinement to home or evacuation to a shelter, separation from family members, no mobility aids, no local access to prescription refills or health product supplies, or limited health care access and emergency rescue services. Now consider just how prepared you and your family are to deal with any of these emergencies. Would you know what to do, where to go, or how to survive? Consider these questions and scenarios carefully. We live in Alaska where there are increased instances of earthquakes, fires, and other disasters. Being prepared for them will help your family to stay calm and overcome whatever obstacle that has been thrown at you and your family.

In addition to your first aid kit, the higher likelihood of emergencies related to snow, cold, and potential earthquakes make having a disaster kit a must for Alaskans and a requirement for all foster families. It is also important to communicate with your children what to do in the event of a disaster, so they can be prepared and safe.

#### **YOUR DISASTER KIT SHOULD INCLUDE:**

- At least 1 flashlight with extra batteries
- At least 1 battery operated radio with extra batteries
- Potable water
- Non perishable foods