

News Release

For more information, contact: ota@aaos.org

Unexpected Events Require Advance Preparation

Orthopaedic surgeons stress need to plan for unforeseen catastrophes

ROSEMONT, Ill. — Disasters – such as hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, tornados, blizzards, tsunamis or other catastrophes – can strike at any time without warning. They have the potential to cause injury or death. That is why the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) and the Orthopaedic Trauma Association (OTA) believe advance planning for disaster management is essential – especially for people with medical conditions – to reduce injuries and save lives.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), there were more than 68 major disasters declared in 2004, the highest since 1953. Some of the recent natural disasters have garnered national attention. Due to their regularity, it is crucial that people plan for catastrophes – before they occur – to effectively protect themselves and their loved ones.

While there is no way to predict what will happen or what each personal circumstance will entail, there are simple things people can do right now to prepare for an unexpected emergency.

AAOS and OTA offer the following tips to aid in planning for an unforeseen disaster:

- Assemble an emergency kit at the home and workplace – to be stored in a safe, accessible place – that contains a first-aid kit, flashlights, batteries, small battery-powered radio, whistle or other signaling device, waterproof matches, toilet paper, plastic sheeting and duct tape, sturdy shoes, blankets, and enough canned or non-perishable food and bottled water for at least three days.
- Appoint an “emergency” contact to determine the whereabouts and health status of family members during catastrophes.
- Take appropriate cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first-aid classes to prepare for medical emergencies.

- Keep physicians’ names and emergency phone numbers for all immediate family members in your wallet and each emergency kit.
- Make a list of all illnesses and corresponding prescription medication for each member of your household. Store in each emergency kit.
- Keep an emergency supply – at least 14 days’ worth – of prescription medicine on hand.

Page 2/ Unexpected Events Require Advance Preparation

- Create identification bracelets for young children, in case they are separated from parents or family members.
- Keep a “survival kit” in the trunk of your car, which should be modified as appropriate for each season, the climate or region you live. Suggested items may include sleeping bags or blankets, bottled water, non-perishable food, toilet paper, whistle, flares or other emergency signaling device, jumper cables, maps, tools, gloves, rope for towing or rescue, first-aid kit and fire extinguisher.
- Maintain a small file of important documents – insurance papers, social security cards, passports, wills, licenses, stock certificates, property titles and birth certificates – which may be difficult to replace. Store in a safety deposit box, fireproof home safe or an easily retrievable location.
- Prepare evacuation plan and make note of all possible exits in the home or workplace.
- Prepare and practice drills for fire and other common disasters with your family.
- Educate yourself and others on local disaster policies and procedures.
- Notify neighbors or your community of major health conditions or disabilities that may interfere with your ability to respond to a disaster.
- Keep a fully charged cell phone with a back-up battery on hand.
- In case of a medical emergency, remain calm. If phone lines are working, call 911.

An orthopaedic surgeon is a physician with extensive training in the diagnosis and treatment of non-surgical as well as surgical treatment of the musculoskeletal system including bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles and nerves.

The Orthopaedic Trauma Association (www.ota.org) is a not-for-profit organization that promotes excellence in orthopaedic trauma patient care at hospitals and trauma centers throughout North America. Its members provide worldwide leadership through education, research and patient advocacy.

With 28,000 members, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (www.aaos.org) or (www.orthoinfo.org), is a not-for-profit organization that provides education programs for orthopaedic surgeons, allied health professionals and the public. An advocate for improved patient care, the Academy is participating in the Bone and Joint Decade (www.usbjd.org), the global initiative in the years 2002-2011 to raise awareness of musculoskeletal health to stimulate research and improve people's quality of life. President Bush has declared the years 2002-2011 National Bone and Joint Decade in support of these objectives.

###