

Planning ahead for crises and disasters



Federal Office
of Civil Protection and
Disaster Assistance

The **Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (Bundesamt für Bevölkerungsschutz und Katastrophenhilfe, BBK)** is your reliable **partner for emergency planning and self-protection**. Further information on all topics in this brochure can be found on our homepage:

www.bbk.bund.de/vorsorge



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Preparation pays off

Germany is one of the safest countries in the world. Nevertheless, we are also experiencing crises in Germany that are disrupting our usual daily routines. Extreme weather events are increasing. Cyberattacks, disinformation and sabotage are being used to attack infrastructure, opinion formation and social cohesion. Even the idea of war, which seemed to be out of the question just a few years ago, no longer feels quite so far-fetched. If something happens, it's better to be prepared.

This brochure will support you in preparing for extreme situations and show you how to get through them as safely as possible.



How preparation helps you in an extreme situation

- You **know what to do** and can stay calmer as a result.
- You can **take care of yourself and others** until help arrives.
- You can **relieve the burden on the emergency services**. They can then support people who are unable to help themselves.

An overview of recommended preparations can be found in the checklist on page 32.

Step by step

All households should be able to provide for themselves for **10 days** if possible. This means ensuring water and food, medical supplies, and toiletries are in place for an emergency. But even having supplies set aside for **at least 3 days** is a big help. You can build on this step by step.

It's safe to say that any preparation is valuable.



When everyday life is interrupted

There are many reasons why our everyday lives may be interrupted. An **accident**, **extreme weather** or **sabotage** can **damage electricity cables, mobile phone lines, or water or gas pipes**. **Cyberattacks** can **disrupt IT systems** that we need in everyday life, those used in hospitals, utility companies or supermarkets, for example. Individual disruptions can have different effects simultaneously and affect many people. It may take some time before all those affected receive help. In these situations, planning ahead provides relief.



Medical treatment

The failure of power or water supplies, IT outages or even restricted capacity in hospitals make medical treatment more difficult.

Orders/deliveries

If IT systems are not working, goods cannot be ordered or delivered.



Tap water

Waterworks need electricity and digital systems. Without them, the water supply fails.



Internet/mobile networks

Without electricity or functioning digital systems, the mobile phone network fails. The Internet isn't available, and you can no longer make phone calls.

Payment transactions

Without electricity or IT systems, electronic payment systems fail. Withdrawals from ATMs and payments by card or mobile phone no longer work.

Refrigeration

The fridge stops working.

Cooking

The cooker doesn't work.

Drinking and washing

No water comes out of the tap.

Information

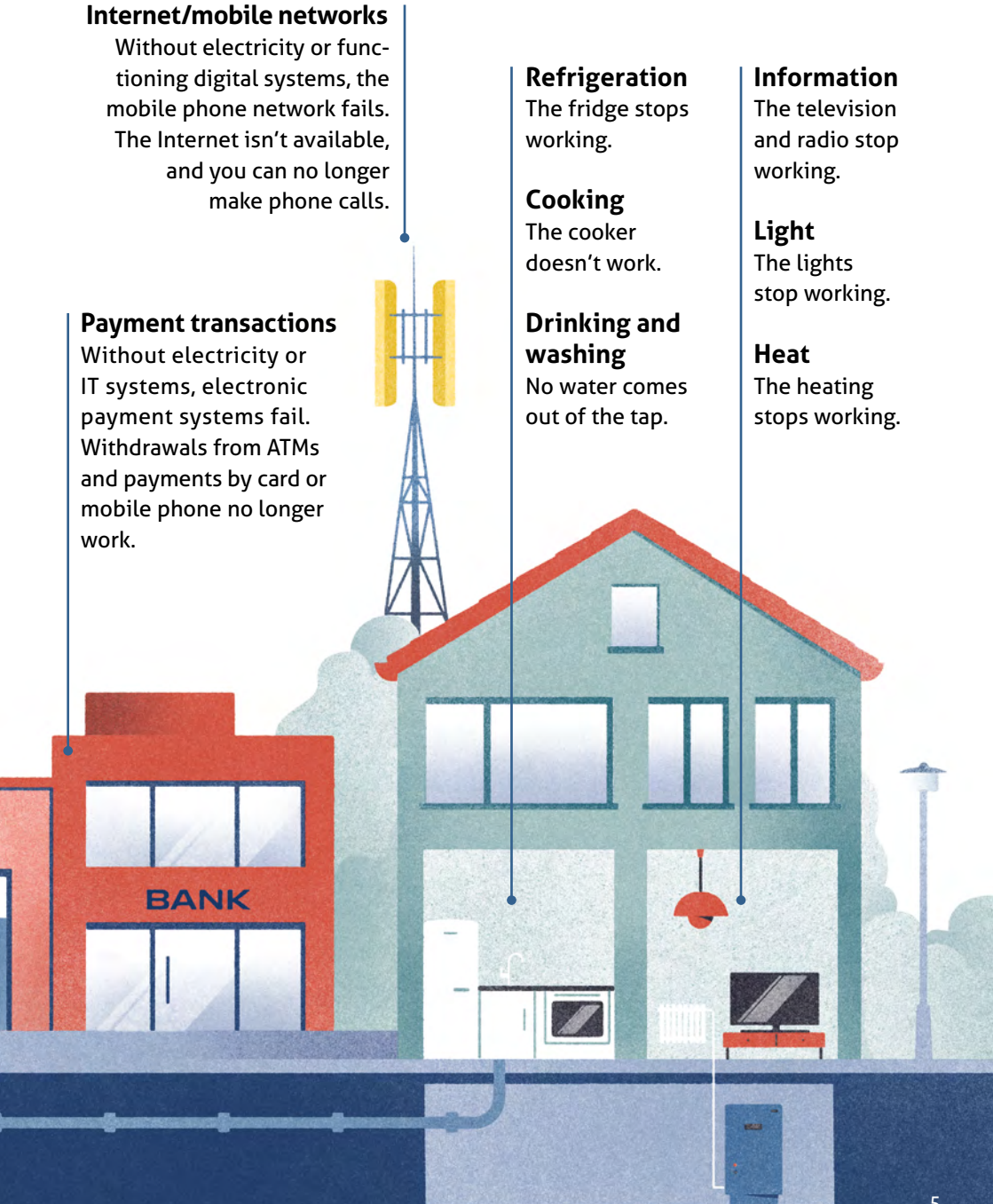
The television and radio stop working.

Light

The lights stop working.

Heat

The heating stops working.



Stocking up on food and drink

Having an **emergency supply** of food and drink can be helpful in many situations – be it in the event of a sudden power cut, extreme weather conditions, a sudden illness or if the shelves at the grocery shop remain empty. You should be able to provide for yourself for **10 days** if possible. But even having supplies set aside for **at least 3 days** is a big help. You can build on this step by step.

Here's what sensible supplies might include

Food: Suitable products for your emergency supply will vary depending on your personal requirements. These points are also important and might help you put together your supplies:

- **Durable.** Food that does not need to be refrigerated will not spoil during a power cut.
- **Ready to eat.** Food that does not need to be cooked is edible even if your cooker stops working.
- **Short cooking time.** Food that can be cooked with little energy means that the valuable energy of your camping stove or barbecue will last longer.
- **Who are the supplies for?** Do you have any allergies or dietary requirements that need to be catered for? Do you have supplies for (small) children and pets that you also need to look after in an emergency?



For those who like precise information, **tables with sample supplies**, tips on preservation and storage, as well as a **calculator for supplies** can be found here: www.ernaehrungsvorsorge.de/private-vorsorge/notvorrat/vorratskalkulator



Water: Having a stockpile of water is important if there is no water coming from the tap or if the tap water is contaminated. Drinking water is very important – more important than food.

- **How much water?** Ideally 2 litres per person per day. Of this, 0.5 litres is intended as water for cooking. Think of your pets too!

Water requirement for 3 people



Planning for people with disabilities

In the event of an emergency or disaster, it is important to be well-prepared – especially if you need assistive technology or support in everyday life. **Preparation does not have to be elaborate.** However, it is often very individual. So think about what you need if, for example, the power goes out or you need to leave the house quickly – in addition to the general recommendations in this brochure.



Things that may be important for you in an emergency

- ✓ Assistive technology such as glasses or hearing aids
- ✓ Replacement batteries, rechargeable batteries and chargers for technical aids
- ✓ Mobility aids if you need to leave the house quickly
- ✓ Medication plan and a supply of necessary medication (think about shelf life and storage)
- ✓ Sufficient animal food and water if you have an assistance animal
- ✓ List of emergency contacts
- ✓ Emergency health card
- ✓ Tip: Find out about escape routes. If you are unable to use them, think about who can support you and how.

Communication with the emergency services

Think about how you and the emergency services can communicate with each other in an emergency.

With an **emergency health card**, you can, for example, show which type of communication you use. This can also contain important information on illnesses, allergies, aids and emergency contacts. Emergency health cards are available from various providers, for example your GP, health insurance companies, emergency services or social organisations. Ask for one there.

A pen and paper can also be helpful to communicate with emergency services in writing if necessary.

What else you can do

- Talk to those around you (neighbours, family, friends) about how they can support you in an emergency situation.
- First aid skills can save lives in an emergency. Some organisations also offer first aid courses in plain language or German sign language. You can also enquire about courses for blind and visually impaired people.
- People with hearing impairments can have smoke alarms installed that use vibration and light.



Tip

Many smartphones also offer the option of creating a digital emergency health card. This can also be opened when the screen is locked.



Are you familiar with nora?

With the nora emergency call app, you can make an emergency call without having to speak.

www.nora-notruf.de



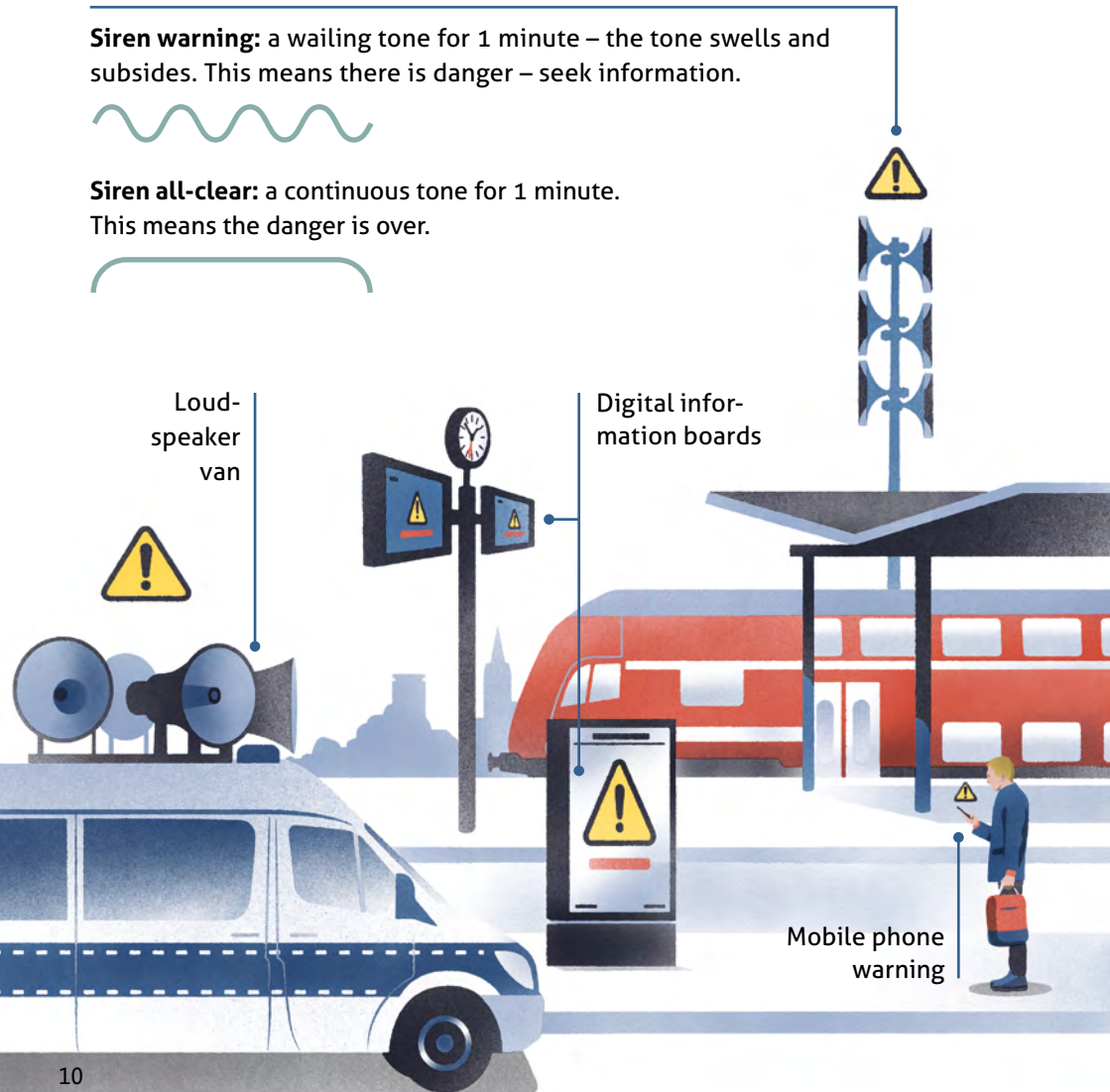
Receiving and understanding warnings

The responsible authorities warn of dangers through various channels and provide recommendations for action. You will receive most information via warning apps and the radio. In particularly dangerous situations, additional warnings are issued via sirens and mobile phones.

Siren warning: a wailing tone for 1 minute – the tone swells and subsides. This means there is danger – seek information.



Siren all-clear: a continuous tone for 1 minute. This means the danger is over.



What you can do

- **Download a warning app**, for example the NINA warning app. This gives you direct access to important information. You can download the NINA warning app here:



Android



Apple

System failure warning

In the event of a power cut or mobile phone network failure, many warning channels do not work.

- **Pass on official warnings** – to neighbours, friends and family. It's possible that not everyone has received the information.
- **Stay reachable** if you are affected by a crisis. For example, keep your mobile phone ready to receive calls, even at night.
- **Take official warnings seriously** – warnings contain important information about protecting yourself and others.



Staying informed during a crisis

Devices such as **TVs**, **computers** or **telephones** can fail for various reasons. If the power fails, you will not be able to charge or use your devices. A cyberattack, storm or sabotage can also affect the mobile phone network or access to the **Internet**. In this case, you can no longer use your mobile phone to make calls, send messages or use the Internet.

How you can prepare yourself

Contacts: A printed or handwritten list of important numbers helps if you cannot access your digitally stored contacts.

Power bank: A power bank is a rechargeable battery to which various devices can be connected. For example, you can use a power bank to charge your mobile phone or laptop in the event of a power failure.



Tip

Many online maps can be downloaded and used offline. They can help with orientation if you do not have Internet access.



Here's where to find information and help in an emergency

Know your contact points: It is helpful to know where you can get information locally in an emergency (e.g. town halls or emergency meeting points).

Help in an emergency: If the emergency numbers 110 and 112 no longer work, go to the nearest police station or hospital in an emergency if possible.

Support others by passing on information from the authorities.

Information via radio

Information when the mobile network and Internet fail

If the mobile network and Internet stop working, warning apps and mobile phone alerts will also fail. However, radio stations will still work. A radio is therefore important in emergencies and crises.

Information in the event of a power failure

In the event of a power failure, car radios, hand-crank radios and battery-operated radios still work, as they do not require power from a socket.



Recognising trustworthy information

Correct information about the situation and appropriate recommendations for action are very important in order to get through a crisis with the best possible outcome.

In **unclear situations**, you may receive contradictory and incorrect information, for example on social networks. Sometimes, **misunderstandings** or **rumours** arise in this way. There are also parties who deliberately spread **misinformation**. They want to influence opinions, unsettle people, undermine trust in government action and weaken social cohesion. The more emotional or dramatic a report is, the more frequently it is disseminated. This effect is often used to spread deliberately false information. **Disinformation** is very dangerous, especially in emergencies and crises! After all, disinformation can unsettle you and cause you to misjudge situations.

How to act

Scrutinise information critically instead of simply forwarding it! Caution is required, especially in an unclear situation. Think and check before you share information:

Is the sender / original source reputable?

Who published the video, image or news first?
Is this a reputable news source?

The provision of a real name can be an indication of the authenticity of a profile. Take a look at the legal notice on websites. This should specify the person responsible for the content of the website. The legal notice must contain a real name and the full address, not just an anonymous e-mail address.

Is the information based on facts?

Are references and sources given that indicate the accuracy of the facts presented?

Many reputable media organisations have good fact-checking departments that check news, images and video material before further use.



If you have answered **NO** to one of these questions, this could be disinformation. Do not spread the information further.

Do other sources agree?

Can you find similar reports from trustworthy sources on the Internet?

It always helps to compare questionable news with other sources.

Dealing with fears and worries

In a dangerous or extreme situation, it is normal to feel helpless. Crises can trigger anxiety and uncertainty as to whether you can cope well with the situation. Being prepared and knowing what you can do for yourself and others in an emergency helps to reduce anxiety and worry.

What might help you in or after emergency situations

- Keeping in touch and talking with other people
- Maintaining daily routines and making a plan for the day
- Going outside if possible
- Exercising, doing sport
- Taking time to switch off and rest, and taking breaks
- Distracting yourself and doing things that are also good for “normal” everyday stress
- Using relaxation techniques
- If possible, getting enough sleep, drinking enough and eating regularly
- Only consuming as much news as is necessary to stay up to date – it can help to set daily time periods for media consumption.



Advice and help

You can get support and advice from the telephone counselling service around the clock – free of charge and anonymously if you wish.



0800 111 0 111 or
0800 111 0 222 or
116 123

www.telefonseelsorge.de



Mutual support helps

Mutual understanding and support within families and among friends can help with challenging situations: you can offer support to other people affected, but you may also need it yourself. Talk to others:

- This helps you gain an overview of the situation and assess it realistically.
- Just the feeling of not being alone with your fears can help in a difficult situation.
- Don't just look at the damage caused, plan and discuss the next steps together.

Mutual help and support give you the sense that you are doing something worthwhile in a crisis. This makes you feel less helpless and powerless.



Talking to children about crises

Through the media, school or conversations with adults, children can hear news that unsettles and frightens them – for example about emergencies, wars or disasters. It is important to take children’s worries seriously and not to leave them alone with their fears.

Every child is different

Children show evidence of stress in different ways and differently to adults. Some children have concentration problems or nightmares. Some children initially display no apparent reaction – perhaps contrary to expectations. Other children appear anxious or irritable. However your child reacts, show understanding.

Offer your child the chance to do something together. Some children are good at expressing their thoughts, feelings and wishes through drawing or writing. Younger children process their feelings through play.



Advice and help

Most reactions to crises are normal. However, if you are very worried about your child, don’t be afraid to seek advice. Your paediatrician, counselling centres, or child and adolescent psychotherapists can provide support.

Free advice for parents, young people and children is available, for example, at www.nummergegenkummer.de



How you can provide support

Children often ask questions by themselves when something is bothering them. Listen carefully if your child has questions and wants to talk about current events.

- Answer questions openly and honestly. Try to speak as objectively, simply and clearly as possible. You can also watch age-appropriate news formats together. However, don't force conversations about crises on your child if they don't want to talk about them.
- If an event is stressful for you, your child should be able to understand your behaviour. Explain why you are worried or sad. This shows that it is completely normal and understandable for crises to make us feel insecure.
- Convey positive messages, for example, "We'll look after you", "We're here for you", "We're well prepared." Children should feel that they are safe and supported by their parents and those around them.



Treating medical emergencies yourself

In a crisis or disaster, the emergency services, hospitals and pharmacies may be temporarily unavailable. It therefore makes sense to have important medication at home. A medicine cabinet can help you to deal with small emergencies yourself.

What a medicine cabinet should contain

- **Personal medication**, for example, asthma inhaler, according to individual requirements. If you are regularly dependent on medication, it makes sense to have supplies for at least ten days.
- **Material for wound care**, for example, plasters and gauze bandages.
- **Basic equipment**, for example, painkillers and clinical thermometers.

A detailed **checklist** can be found on page 33.

How you can prepare yourself

You can learn and practise life-saving measures by taking part in first aid course. This gives you peace of mind if someone needs help. If it has been some time since your last first aid course, it's advisable to brush up on your knowledge!

As part of a first aid course, for example, you can learn how to dress wounds that are bleeding heavily.



Tip

Anyone can help in the event of a cardiac arrest by doing chest compressions. Learning resuscitation through chest compressions is not difficult. Simple instructions can be found in first aid courses or at:
www.wiederbelebung.de

How to apply a pressure bandage

If a wound is very deep and bleeding heavily, a pressure bandage is necessary to stop the loss of blood. It is useful for you to know how to apply a pressure bandage if medical care is temporarily limited. **First aid boxes** or **first aid kits** contain materials for treating injuries. These provide a good backup if you don't want to buy the items individually.



Step 1:

Place a compress on the wound.



Step 2:

Wrap a gauze bandage around the compress two or three times.



Step 3:

Place a pressure pad on top of the wound. You can make a pressure pad by using another gauze bandage from your first aid kit.



Step 4:

Wrap another gauze bandage around the pressure pad several times, then secure the gauze bandage with strips of plaster.

Cooking without electricity

In the event of a power failure, your electric cooker will no longer work. If you have a gas hob, you can often continue to use it. There are also other alternatives:

You can cook indoors with the following:

- A teapot warmer with a tea light can be used to heat up food (e.g. ready-made soup).
- A fondue set with fuel gel can bring small quantities of food to the boil.
- A gas stove can be used for cooking if it is approved for indoor use.

You should only cook outdoors with the following:

- Camping stoves with gas cartridges
- Gas or charcoal barbecues



Important

Dangers of cooking and heating without electricity

Only use appliances indoors if they are approved for indoor use! Such appliances are equipped with special safety mechanisms. Beware of naked flames indoors! If there is too little oxygen in the air you are breathing, carbon monoxide may be produced during combustion. **Carbon monoxide poisoning is life-threatening.** It is best to install tested and approved carbon monoxide detectors. These trigger an alarm at a critical concentration.



Tips and recipes for cooking without electricity can be found on the BBK website:
www.bbk.bund.de/notfallkochbuch

When heating fails

Without electricity, your heating may stop working. If the heating fails in winter, rooms can quickly cool down. Gas heaters, ethanol fires or paraffin stoves approved for indoor use work without electricity and can be used safely indoors.

What you can do:

- With **warm clothing, blankets and sleeping bags**, you can bridge the gap for a while.
- **Keep windows and doors closed** to avoid heat loss, but **ensure regular ventilation!** Open the windows wide for a few minutes to improve air quality.



Reacting when there's a fire

If a fire breaks out in your home, it is important to act quickly.

You should note the following:

1. Only **extinguish** the fire if you are not putting yourself in danger.
2. **Immediately leave the room** in which the fire is burning if extinguishing it is not possible. If possible, close the windows and close the door when leaving the room. This deprives the fire of oxygen. This also prevents smoke from spreading into the hallway.
3. **Warn and help** people in your household.
4. **Leave the building.** Never flee through smoke-filled rooms or stairwells. Even a few breaths of smoke from a fire are life-threatening. If escape routes are filled with smoke, make yourself heard loudly at a window.
5. **Call the fire brigade on 112.**
6. **Warn** your neighbours.

Remember, never put yourself in danger!

How you can prepare yourself

Smoke alarms draw attention to toxic smoke and are generally important in all rooms except the bathroom and kitchen.

You can extinguish small fires with **fire extinguishers**. They can also be used if a person's clothing has caught fire. Familiarise yourself with these devices! Burning kitchen fat, wax or liquid fuels (such as oil or petrol) **must not be extinguished with water**, but only with fire extinguishers or extinguishing sprays of fire class F. Using water would cause it to suddenly vaporise and lead to a **fat explosion**.

Find out about **escape routes** – at home, at work and also in unfamiliar surroundings.

Storing documents securely

If you have to leave the house suddenly, you should have important documents to hand. They can be lost in the event of a fire or flood. It can be difficult or even impossible to obtain new ones. Store the documents in a fireproof and/or water-proof container.

Documents are important if they ...

- ... provide proof of identity, for example, birth certificate and identity card.
- ... provide proof of ownership, for example, land register entries or purchase contracts.
- ... provide proof of financial claims, for example, insurance policies.
- ... provide proof of qualifications, for example, school and work certificates.
- ... provide proof of rights, for example, powers of attorney or court decisions.
- ... contain important personal information, for example, wills or medical reports, vaccination cards or password lists.
- ... are emotionally important, for example, a selection of photos that you don't want to lose.



Tip

Ask the issuing institution whether the document must be an original or a certified copy.

Make a digital copy of your documents. Back up important digital documents in a cloud, on a portable hard drive or a USB stick.



Having emergency bags to hand

Imagine that there is a **fire in your neighbourhood** and suddenly your home is also affected. But you are well prepared and have **your emergency bags to hand**. You and your family quickly leave the house in the middle of the night. **You have your keys, mobile phone and wallet to hand.**



Thanks to your **charged power bank**, you can continue to communicate and keep yourself informed.



What emergency bags should include:

- Warm clothing, rain protection and, ideally, sturdy shoes
- Change of clothes
- Important documents (see page 25)
- Charged power bank
- First aid material
- Personal medication and toiletries
- Durable food and refillable drinking bottle
- Cash

In an emergency situation, you may have to find temporary accommodation elsewhere or have limited access to medical care. Having **personal medication** with you is particularly important.



Seeking shelter

There are situations in which it is crucial to know where you can best reach safety. In the event of natural disasters, nuclear and chemical accidents or, in the worst case, a military attack – depending on the situation – it can vary greatly as to whether a place is safe or relatively dangerous. Here are some examples of which places can offer protection in which situations. In principle, the following applies: pay attention to warnings and follow any recommendations and possible instructions.

Upper storeys

In the event of **gases** or **vapour** leaking outdoors, go into a building and close windows and doors. If possible, make your way to the upper storeys. Most gases are heavier than air and collect on the ground. Seal windows and doors and switch off ventilation systems.

Outdoor area

In the event of **gases**, **vapour** or **hazardous liquids** leaking in the building, leave the building.

Underground rooms

If **radioactive substances** escape or in the event of **explosions**, keep as low as possible, away from windows and glass surfaces. Seek shelter in internal spaces or preferably in basements, underground car parks or underground stations. Thick walls and earth increase protection against radiation, shock waves and flying debris.

Higher areas or upper storeys

In the event of **flooding, heavy rain, flash floods or storm surges**, higher areas or upper storeys offer the best protection.

Do not enter the cellar under any circumstances. If the cellar is flooded, you can no longer open the door from the inside.

There is also a risk of a fatal electric shock. Avoid underground car parks, underground stations and subways.

Car

In the event of **gases and vapour** leaking outdoors and there being no building within reach, you can find protection in your car. Switch off the ventilation and air conditioning.



Protection from explosions

In explosions, shock waves, flying debris and glass splinters pose a big danger. The same is true of air strikes.

However, most buildings in Germany are solidly built. **Internal spaces** without windows and with as few external walls and doors as possible therefore offer effective protection. In the event of an explosion, no injuries can be caused by glass splinters, for example.

These are suitable rooms

- **Windowless cellars** offer a lot of protection.
- If you do not have a cellar, internal spaces such as **stairwells, bathrooms or hallways** are also suitable. Remember, **avoid the attic!** A roof offers little protection against shock waves and flying glass splinters or debris.
- You can also seek shelter in publicly accessible facilities such as **schools, museums, underground car parks or underground stations**. It is important to put plenty of distance between yourself and open entrances, windows and doors. Lifts should no longer be used.



Tip

Further information on how to behave in the event of explosions can be found at www.bbk.bund.de/explosionen

The rule of “2 walls”

Remember: for good protection, make sure that there are **2 walls between you and outdoor spaces**. If the first wall, i.e. the outer wall of a building, is damaged by an explosion, the second wall can protect you from penetrating splinters and debris. The more shielded the room is inside the building, the better.



Green = Here you will find good protection

Checklist

Your needs vary depending on your situation in life. These are general instructions for preparing for emergencies and disasters. Check what is appropriate for your situation. It can also make sense to buy and share things with others. Any preparation counts!

Food and drink

- Drinking water:
2 litres per person per day for:
 - 3 days
 - 5 days
 - 7 days
 - 10 days

- Durable food
for all persons for:
 - 3 days
 - 5 days
 - 7 days
 - 10 days

- Alternative cooking facilities
(such as a camping stove or
gas barbecue)

- Fuels for cooking facilities
(such as gas)

- Food supplies
for pets

Information/communication

- Solar or battery-powered
radio incl. batteries or
hand-crank radio

- Warning app installed
(such as NINA)

- Charged power bank

- List of important telephone
numbers on paper

Light and warmth

- Torch and spare batteries

- Candles and lighter

- Warm clothing and blankets

- Sleeping bags

- Heating source independent of
the mains (such as gas heaters,
paraffin stoves, ethanol fires)

- Fuels for heating source

Medicine cabinet

- Personal medication
- Painkillers
- Antipyretics
- Clinical thermometer
- Remedies for diarrhoea, vomiting and nausea
- Remedies for cold symptoms
- Electrolytes to compensate for fluid loss
- Wound disinfectant
- Skin disinfectant
- Plasters and bandages
- Dressing for burns
- Disposable gloves
- Cold compress
- Remedy for sunburn and insect bites
- Gel for cooling and reducing swelling for minor sports injuries
- Decongestant nasal drops or nasal spray
- Tweezers
- Scissors
- Burn, wound and healing ointment

Emergency bags

- Warm clothing, rain protection and sturdy shoes
- Change of clothes
- First aid materials
- Personal medication
- Charged power bank
- Toiletries
- Durable food and refillable drinking bottle
- Folder with important documents
- Sleeping bag or blanket
- Tableware
- Pocket knife and tin opener
- Torch
- Battery- or solar-powered radio or hand-crank radio
- Lighter or matches
- Sun cream and head protection
- Notepad and pen
- Work gloves
- Replacement assistive technology such as glasses or hearing aids
- Cash

Fire protection

- Smoke detectors
- Fire extinguisher / fire extinguisher spray
- Carbon monoxide detector

Hygiene

- Toothpaste, toothbrushes
- Soap
- Personal toiletries (such as feminine hygiene products, nappies)
- Bin liners, including large and sturdy ones for hanging in the toilet
- Toilet paper
- Disinfectant
- Detergent
- Wet wipes
- Paper towels
- Household gloves
- Camping toilet

Miscellaneous

- Water container, for fire-extinguishing water or raw water
- Face mask, for protection against viruses, bacteria and hazardous substances in the air
- Safety helmet, for protection against flying debris
- Cash (in addition to that in emergency bags)
-
-
-
-
-

Important telephone numbers

Fire brigade, rescue service **112**

Police **110**

Public authority number **115**

Medical on-call service **116117**

Ambulance transport

Poison control centre

Emergency pharmacy service

Public utilities

City administration

Other important numbers:

Legal notice

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