

Identification of potential hazards in a childcare setting, impact at our site and continuing operations during and after an emergency

FIRE

When you see flames or smell smoke in the home/center:

- Before you open a door, feel for heat on the surface. If it is hot, check other ways to exit the room and home/center.
- Immediately get yourself and all of the children outside.
- Gather all the children at a designated spot away from the fire. Count heads to make sure everyone got out.
- If these items are handy and there is time, take your emergency kit, your emergency plan, your contact list, and your cell phone. If you have a copy of these lists in your car, get them from there instead.
- Call 9-1-1 to report the fire.
- DO NOT go back into the home/center until fire responders say it is safe to do so.

If you are trapped inside:

- Try to get everyone to a safe place inside the home/center.
- Count heads to make sure all children are with you.
- Seal the door(s), especially those between you and the fire. Place a wet blanket or towel at the bottom of the door to slow/stop smoke from coming into the room.
- Open or close windows as appropriate. Close them if smoke or other dangerous fumes would blow in; open them if you can use them to escape, to get fresh air, or to signal for help.
- Try to keep the children calm.
- Contact the fire department however you can.
- After the immediate emergency has ended, contact parents/guardians. If you are a licensed provider, you should call your licensor.

FLOODS AND FLASH FLOODS

Floods can happen during snow melt in the spring, after heavy rainstorms, or because of an ice or debris jam on a river. Flash floods are a very sudden rise of water within six hours of heavy rain, after a dam or levee failure, or following a sudden release of water held by an ice or debris jam. Good practices include:

- Listen to weather reports and follow the advice of emergency responders.
- If needed, evacuate to higher ground as waters rise out of the area.
- When driving toward the flooding, turn around instead of trying to drive through the deep water.

GAS/CHEMICAL LEAKS

When you smell gas fumes in your home/center you should:

- Evacuate the building if you believe the leak is from inside the home/center.
- Do not use any electrical switches, telephones (landlines or cell phones) or anything that could cause an electric spark while in the home/center.
- Go to a safe location in a nearby home/center or building.
- Call your gas company's emergency line, and dial 9-1-1 as soon as possible. Never assume that someone else has reported the gas leak. Alert your neighbors.
- Never try to repair a gas leak yourself. Leave all repairs to a trained technician.

When you smell gas fumes outside of your home/center you should:

- Call your gas company's emergency line, and dial 9-1-1 as soon as possible. Never assume that someone else has reported the gas leak. Alert your neighbors.
- Follow directions for safety professionals.
- Never try to repair a gas leak yourself. Leave all repairs to a trained technician.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Hazardous materials are all around in the form of products we use every day. Accidents can happen where they are manufactured, transported, stored, used, or disposed of. Good practices include:

- Call 9-1-1 as soon as possible if you see a hazardous materials accident, spill or leak.
- Turn on your local radio or television station if you hear a warning siren, and listen for instructions from emergency responders. They might advise you to evacuate or to take shelter in your home/center, depending on the circumstances. Follow their advice immediately.
- Stay away from the incident site to minimize your chances of contamination. If you are caught outside during an incident (such as during a field trip or walk in the park): try to stay upstream, uphill, and upwind of hazardous materials.

Hazardous materials can quickly be transported by water and wind. In general, try to go at least one-half mile (10 city blocks) from the danger area; for many incidents you will need to go much farther. Avoid contact with the hazardous substance and do not eat or drink anything that might have been contaminated. When in a motor vehicle, close off ventilation and shut windows.

HIGH TEMPERATURES

Minnesotans are used to cooler weather, so heat waves can hit hard. Small children are especially at risk for heat reactions.

To protect children, make sure they:

- Slow down, especially during the hottest part of the afternoon.
- Stay in the coolest available place; air-conditioned space is usually best.
- Dress for summer; wear lightweight, light-colored clothing as it reflects heat and sunlight and helps bodies stay cooler.
- Eat less food. Heavy meals can heat up bodies.
- Drink lots of water, even if the children say they are not thirsty.
- Stay out of the sun. When children are outside, provide a shaded area, such as trees, umbrellas, etc.
- Play outside for short periods.
- Play outside earlier or later in the day, staying indoors between noon and 4:00PM. Use your best judgment on timing; if you are hot, they are too.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Serious infectious diseases are transmitted in several different ways, including physical contact with an infected person or animal through:

- Objects the person has touched.
- Airborne droplets carrying the disease, spread by coughing or sneezing.
- Bug bites and stings.

- Food contamination. Limiting the spread of germs prevents the spread of infectious disease. You and/or the children should routinely:
 - Wash hands frequently with soap and water upon entering your home/center and often throughout the day.
 - Wash hands before and after using shared materials, such as toys and play dough – especially with infants and young toddlers who tend to put things in their mouth.
 - Avoid coughing or sneezing into your hands. Instead, cover coughs or sneezes with tissues or the inside of your elbow. Put used tissues in the wastebasket. Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing.
 - Keep plenty of hygiene supplies handy, such as tissues and soap.
 - Keep toys clean. Wash any toy a child has put in his or her mouth before letting another child play with it.
 - Use clean and safe food preparation techniques.
 - Keep diaper changing areas separate from areas occupied by children and food preparation areas; sanitize often.
 - Keep home/center pets healthy.
 - Avoid sharing personal items, such as drinking glasses and combs.
 - Ensure that the children in your care have all their recommended vaccinations.
 - Give medication to children ONLY with a doctor's prescription and signed parent/guardian permission.

If a child gets sick while at your home/center, isolate the child from you and the other children. Check on the child regularly for any change in condition. Call the parent/guardian to request that they pick up their child as soon as possible, and make sure the child is well before coming back to child care. Notify other parents/guardians so they are aware of the risk to their children.

If you catch an infectious disease, isolate yourself until your illness passes. It is recommended that you do not care for children while you are infectious. If an infectious disease threat arises, such as an E. coli bacteria outbreak, the Department of Health will issue directions on how to protect yourself and the children. Schools and child care centers may be closed in infected areas.

If a pandemic flu epidemic threat arises, the governor and the Department of Public Safety will issue instructions designed to prevent the spread of the disease. Schools, churches, child care, and other public gathering places may be closed.

SEVERE WINTER WEATHER

Severe winter snowstorms can bring strong winds, blizzard conditions with blinding snow, severe drifting and dangerous wind chill. Strong winds can knock down trees, utility poles and power lines. Keep children indoors during these storms. Even when it is not storming, be cautious about cold weather hazards by:

- Listening to NOAA weather radio, or local radio and television stations for the latest weather reports and emergency information.
- Paying attention to wind chill reports to decide if, and for how long, children can play outside while in your care. The National Weather Service has a chart that shows how long it takes for frostbite to occur based on the current temperature and wind speed. <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/windchill.shtml>
- Dressing children warmly for playing outside in colder weather: several layers of clothes, boots, gloves or mittens, and a hat.
- Limiting play time out in the cold.
- Being careful about the surfaces on which children skate or sled, making sure that ice is thick enough to hold them, and deep snow is packed enough so they do not sink in.

THUNDERSTORMS

With thunderstorms come lightning strikes and possible heavy rain, strong winds, hail, and tornadoes. Tune in to your local radio and television stations or NOAA weather radio to stay informed about weather developments. When the weather becomes severe, take shelter in your home/center and be ready to head for your tornado shelter, if needed. If you hear thunder, the storm is close enough for you to be hit by lightning – you can remind children that, “When thunder roars, go indoors!” This unstable weather can become dangerous very fast.

TORNADOES

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air that extends from the base of a thunderstorm to the ground. In Minnesota, tornadoes strike most often between June and August, but have been known to strike from mid-March to mid-November. They typically hit between 4 and 9 p.m. Tornado Watch means conditions in the area are such that a tornado may develop. Tornado Warning is issued when a tornado is imminent. The community outdoor warning siren (three-to-five minute steady blast) will sound, and you will get alerts from the NOAA weather radio and other warning systems. **TAKE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY AT THIS TIME.** Remember:

A **WATCH** means to watch the sky for a possible tornado.

A **WARNING** means a tornado has been spotted nearby. As dark clouds and storms move in:

- Turn on your NOAA weather radio, or listen to local commercial radio and television stations for weather updates, warnings, expirations, or extensions.
- Take shelter with the children if skies appear threatening, even if the outdoor siren has not sounded. These storm systems can move more quickly than the warning systems can be activated.
- Call the children’s parents/guardians to let them know their children are safe. Bring an emergency kit to your shelter-in-place locations and, as time allows, collect the following:
 - Battery-operated or hand-operated radio.
 - Your emergency plan with parent/guardian contact numbers.
 - Flashlight or other light source.
 - Cell phone.
 - Extra batteries and a backup electricity source for cell phone charging.
 - Snack food and beverages.
 - Books or toys for the children.

VIOLENT INCIDENTS

Violent incidents are rarer than many of the other disasters, but they are very important to plan for because, when they do occur, the action is very sudden and fast-breaking. Two types of situations happen:

- Incidents that start nearby or outside of your property.

Examples of this could include a bomb threat nearby or a robbery in the neighborhood where the suspect is fleeing to take cover. You may find out about these incidents when you hear emergency response noises in the neighborhood, through news reports of the incident, or if a police patrol stops by to warn you. Neighborhood violent incidents can escalate fast and possibly spill over onto your property.

- Incidents where someone in your home/center is the target. Examples of this could include violence related to custody battles or other distress in a child's family. If you are confronted with either of these types of situations:
 - Avoid confrontation with someone who is armed with a weapon.
 - Immediately grab your cell phone (if possible and safe to do so) and take the children to your pre-designated shelter location within your building. Your shelter should have another escape route in case you need it.
 - Lock down the shelter location when you get there: lock doors, cover windows if safe to do so, turn the lights down, and keep everyone away from windows.
 - Call 9-1-1 to report the incident if it started on your property or if you think police are not aware of it already. Follow their instructions or instructions from other responders who arrive on the scene.
 - Try to keep the children as quiet and calm as possible.
 - Tune in to your battery-operated radio for updates and to find out when it is safe to leave the shelter.
 - Contact the children's parents/guardians when the danger has passed.