

Helping children During emergencies

Overview

Teaching your children how to act during emergencies can help reduce stress, minimize the risk of serious injuries and save lives. Be sure to have family [emergency plan](#), and prepare an [emergency kit](#) together.

Helping kids cope

Children can feel the stress from a disaster and may react in different ways.

- Take their fears seriously and tell them it is okay to be scared.
- Explain the events as best you can and acknowledge what is frightening about what has happened.
- Tell your kids what you think and feel. Doing so helps them feel less alone if they know their feelings are similar to yours.
- Maintain familiar routines, like mealtimes and regular bedtime hours.
- It may be helpful to talk to a professional who can help children understand and cope with their emotions.

Using 9-1-1

Let your children know they can call this number if they think someone is in danger, or are seriously injured. Assessing this kind of situation may not be obvious to children, so they need concrete examples. If your children are young, use simple words and avoid medical terms.

If someone close to you has a particular health problem, you should explain it to your children. Describe the symptoms and tell them what to do in case this person is not feeling well.

What to do before calling 9-1-1

Your children must be able to determine whether or not it is safe to call 9-1-1 from where they are.

Explain to your children that calling 9-1-1 is not a game or a joke. Tell them that every second counts when someone is in danger. An unnecessary 9-1-1 call could prevent someone who is truly in danger from getting help.

What to say to 9-1-1

Talk to your children about what will happen when they call 9-1-1. Tell them they will be asked whether they need police, fire or an ambulance.

They will need to know how to answer the following:

- What is wrong
- Where they are
- Their phone number

Resources

For more information on Responding to Stressful Events refer to [Alberta Health](#) or [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Practice by role playing!

Familiarize children with emergency situations to help reduce panic or anxiety in case of a real emergency.

For more information and for scenarios, visit [Emergency Preparedness for Children](#).