Slightly Anxious · The Preparedness Checklist

Everything, in the order you would do it

Sixteen chapters of the Emergency Guide produce a great many small jobs. Gathered here they look like a lot, and taken one at a time they are not. Nothing here is new — it's the same advice, sorted by when you'd actually do it, rather than by which chapter it came from.

This week, and none of it costs anything

These are the jobs that need a torch, a phone camera and twenty minutes. Nothing here needs buying, and every one of them is worth more than anything you could order.

- ☐ Find your internal stop valve, turn it off and on again, and photograph it.
- ☐ Find the external stop valve at your boundary.
- ☐ Open the consumer unit in daylight, photograph it, and label the circuits.
- ☐ Find the gas emergency control valve and check you can actually reach it.
- ☐ Work out which of the three boiler arrangements you have, and whether you have a cylinder.
- ☐ Put 105 for power cuts and 0800 111 999 for gas into every phone in the house.
- ☐ Do the stopcock test: shut the water off where it enters, then run every tap and see which keep flowing.
- ☐ Do the four minute hob test: turn the power off at the fuse board and try to light one gas burner with a match. Write down whether it worked.
- ☐ Do the cold house test on a cold day, so you know whether your house gives you hours or a day.
- ☐ Decide which room is your warm room, and check it is not the kitchen.
- ☐ Decide where the torches live, somewhere you could find in complete darkness.
- ☐ Agree an out of area contact, tell them, and make sure everybody knows the number by heart.
- ☐ Write everybody's medicines, doses and conditions on paper.
- ☐ Check Emergency Alerts are switched on, on every phone.
- ☐ Find out whether your landline needs mains electricity, because most now do.
- ☐ Check your flood risk by postcode, even if you are confident there is none.
- ☐ Check the microchip details for every animal are current.
- ☐ Ring your oldest relative or neighbour and ask what the thermostat says, rather than how they are.
- ☐ Get a phone number for the households either side of you.
- ☐ Share every photograph with everybody else in the house.
- ☐ Write the answers onto a household emergency plan, print it, and put it somewhere findable in the dark.

This month, and this is the part that costs money

None of it is expensive and none of it needs doing at once. If you only do the first four you will have covered most of what a bad week asks of you.

- ☐ Water: ten litres per person per day, times seven, split across containers you can lift when full. Store them low, cool, out of the light and never in the loft. Write the fill date on each one.
- ☐ A head torch each, plus a couple of hand torches and one room lantern. Standardise on one battery size, and keep the spares with the torches.
- ☐ A power bank of at least ten thousand milliamp hours.

- [ ] An audible carbon monoxide alarm near any fuel burning appliance. Look for BS EN 50291 on the box.
- [ ] Purification tablets, and read the dose on the packet before you need it.
- [ ] A manual tin opener, if you cannot say where yours is.
- [ ] Enough food your household actually eats to cover the gap between what is in the cupboard and a week.
- [ ] A camping stove and a spare canister, propane rather than butane for cold weather.
- [ ] A large vacuum flask.
- [ ] A battery radio that receives analogue as well as digital, with spare batteries.
- [ ] Strong bin bags and a bag of cat litter, kept together.
- [ ] Bars of soap, not only liquid.
- [ ] A fire and water resistant lockable case, for the cash and the documents.
- [ ] Cash: one week of ordinary shopping plus half again, in small notes and coins.
- [ ] A pack of cards, and two or three board games your household will really play.
- [ ] A Grab Bag per person, small enough that they can carry it, kept at the door you would leave by.
- [ ] A second Grab Bag that lives in the car boot permanently.
- [ ] Nappies, sanitary and incontinence products, generously, and tell somebody where they are.
- [ ] A week of pet food and their medication.

Arrangements to make, which are mostly phone calls

These take longer than an afternoon because somebody else has to act. Start them now and they will be in place long before you need them.

- [ ] Check who in your household qualifies for the Priority Services Register, then register with electricity, water and telephone separately. Do the same for an elderly relative, with their agreement.
- [ ] Start ordering every repeat prescription as soon as you are eligible, and allow ten days.
- [ ] If anybody depends on powered medical equipment, ask the supplier what happens in a power cut and how long the battery lasts.
- [ ] If anybody depends on the landline, ask your provider for the battery backup unit they are obliged to offer.
- [ ] Register for flood warnings if you live anywhere near water.
- [ ] Find out whether your bank lets you withdraw at a Post Office counter, and where your nearest one is.
- [ ] Find out how far ahead your vet will dispense, and write down their out of hours arrangement.
- [ ] Ask your council where it opens rest centres, and whether it runs warm spaces.
- [ ] If you care for somebody, ask the council about their carers emergency scheme and join it.
- [ ] If you have no car, tell the council now, since they cannot arrange transport they do not know you need.
- [ ] Read your insurance policy and find out whether it covers alternative accommodation.
- [ ] If you rent, get contents insurance, and ask your landlord in writing whether the property has flooded before.
- [ ] Book a first aid course, and take somebody else in the household with you.
- [ ] Agree where you would go if you had to leave, ask them properly, and have a second option in another direction.

Twice a year, at the clock changes

One afternoon in March and one in October. Put both in the calendar now, because this is the part everybody means to do and nobody does.

- [ ] Rotate the stored water and rewrite the dates.
- [ ] Exercise the internal stop valve so it does not seize.

- [ ] Check the torches, the spare batteries and the power bank, and top the power bank up.
- [ ] Check the carbon monoxide alarm and the smoke alarms.
- [ ] Check the first aid kit and the dates on the medicines.
- [ ] Check the hot water bottles for perished rubber at the neck.
- [ ] Rotate the food: new to the back, cook from the front.
- [ ] Check the Grab Bags still fit the people they belong to, and that the car one is still in the car.

When you are told it is coming

Storms and floods usually give you notice. This is what that notice is for.

- [ ] If a flood is forecast, leave early. Do not wait to see how bad it gets, and do not go back.
- [ ] Take the Grab Bag, the document case, the medicines, and the animals in their carriers.
- [ ] If you are not leaving, move people, animals, medicines and documents upstairs.
- [ ] Put up door barriers and air brick covers if you have them and there is still time.
- [ ] If a storm is forecast, fill the freezer gaps with bottles of water.
- [ ] Fill containers while the pressure is still there, and keep them somewhere warm if it is freezing.
- [ ] Charge everything that takes a charge.
- [ ] Tell somebody where you have gone.

And finally

If you do nothing else on this list, do the first six things in the first section. They cost nothing, they take one evening between them, and they are the difference between a household that knows where its stopcock is and one that finds out at eleven at night.

Remember, keep calm and visit us here.