

# An older person's guide to preparing for natural disasters in Murihiku Southland



# Emergency Management Southland

Emergency Management Southland (EMS) is responsible for the delivery of Civil Defence and Emergency Management responses throughout Southland. EMS is responsible for the 24/7



operation of the Emergency Coordination Centre, which facilitates planning and operational activity during an event. We also work with emergency services and community partners to service our work across the 4Rs (Reduction, Readiness, Response and Recovery) in a seamless way.

Our aim is to empower Southlanders to build safer, strong communities to understand and manage their hazards.

## Acknowledgement

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- Gore District Council's Ready for Living for the initial development of this booklet.
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# Introduction

This booklet has been designed as a handy guide for older people living in the Southland District. Its focus is to help them prepare for natural disasters and their consequences.

Disasters can happen anytime and often without warning. Emergency services and agencies, and Emergency Management Southland will respond but can't be everywhere at once.

New Zealand refers to the 4 'Rs' when planning for and responding to emergency events.

"Sometimes it does us a power of good to remind ourselves that we live where two tectonic plates meet in a somewhat lonely stretch of wind-swept ocean just above the roaring forties. If you want drama - you've come to the right place."

- Former Prime Minister the Hon Geoff Palmer

## Reduction

- Identify and prioritise risks then 'reduce impact if possible'.

## Readiness

- Have a plan, practice the plan and be prepared.

## Response

- Planned actions you will take during the event.

## Recovery

- Post event, get back to your normal or as close to normal as pre-event living.

Experiencing a disaster can be overwhelming. Being prepared will reduce the pressures. Preparing takes time and effort so you might want to do a little at a time. The more you do, the better you can look after yourself and your loved ones in a disaster.

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# Reduction

## Reducing the impacts of an emergency

We can't completely eliminate hazards and their impact on our households and communities. That's why it's so important to know what to do in an emergency and take steps to be prepared.

Reduction can involve eliminating or avoiding the risks of a hazard where practicable to do so. However in many cases this may not be possible. Instead the focus is reducing the likelihood of the risk and the magnitude of its impact to an acceptable level.

Reduction can take many forms ranging from an individual's personal actions to look after themselves, their family, business and property, through to collective actions undertaken on behalf of communities.

Some basic things we can do are:

- Securing heavy objects such as shelves, bookcases, cabinets and water heaters to walls and floors.
- Placing large, heavy, or breakable objects on lower shelves.
- Hanging heavy items, such as pictures and mirrors, away from areas where people sit or gather frequently.
- Bracing overhead light fixtures.
- Repairing defective electrical wiring and leaky gas connections. These are potential fire risks.
- Repairing any deep cracks in ceilings or foundations. Get expert advice if there are signs of structural defects.
- Storing flammable products and hazardous material securely on bottom shelves in cabinets that are closed with latches.
- Making sure we are insured to protect our homes.



[www.eqc.govt.nz](http://www.eqc.govt.nz)

# Insurance

## Homeowners

It's important to protect your home and its contents against loss or damage.

Check your insurance:

- Find out what your insurance policy covers, as well as what it doesn't cover.
- Check you have enough insurance cover to rebuild your home and replace your valuables.
- If you have been affected by a disaster, contact your insurer as soon as you can to lodge a claim and understand how they can help.

## Renters

- It is strongly recommended you have contents insurance. This will help to replace your belongings if they are lost or damaged. Some contents insurance policies may include provisions for temporary accommodation if the property you rent becomes uninhabitable.



# Readiness

Get prepared to respond to an emergency

## Know your hazards

Learning about the hazards that can occur in your community, and the impacts they can cause, will help you work out what steps you can take to get prepared.

In Southland the three main hazards are flooding, severe weather events and earthquakes. Please see the 'Response' section for specific ways you can prepare in advance for these hazards.

## Other hazards

You need to be aware of the other risks including tsunamis, volcanoes, tornadoes and landslides if you are travelling out of the Southland area.

Further afield, events can affect you indirectly as many supplies are transported to Southland. If the larger South Island cities are affected by an event, or the transport routes in between, it is highly possible the supply chains won't be able to operate as normal.



**Flooding**



**Severe weather**



**Earthquakes**

# Know how to stay informed

## Radio

If the power goes out, a solar or battery powered radio (or your car radio) can help you keep up to date with the latest news.

## Online and Social Media

You can head to official websites and social media pages for information and updates. You can also send any information of hazards to authorities.

## Antenno

Antenno is a free mobile app that sends alerts and notifications from Emergency Management Southland to your smart phone, so you know what's happening during an emergency. It is best to download the app and become familiar with it before an emergency occurs.

## Telephones and internet communication

Emergencies may affect your ability to communicate by telephone, especially if the electricity is cut off.

- Because you have a fibre connection, your phone and internet will not work when the power is off.
- If your landline phone is not working, you will not be able to use it to dial 111.

In an emergency, phone lines can become overloaded quickly. Keep them clear so emergency calls can be made and, if you can, use text or online messaging to keep in touch. Keep a written list of important numbers, in case you have to evacuate.

**We have listed useful radio, websites and important information on the back of this booklet.**



# Make emergency plans

## Make a home emergency plan

A home emergency plan lets each member of a household know what to do in an emergency and how to be prepared, this makes emergency situations less stressful while saving precious time.

## How to make a home emergency plan

Decide where you will go in case you have to evacuate or can't get home.

Discuss and write down places to go:

- A safe meeting place if you can't get home. It might be a friend's home or with family.
- A place to stay out of town during or after an emergency.

Go there when you have to evacuate from your neighbourhood (e.g. for a flood) or if you can't get back to your neighbourhood.



# Have an emergency kit

## Emergency supplies for your home

In an emergency, Emergency Management Southland and emergency services may not be able to respond in your area immediately. It is expected that you will be able to support yourself, for at least three days. You could be stuck at home without basic services, such as electricity, drinking water, flushing toilets, and phones for days or even weeks.

Your house is already full of emergency items disguised as everyday things – as long as you can find them in a hurry and/or in the dark! They don't all need to be in one place.

Your household emergency supplies should include:

- Clean drinking water for a minimum of three days, or a week or more if you can - make sure you have at least nine litres of water for every person.
- A minimum of three days, or a week or more if you can, of food. Consider how you will cook it (do you have a camping stove or BBQ and enough fuel for a minimum of three days).

- Medications.
- Torch and batteries.
  - Do not use candles as they can tip over.
  - Do not use kerosene lamps, they need a lot of ventilation.
- A solar or battery-powered radio.
- A large plastic bucket with a tight lid (or large rubbish bags), toilet paper and disinfectant, for an emergency toilet.



### Important points to note:

- **Something prepared is always better than nothing.**
- **Neighbours can help each other by sharing resources like barbecues and portable gas stoves.**

## Have a grab bag

### Emergency supplies if you have to evacuate

You will need essential items you can carry with you.

Ideally you should store these items in a grab bag, ready for you to take if you have to leave in a hurry. If not, figure out what you already have in your home, so you can grab them quickly.

Basic supplies to have in a grab bag in case you have to evacuate:

- Torches and batteries
- Radio (solar or battery powered)
- Walking shoes, warm clothes, raincoat and hat
- First aid kit and medication
- Water and snack food
- Hand sanitiser
- Cash – If power is out EFTPOS and ATM machines won't work
- Copies of important documents (online or paper). You can do this by taking a photo on your smartphone.

**If you wear glasses or hearing aids, remember to take them with you!**

### Special dietary requirements

If you or someone in your household has special dietary needs, make sure you have sufficient stock of these food items for a minimum of three days, or a week or more if you can. Include a supply of your special food items in your grab bag too. Emergency shelters are unlikely to have the special food items you may need.

If you receive Meals on Wheels or other meal services make sure you have food supplies in your house you are able to prepare and cook, or that doesn't need cooking if you cannot be reached.



# Medications

For many, interruptions in medication can have severe and potentially fatal repercussions.

- Keep a minimum of 3 days, or a week or more if you can, supply of essential medications.
- Complete a medical information list that you can use, include your:
  - Medical Centre's name and phone number
  - names of medication and their dosages and the condition you take them for
  - any allergies or sensitivities and any communication or cognitive difficulties
- If you have asthma or a respiratory disorder, make sure your grab bag has dust masks (rated P2 or N95). You may find hazards such as earthquakes make it harder to breathe.
- If any of your medication needs to be stored in a refrigerator (e.g. Insulin), keep ice packs in the freezer. Then, if you have to evacuate you can take it with you in a small chilli bin or wrapped in a towel/newspaper to keep cold for longer.
- Know where to go for assistance if you are dependent on a dialysis machine or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.

Every time medications are changed update your getaway kit, also check the expiration dates of prescription medications in the kit every six months.



**If you are diabetic make sure you have some high sugar foods in your grab bag, such as lollies, honey or juice, in case blood sugars become low.**

# Build a personal support network

Your support network will be the first people you can turn to in an emergency. They might be your neighbours, family or friends – people who are regularly in the same area as you. It's important your network includes more than one person.

Get to know your neighbours. You'll want to look out for your neighbours and they'll want to look out for you.

- Share contact details and agree on how you will contact each other during an emergency
- Tell them about your emergency plan and ask about their plans.
- Find out who can help you and who might need your help.
- Join a Neighbourhood Support Group.

Having connections in local community-based organisations is important – they may be able to assist you with everyday problems and emergencies or find roles for you to help others.

## Feeling stressed?

Emergencies are scary and it's perfectly normal to feel stressed or anxious. Don't be afraid to talk to others about how you feel and to seek help if you need it.

Everyone affected by a disaster may experience symptoms such as irritability, not being able to sleep, forgetfulness, headaches etc. They are all normal reactions, but if any of these symptoms affect your ability to function or are prolonged, seek medical attention or call the numbers below.

**Healthline** 0800 611 116

**Want to talk?** Call or text 1737

# Disabled people and those with special requirements

If you or someone in your family has special requirements or is disabled, you will need to include their needs in your emergency plan. It's important to take time to plan and prepare.

## Physical disability or mobility impairment

If you or someone you are caring for has a physical disability or mobility impairment, make sure you bring any aids required.

## Hearing impairment

Make sure you have a way to find warnings, information and advice in an emergency.

- Arrange for your support network to alert you to any warnings and to keep you informed.
- Give a neighbour or someone in your support network a key to your house so they can alert you.
- Put a writing pad, pencils and a torch with batteries in your grab bag so you can communicate with others.

**If you wear hearing aids, make sure you have spare batteries.**

## Sight impairment

Be prepared if you have to evacuate. You may have to depend on others if you have to evacuate, go to an unfamiliar Civil Defence Centre, or Community Emergency Hub.

If you have a guide dog, make sure you have a grab bag for them with food, medications, vaccination records, identification and harnesses.

Keep extra canes at home, even if you use a guide dog. Animals may become confused or disoriented in an emergency.

# Pets

Reduce the risks to your pets and other animals.

- Include essential supplies for your pets in your grab bag and emergency supplies.
- Ask your neighbours to look out for your pet if an emergency happens, and you can't get home.
- Make sure you have a pet crate or cage for your animal(s).

Preparing pets for evacuation by bringing them indoors and confining

them to one room allows you to find them quickly when you need to leave. Have pet carrier boxes and leashes ready.

Take your pets with you when you evacuate if it will not delay you, or consider an early evacuation.

**After an event:** Be aware of their wellbeing and take measures to protect them from hazards and to ensure the safety of other people and animals.



**Your animals are your responsibility. You need to include them in your emergency planning and preparation.**



## If you have to evacuate

Evacuate immediately if told to do so by authorities.

Take your grab bag with you if you have it with you. Use travel routes specified by local authorities, some areas may be impassable or dangerous.

## Preparing to evacuate

There may be times when authorities tell you to prepare to evacuate, but you do not need to leave immediately. For example, you may be told to prepare to evacuate if river levels are getting very high and there is a risk of flooding.



## Prepare to evacuate by following these steps:

1. Put on protective, weather appropriate clothing to cover your arms and legs, and sturdy footwear in case you have to move through debris (e.g. if there has been an earthquake).
2. Put your grab bag by the door or in your vehicle.
3. Leave mobile phones on and charged so you can receive Emergency Mobile Alerts and Antenna updates.
4. Listen to the radio or check website or Facebook pages (on back page) for updates.
5. Listen to Emergency Management Southland and authorities, and follow any instructions regarding evacuation of your area. Self-evacuate if you feel unsafe.

**Get in a habit of keeping your petrol tank at least half full. If there are power cuts in an event, fuel stations may not be able to operate pumps.**

## Sheltering in place

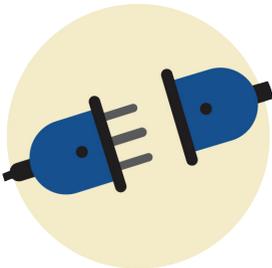
If it is too dangerous for you to leave your current location, you may need to take shelter where you are.

You may be asked to shelter in place at another location. You should stay there either until you are asked to evacuate, or until you are told it is safe to leave.

## Sheltering at home

Sometimes, emergencies make it unsafe for people to leave their homes.

- Unplug small appliances. Small appliances may be affected by electrical power surges.
- Turn off utilities if instructed by authorities. Authorities may ask you to turn off the water or electricity supply to prevent damage to your home.



## Electric heating

If all your heating is electric and you have no fireplace, you will need to consider what you will do to keep warm if the power goes out. Put on warm layers before you get cold, have a good supply of warm blankets to wrap up in and keep windows and doors closed.

## Gas cookers and BBQs

Gas cookers and BBQs are a great alternative to use when power goes out. They can be used both for cooking and for boiling water for hot water bottles to help keep you warm.

**Do not use outdoor gas appliances such as camping cookers and BBQs indoors.**

# Response

## Floods

### Before

Find out if you are in a flood prone area. You can do this by going to the Environment Southland website - **maps.es.govt.nz** and searching '**maps and data**' to look at the natural hazards map.

If flooding is possible in your area:

- Move valuable and dangerous items, including electrical equipment and chemicals, as high above the floor as possible. Don't forget items in your garage or garden shed.
- Use watertight containers to store important items.
- Secure outdoor possessions, including outdoor furniture that can be swept away in floodwaters.

**Put safety first.  
Don't take any  
chances. Act  
quickly if you  
see rising water.**



### During

Listen to the radio for updates and check the Emergency Management Southland website and Facebook page. Follow instructions about evacuation in your area.

- Put safety first. Act quickly if you see rising water. Do not wait for official warnings. Head for higher ground.
- Do not try to walk, swim, or drive in floodwater: even water just 15 centimetres deep can sweep you off your feet.
- Always assume that all flood water is contaminated.

### After

Remember - if you have been evacuated, it may not be safe to return home even when the floodwaters have receded. Listen to emergency services and Emergency Management Southland. Don't return home until they tell you it is safe to do so.

# Severe Weather

## Before

Stay up to date with the latest weather information from MetService. Pay attention to watches and warnings.

## During

If severe weather is coming, Severe Weather Outlooks, Watches and Warnings are issued by MetService. They are available through radio, television, the MetService website and the MetService app.

Listen to advice provided by Emergency Management Southland and emergency services and follow any instructions.

- Secure your home by closing windows. Pull curtains and blinds closed. This can prevent injury from flying glass if the window breaks.
- Close all interior and external doors.
- Drive only if it is absolutely necessary.
- Be prepared to evacuate and keep your grab bag close.

## After

Listen to advice provided by Emergency Management Southland and emergency services and follow any instructions.

If it is safe to do so, check on neighbours, friends or family who may have been affected.

Continue to stay up-to-date with the latest weather information.



**Severe weather can include heavy rain and snow, thunder and lightning, and strong winds.**

# Earthquakes

## Before

Identify safe places within your home and other places you frequently visit:

- Somewhere close to you, to avoid injury from flying debris.
- Under a strong table. Hold on to the table legs to keep it from moving away from you.
- Away from windows that can shatter and tall furniture that can fall on you.

## During

- **DROP, COVER and HOLD** until the shaking is over.
- Do not go outside or you risk getting hit by falling masonry or glass.
- If you are outside, move away from buildings, streetlights and power lines if you can.

## After

- Check yourself for injuries and get first aid if necessary.
- Look quickly for damage around you, particularly where furniture and fittings may have become hazardous.
- Be careful as you start to move about, many injuries happen after the shaking stops. Look out for broken glass and sharp objects.



**Aftershocks can occur minutes, days, weeks, months and even years following an earthquake.**

# DROP, COVER and HOLD



**DROP, COVER** and **HOLD** is the right action to take in an earthquake.

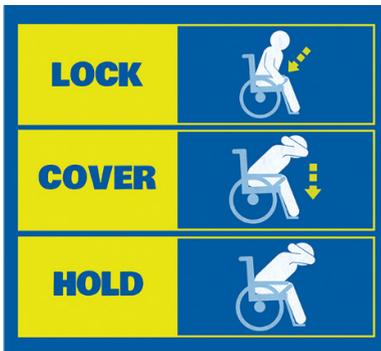
- Drop down on your hands and knees.
- Cover your head and neck under a sturdy table (if possible).
- Hold on to the table legs.

If you have difficulty getting onto the ground, or cannot get back up again, then follow these recommendations.



If you are using a walker, **LOCK, COVER** and **HOLD**.

- Lock your wheels (if applicable).
- Carefully get as low as possible, bend over, and cover your head and neck.
- Hold on until shaking stops.



If you are using a wheelchair, **LOCK, COVER** and **HOLD**.

- Lock your wheels.
- Bend over and cover your head and neck.

If you are in bed, **STAY, COVER** and **HOLD**.

Stay in bed. Cover yourself by pulling the sheets and blankets over you. Hold your pillow over you to protect your head and neck.

# RECOVERY

## If your property is damaged

Please note this advice may differ depending on the type of event and the impact it has had on you and your community. For example, specific advice for a flood event may differ to advice for severe weather or earthquakes.

- If you have been affected by a disaster, get in touch with your insurer as soon as you can to lodge a claim and understand how they can help.



**Recovering after an emergency can be a long and stressful process, but there are some steps you can take to get back on your feet as quickly and safely as possible.**

## Urgent repairs and recovery

- Do not do anything that puts your safety at risk or causes more damage to your property.
- Food and water are easily contaminated during emergencies; you need to take extra care to avoid getting sick.
- Always wear protective gear, including gloves and masks, in case you're exposed to hazardous material.
- Do what you need to do to make your home safe and sanitary as possible.
- Take photos and videos of any damaged, perishable or unsanitary items and note down the details of valuable items before disposal.
- Get essential services repaired and keep copies of invoices.

# How can you help your community?

Older people are an important part of volunteer networks, often forming the backbone of local community organisations, bringing extensive skills and experience.

If you want to volunteer it is easy to start close to home, think about people who might need your help in an emergency (e.g. disabled people, single parents with young children, people who are new to the area and people who live on their own).

If you are part of local community-based organisations there are often volunteer roles available during emergencies.

## Other ways to help

- Join your local EMS Community Response Group
- Join community groups like Red Cross Disaster Welfare and Support Team



# Key communications

## Southland Radio Stations

In an emergency, the media will provide regular updates. Listen to the radio and follow trusted news sites.

### Southland Radio Stations

- Hokonui – 94.8FM
- More FM – 89.2FM
- The Hits – 98.8FM
- National Radio – 101.2FM or 720AM,  
Te Anau – 101.6FM  
Milford Sound – 92FM
- Newstalk ZB – 864AM
- The Breeze – 91.6 FM
- Radio Southland – 96.4FM

## Emergency Management Southland

- ☎ 0800 76 88 45
- 🌐 [cdsouthland.nz](http://cdsouthland.nz)
- f [facebook.com/cdsouthland](https://facebook.com/cdsouthland)

## Southland Councils

### Invercargill City Council

- ☎ 0800 422 435
- 🌐 [icc.govt.nz](http://icc.govt.nz)
- f [facebook.com/invercargillcitycouncil](https://facebook.com/invercargillcitycouncil)

### Southland District Council

- ☎ 0800 732 732
- 🌐 [southlanddc.govt.nz](http://southlanddc.govt.nz)
- f [facebook.com/southlanddistrictcouncil](https://facebook.com/southlanddistrictcouncil)

### Gore District Council

- ☎ 0800 467 332
- 🌐 [goredc.govt.nz](http://goredc.govt.nz)
- f [facebook.com/goredc](https://facebook.com/goredc)

**If life or property are at risk, call 111 (fire, police and ambulance)**

