

Pointers For Parents

Helping Children Weather A Natural Disaster

(NAPSA)—Parents can help calm children's common fear of severe weather and help protect children from harm by discussing how weather happens, ways to protect the family in advance and what to do in an emergency.

The federal agency charged with managing natural disasters and emergencies—the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—offers these tips for preparing your home and family:

- Educate everyone. It's important to educate children about weather and disasters in advance of a scary situation.

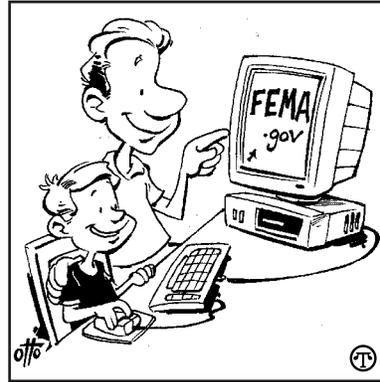
When a child asks a question about disasters, they are likely looking for both understandable information and reassurance. One way to help children feel more secure is by teaching them the warning signs and signals for your areas and rehearsing what to do if a disaster strikes.

- Make prevention a priority. One of the best ways to make everyone feel safer is to take action to prevent damage to your home. Get children involved in the prevention process.

Find out what disasters are possible in your area by contacting your local Red Cross Chapter or emergency manager or visiting your local library. You can also visit the FEMA for Kids Web site at www.fema.gov/kids.

Once you know your risks, kids can help with a "home hazard hunt" to check the safety of your home. They may identify the need to install hurricane shutters, raise important appliances above flood levels, or install high-wind or fire resistant shingles to protect from tornados or wildfires.

Adults and children can work together on a disaster plan for the family and prepare a disaster kit with canned food, water and other essentials. Think about where the family would go in



Make kids feel safer by involving them in actions to prevent damage to your home.

case of an evacuation or damage to the home. Tips for planning can be found in the "Get Ready Get Set" section of the FEMA for Kids Web site.

- If disaster does strike, pay attention to your child's behavior. Changes in behavior, such as acting out, unusual shyness or hyperactivity, and regression to early childhood behaviors can signal that a child needs help.

Allow children to share their feelings about what has happened. Suggest creative means of expressing feelings too—such as drawing, keeping a journal or writing a story.

Let friends and neighbors help when they can. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to seek assistance for you or your child if the recovery and rebuilding process becomes overwhelming.

Finally, be patient with the recovery process. Remember that children heal in their own time. Continue to reassure them that they are loved.

More information is available on the FEMA for Kids Web site at www.fema.gov/kids.

Parents can also get information on disaster damage prevention at www.fema.gov/mit.