

## Emergency Preparedness: How to Prepare to Shelter in Place

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February 15, 2019

Emergencies generally require one of two responses: “shelter in place” or “get out of Dodge.” Sheltering in place is appropriate when it is safer to stay in your home than to leave it, such as during a pandemic flu outbreak or period of civil unrest. But leaving in a hurry is the right thing to do in advance of forest fires, hurricanes or floods. Most of us can predict based on our geographic location (and perhaps past experience) which type of emergencies we are most likely to face.

About a decade ago, as a serious [“H1N1” flu virus](#) propagated around the globe, my colleagues and I on the Water Quality & Health Council developed a list of basic items for keeping families safe, healthy and comfortable during a shelter

in place emergency due to pandemic flu. Working under the assumption that a picture is worth a thousand words, we turned our recommendations into a downloadable infographic we called “Dr. Ralph’s Flu Preparedness Closet.” We recently updated this virtual closet to be relevant for any shelter in place emergency. The feature is available now in two forms: a static, downloadable infographic and an online interactive version. These resources are accessible via computer, tablet, or smart phone.



### *Emergency Preparedness in a Closet*

In the modernized closet, flip phones are out, and portable solar chargers for smart phones and other small electronic devices are in. We added a hand-crank radio suggestion for dealing with power outages and advised folks to make sure the foods they store include "comfort food" the family will enjoy in stressful times. Logistics within the closet are important too: We moved the chlorine bleach (for [emergency water](#) or surface disinfection) from an upper shelf of the closet to the closet floor, just in case of a leak. "Dr. Ralph" offers information and tips on each of the stored items in the closet, and in the interactive version of the resource, my Yellow Labrador Retriever, Argos, wags his tail as he reminds folks to remember their pets when preparing for emergencies.

We hope the updated Dr. Ralph's Emergency Preparedness Closet will inspire you to gather and store the necessities for a potential period of sheltering in place. Our next project will be to develop an infographic on recommendations for the "Get out of Dodge" emergency option. Meanwhile, be prepared and be safe!

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