

## **Protecting Communities from Disasters**

### **WEEK THREE // May 16-24, 2018**

#### **Build to Code**

Although you have little control over the occurrence of natural disasters in your community, mitigation efforts are some of the best tactics jurisdictions can take to protect a community against the effects of these disasters. Mitigation increases occupant health and safety during a disaster, protects the local tax base, ensures continuity of essential services, and supports more rapid recovery from disasters. Mitigation through adoption and enforcement of building codes provide you, your family and your community protection in the event of a natural disaster.

The development and widespread adoption of building codes creates a uniform regulatory environment in which design professionals and contractors are held to a set of standards adopted by and applicable to the jurisdiction in which they work. Building regulation in the United States began in the late 1800s when major cities began to adopt and enforce building codes in response to large fires in densely populated urban areas. Over time, the scope of building codes broadened. Today, building codes address structural integrity, lighting, ventilation, safe egress, construction materials as well as fire resistance. They specify the minimum requirements to safeguard the health, safety and general welfare of building occupants.

To learn more about building codes, check out [the Code Council's Introduction to Building Codes](#) and [FEMAs Building Codes Toolkit](#).

#### **Prepare Your Family**

Making sure your family is prepared for any natural disaster is important. Below are some of the steps you can take to prepare your family and protect your home from natural disasters. Your actions can ensure that no matter what Mother Nature brings, you, your family and your community will be resilient.

Here are a few tips to follow from the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes – (FLASH®) when preparing your family for any emergency.

Develop a [family disaster plan](#) that includes a list of food and water supplies needed for each member of your family and supplies for your pets. Make copies

of important documents like insurance policies, the deed to your home, and other personal papers, important phone numbers and a home inventory. Create a checklist of important things to do before, during and after a disaster.

Review your [evacuation route](#) and emergency shelter locations with your family. Options for evacuation would include staying with friends and relatives, seeking commercial lodging or staying in a mass care facility operated by disaster relief groups in conjunction with local authorities.

Taking shelter is critical in times of disaster. [Sheltering in place](#) is appropriate when conditions require that you seek protection in your home, place of employment or other location where you are when disaster strikes.

Consider incorporating a [safe room](#) in building plans and improvements.

Review your plan regularly. If you make changes that affect the information in your disaster plan, update it immediately.

Visit [America's PrepareAthon!](#) to learn more about how to prepare for earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires and winter storms. [Get Involved](#) to help prepare your family and community.