



Individual and Community Preparedness e-Brief:

[Helping Children Cope and Stay Safe after Sandy - Helpful Tips & Resources for Parents & Caregivers](#)
[Fun for the Kids after Sandy](#)
[Our Nation's Youth and the Impact they Have on Preparedness](#)
[Elmo Explains Hurricane Sandy](#)

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Helping Children Cope and Stay Safe after Sandy - Helpful Tips & Resources for Parents & Caregivers

The Super storm known as Sandy has passed, but some children may still be coping with its aftermath. We are asking you to do the following:

1. **Read and share this [blog post](#) by Sarita Chung MD, FAAP, member, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Disaster Preparedness Advisory Council;**
2. **Like and share this story on [FEMA's Facebook page posts](#); and**
3. **Follow and re-tweet [@ReadyDotGov](#) tweets**

Although Sandy has passed, for millions in states along the east coast there are still many hazards. It is important to take steps to protect children, as they are especially vulnerable to the environmental hazards that may be present. Here are some tips parents should keep in mind:

[Flood Water Safety](#)

- **Parents or other caregivers should directly supervise children** - this prevents them from playing in or around floodwaters. It doesn't take long and it doesn't take much water for children to drown.
- **Watch for live wires or power sources** - electricity from streetlights and downed power lines may be active and may cause a deadly shock through contact with standing water or direct contact with live lines.
- **Keep children from playing around drainage ditches, storm drains, river channels, or any place with moving/standing water** - children can fall in, get stuck, or drown.
- **Be aware of what's in the water** - standing or flood waters can be contaminated and cause children to become sick. Playing in water could also result in being bitten by snakes, rodents or other wildlife.

[Home Safety](#)

- **Lock the door** - In preparation for the storm, many people filled bathtubs and buckets with water to use for drinking or washing. If this is the case, keep everything in one room and lock it away from young children, as they can drown quickly in very small amounts of water.
- **Be mindful when using candles or heat sources** - Make sure to watch small children around lit candles, and don't forget to blow them out when leaving the room. Supervise children directly when there are portable grills or sources of heat or fire.

- **Turn off vehicles** - In order to recharge cell phones and other electronics, people may leave their cars running. Be sure children don't climb or play in the car. Don't leave vehicles running inside garages or in any closed area where carbon monoxide can collect.
- **Leave it out in the open** - Portable generators are useful when temporary or remote electric power is needed, but they can be hazardous. The primary hazards to avoid when using them are carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock or electrocution, and fire. For tips on using generators safely, visit the [U.S. Fire Administration website](#).

Addressing the Emotional Impacts from Sandy

Sandy was very frightening for many adults, so imagine how scary the storm was for children who experienced it firsthand, or even those who simply watched it on television. For kids, no amount of time or statistics really explains the weather event that just occurred or provides comfort in its wake. They may have lost pets, favorite toys, or other cherished treasures, and they may not understand why parents must dispose of their contaminated belongings during the clean-up process.

Here are some [helpful tips](#) to support children in recovering and coping with the situation:

- **Limit TV and other media coverage of the storm and its impact (such as Internet, social media, and radio interviews of victims)** - Listening to stories about the impact of disasters can cause further distress to children and adults. Realize that children should not be exposed to the same amount and level of media coverage being viewed by adults.
- **Keep to a routine** - Help your children feel they still have a sense of structure, making them feel more at ease or provide a sense of familiarity. When schools open again, help them return to normal activities including going back to class and participating in sports and play groups.
- **Make time for them** - Help kids understand they are safe and secure by talking, playing and doing other family activities with them. To help younger children feel safe and calm, read them their favorite book, play a relaxing family game or activity. For other ideas, visit the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) website.
- **Encourage and answer questions** - Talk with your children about the event and what is being done to keep them safe and help with the recovery process. Realize that children's concerns may be very different than those of adults, so be sure to ask them what they are concerned about. When children ask about whether another storm may occur, realize that their underlying question is likely whether or not they need to worry that a storm as bad as Sandy is likely to occur. Help them understand that while storms are common, Sandy was a particularly devastating storm and that other bad weather that may occur in the near future is unlikely to cause as many problems. Help them understand what is being done to protect them and their families from future harm and why other storms are unlikely to be as destructive.
- **Provide realistic reassurance** - Children's worries may be based on misunderstanding or misinformation. When possible, provide realistic reassurance. But if their concerns are real, acknowledge their concerns and help them think through strategies to deal with their distress. Remember, if children feel they are worried – they are worried.

Here are some other useful resources to help children cope with a disaster:

American Academy of Pediatrics

- [Promoting Adjustment and Helping Children Cope with Disasters](#)
- [Talking to Children About Disasters](#)
- [Flood Recovery \(Clean-up Efforts\)](#)
- [Information for Parents](#)

Other Resources

- [Coping with Disasters](#)
- [Save the Children](#)
- [Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on Crisis Prevention and Response](#)

Promoting Youth Preparedness

- [Ready Kids](#)
- [UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools](#)
- [Youth Preparedness Resources](#)
- [FEMA's Flat Stanley and Flat Stella preparedness Web site](#)

Posted by: Sarita Chung, MD, FAAP, member, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Disaster Preparedness Advisory Council

(The views expressed by Ms. Chung do not necessarily represent the official views of the United States, the Department of Homeland Security, or the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA does not endorse any non-government organizations, entities, or services.)

Fun for the Kids

Sandy has many schools closed leaving parents, guardians and even shelter coordinators wondering how they will keep the kids occupied, indoors and in some cases, without power. Remember, batteries are not just for flashlights, they also bring life to handheld video games and tablets, but when they need to be conserved for evening hours or stir-crazy moments, don't be afraid to look for [things to do](#) or to fall back on some of the classics:

- **Board games:** Pick games that don't end too quickly. Candy Land, Chutes and Ladders, and Monopoly are great games to play at any age. Even cards games such as Go Fish, War or Concentration can bring hours of fun.
- **Musical Chairs:** If you have power and three or more kids you can play a game of musical chairs. Bean bags, folded blankets or pillows can be used as chairs if space is limited.
- **Simon Says:** A game of Simon Says helps kids work on their listening skills and can help relieve some of the energy that's bottled up inside.
- **Exercise:** Include activities kids may do in gym class, including jump rope, push-ups, jumping jacks and stretching exercises. This is great for expelling energy for those kids who are stuck indoors.
- **Build a fort:** Pile up those pillows and blankets, and let them build their fantasy fort freely. This could relieve their stress, and yours.
- **Draw or paint:** Every child, young or old, enjoys being creative.

Our Nation's Youth and the Impact they have on Preparedness

Children comprise approximately 25 percent of our nation's population and are the future of our communities. They play an important role in disaster preparedness and each have the unique ability to help their communities be safer, stronger and more resilient before, during and after a disaster or emergency event. As such, we all have a vested interest in engaging and empowering youth to become active participants in individual, family and community preparedness. Research states that:

- Youth who are trained in preparedness are more resilient in actual disasters.
- Youth are highly effective messengers for reaching and influencing parents and other adults.
- Youth who are engaged today will ensure a future generation of prepared adults.

Youth preparedness is a priority at FEMA and is why the agency recently introduced the first ever [Youth Preparedness Council](#). This select group of youth leaders from across the country will lend their voices, opinions, experiences, ideas and solutions to help strengthen the nation's resiliency for all types of disasters. Bring youth preparedness to the forefront of your community by [implementing a youth preparedness program](#). Much like FEMA, the [Texas School Safety Center \(TxSSC\)](#) recognizes the importance of engaging youth in preparedness and for the past two summers has held a summer camp for youth focusing on Teen CERT training, youth emergency preparedness, leadership and action planning. What is your area doing with youth preparedness? Share your story and/or ideas on the [NPM Coalition Website](#) today!

We want to hear your suggestions on how we can improve our communications to you, be sure to email us at citizencorps@dhs.gov.

Elmo Explains Hurricane Sandy

Elmo, resident of Sesame Street, along with Dr. Rosemarie Truglio of the Sesame Street Education and Research Department talked to kids about Hurricane Sandy on the radio on Tuesday, October 30, 2012. [Listen](#) to Elmo reassure kids on the Brian Lehrer Show.

For additional information, plan together with Sesame Street at [Let's Get Ready! Planning Together for Emergencies](#). Sesame Street offers emergency tips and activities for parents and children to better plan for emergencies.



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