

## **DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: BE READY - GET ORGANIZED**

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ST. DAVIDS, PA, September 10, 2008: When disaster hits, being prepared can make all the difference. We don't need an insurance company to tell us, "Life comes at you fast."

### **September is National Preparedness Month.**

Members of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO-GPC) are on board. NAPO members are participating in Red Cross disaster preparedness training taught by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (SEPA-VOAD). The training will further enable professional organizers in this region to help their clients be prepared for life and its events.

### **Are You Ready?**

If you had to evacuate your home *in the next 24 hours*, would you be ready? Where do you start? Does your family have an exit and communication plan? And what exactly is in that emergency kit that you are supposed to take with you? When the disaster is over, how difficult would it be to resume your daily life? Many people find these questions almost too big to think about, but there are manageable steps everyone can take.

Residents of our region may feel safe compared to the devastation seen from hurricanes in the south or wildfires and earthquakes in the west. In fact, the most common disasters affecting the northeastern region are fires and floods. But even common problems like water in the basement can cause major problems that some would call a disaster.

### **A Professional Organizer Can Help**

With preparation, you can feel more secure and confident in an uncertain world. NAPO-GPC President Rhonda Sinor summarizes, "Organization is key in being able to handle any disaster. When your life and possessions are organized, everything becomes easier, especially when situations that are out of your control arise."

Busy people turn to a professional organizer for many reasons, at work and at home. Professional organizers offer services that range from clutter control to time management to business process improvement. People call professional organizers because they don't have time, they aren't sure how to apply organizing information to their own situation, or they just get overwhelmed by it all. Professional organizers can help with these steps recommended for preparedness:

- Devising an exit plan and meet point for everyone in your home if communication is disrupted.

- Locating, copying, and organizing important documents for a “grab and go” scenario. Important documents include government identification papers, property values, and critical medical records.
- Storing copies of critical documents in a safe place, such as a safety deposit box or family member’s house.
- Making a plan for pets.
- Conducting a home inventory. No one likes to think about this, but the insurance industry recommends a home inventory to prove loss and value as well as speeding recovery when losses do occur ([www.iii.org](http://www.iii.org)).
- Storing food, medication and first aid supplies for grab and go access.
- Backing up and organizing business records to resume operations quickly.

A professional organizer can apply standards of disaster preparedness to their client’s specific situation. Clients can get help creating plans for their own situation, assemble important documents (often from unorganized piles and files) and create space for an emergency supply kit for each family member. A professional organizer can help initiate and complete this important process, in as little as a few hours or over an extended period of time. With the Red Cross and VOAD training, NAPO-GPC’s members will be armed with sharp pencils, clear heads, and compassionate solutions.

## Resources Are Available

Getting prepared doesn’t have to be costly or time consuming. There are plenty of resources available. Ready America ([www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)) puts it simply and offers many fact sheets: Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed, Get Involved. The Red Cross Philadelphia chapter ([www.redcross-philly.org](http://www.redcross-philly.org)) offers classes and information and pre-assembled emergency kits at their eStore. And many NAPO-GPC members ([www.napo-gpc.org](http://www.napo-gpc.org)) offer phone and initial consultations to assist with hands-on preparedness.

*Professional organizers create solutions that improve quality of life. The NAPO-GPC members are dedicated to providing organizing services, advice, solutions and products to clients in corporate, small business, home office and residential settings. They are specialists in helping clients simplify, balance and structure their environment, serving Eastern Pennsylvania, Central & Southern New Jersey and Delaware. NAPO-GPC has been in existence since 1996 and has reached a membership of 100 organizers. The Greater Philadelphia Chapter is part of the national non-profit organization NAPO, which has been active since 1985 and consists of more than 4,000 members throughout the United States and in eight other countries. For additional information or to find a professional organizer, visit [www.napo-gpc.org](http://www.napo-gpc.org).*

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