

EVERY DAY HOME BLOG

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Prepare your storm shelter for upcoming storm season

Spring is about to be sprung; Oklahomans need to prepare themselves for storm season. Anyone who has gone through one of the state's storm seasons knows how quickly the weather can change. Being prepared ahead of a storm is essential for safety and peace of mind.

One of the first things families need to do is make sure their storm shelter is ready for them, said Gina Peek, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension housing and consumer specialist.

"The last thing you want in the event of a weather emergency is to discover your storm shelter has standing water or is full of spiders," Peek said. "It's in the best interest of the entire family to make the shelter as comforting as possible for the duration of your stay during a weather emergency."

Since a storm can occur just about any time, try to get your storm shelter preparations done as quickly as possible. If water is an issue, call someone to inspect the shelter and determine how water is getting in. Repair any holes to keep out moisture. You may need to use a wet/dry vacuum to remove any water currently on the floor.

Peek said if you see evidence of spiders or other creepy crawlies, choose the least toxic method to get rid of them. For example, seal up any cracks that allow entry. Sealing cracks keeps bugs out. After the cracks are sealed, use a broom or vacuum to get rid of invaders.

Once the shelter is cleaned up and ready to be inhabited, prepare a survival pack of essentials in the event you must stay in the shelter for an extended period of time.

"Include things such as nonperishable foods, flashlights, extra batteries, a battery-operated radio and a first aid kit," she said. "Bottled water is essential as well, and you should figure about a gallon of water per person per day. Be sure to include all the medications your family takes on a daily basis. Also, make sure everyone is wearing shoes when you take cover in the shelter. Your feet will need to be covered in the event of storm damage when you emerge from the shelter."

Think about all the special needs your family may have. Families with babies and small children should pack diapers, formula and other child-related essentials. Older adults will have their own special needs that must be taken into consideration.

Try to keep young children occupied with games, books, or puzzles. Children often feel very scared during a storm and anything that can help keep them occupied and their minds off the storm is good to have in the shelter.

"A weather emergency is nerve wracking under any circumstances. If you're prepared, knowing

your family has what it needs for a few days is just one less thing to worry about in the midst of all the chaos a storm can cause,” says Sonya McDaniel, Pottawatomie County OSU Extension Educator. “Being prepared can help ensure there is less risk for injury and more of a guarantee that everyone will come out of the storm safe and sound.”

Finally, if you have pets and small children it is a good idea to have practice, non-stormy times to enter and exit your shelter. It is a strange place for animals and children, so getting them used to the feel, smells and sights will help them during a stressful situation like a true tornado warning.

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