

EXPERT OFFERS STEPS TO KEEP SAFE AND SURVIVE IN PUBLIC PLACES

With staggering death tolls from nightclub disasters in Chicago and Rhode Island, a roof collapsing in a Maryland toy store and a country on terror alert, people across America are concerned about how to prepare themselves should an emergency situation arise in a public place. Debra Holtzman a nationally recognized safety and health expert and author of the popular book, *The Panic Proof Parent: Creating a Safe Lifestyle for your Family* (McGraw-Hill) says, "There are some simple things that you can do beforehand to protect yourself in an emergency situation. And how well we prepare ourselves to deal with all types of emergency situations will determine our success in managing them. " In addition to learning crucial safety skills, Holtzman recommends that everyone carry an emergency safety kit with them. "These items can fit in a small purse or pouch and most people have these life saving devices in their home already".

Contents of the Emergency Safety Kit:

- A Fully Charged Cell Phone. Preprogram the telephone with emergency contact telephone numbers. Include the telephone number of a friend or relative living outside of the emergency area. (A caller is more likely to connect with a long-distance number outside the emergency area than with a local number within it.)
 - An ID Card. This should include the your name, date of birth, blood type, date of last Tetanus shot, a list of allergies, and chronic and past illnesses. This should also include Health Insurance Information. Laminate in plastic to prevent tears or water damage. Keep this ID card in your wallet directly behind your driver's license.
 - A small Flashlight or Penlight. If there is a power outage, the penlight will help to guide you to safety. Make sure to check batteries monthly.
 - A Whistle. If you are trapped in a dark location, you can blow the whistle so someone can locate you.
 - A Handkerchief. If there are dangerous gases or dust in the air, you can use it to cover your mouth and nose.
 - Small bottled water and snack. If you get trapped inside in a building, you will have a snack handy.
- Holtzman further recommends that whenever you visit any public place:
- Locate all possible exits. Make sure the exits are not blocked, the doors are unlocked and they are all well lit. (People have been known to bypass several fire exits in an emergency and head right for the door they entered because they didn't take the time to plan their escape route.)
 - Locate security in the building.
 - Locate first the aid station if there is one.
 - Be aware of your surroundings. Promptly report suspicious persons, vehicles, objects and packages, to security.
 - Be aware where your children are at all times (always).
 - Look above and look below. Check to see that you are not standing under a light fixture or any other item that may topple down (or shatter- glass fixtures and store window shatter) on you. Be aware of the surfaces you are walking and/or standing on to avoid slips and falls.
 - When evacuating a building, leave as calmly and quickly as possible. Once you are out the building, move away from the scene so you'll be out of the emergency personnel's way and safe from any hazardous conditions.

In addition, Holtzman recommends that everyone practice responding to emergencies. And adults and teens enroll in a first aid and CPR class. Holtzman is currently Honorary Co-Chair of the Florida Safe Kids Coalition. She has a master's degree in Occupational Safety and Health and is an attorney. www.thesafetyexpert.com