

## Can I get out in a hurry?

By Barry R. Weissman, REM, CSP, CHMM\*, CHS-V, CIPS

There you are, asleep and this loud horn keeps going off. Is it a dream? But wait, what's that smell? It is smoke. Where's my wife? Where are the children? *Can I get out in a hurry?*

It seems like an ordinary day at work. You toured the production area and are getting back to your desk when suddenly; the building trembles and you feel an explosion. The lights go out. You look around and people are screaming; running toward the exits - *can I get out in a hurry?*

These are two different situations but they are related. There is an emergency and you need to be able to get out in a hurry. *Can I get out in a hurry?*

Yes you can if you have a plan and you have practiced your plan. Let's start in the home and talk about EDITH.

EDITH is not a person; it stands for **Exit Drills In The Home**. Your family needs to have a plan. They need to know two ways of getting out of each room in the home and one of those ways may have to include the window. Sketch your home and just like the drawings at work, show the two paths out of each room. Once you have the plan, you need to practice it. How do you get out of a second-story window from the inside? A chain ladder would be one way to do that. Once you've decided that you will use the chain ladder, you need to read and follow the instructions and then practice using it.

Once you've escaped from the house, then what? Set up a meeting location (assembly point) with the family and tell them, 'this is where we will assemble.' It might be the Oak tree in the neighbor's yard or it might be Mrs. Green's front porch, across the street but whatever the location, tell the family, practice going there and tell them again.

Once you've gotten out, you might have to stay out. It could be a floor, earthquake, building collapse or fire. But you and the family can't get home to get supplies and clean clothing. What are you going to do?

You are going to make a kit for each person. Small rolling suitcases or back packs will be suitable. You should have one for each person. You should pack essentials that you and your family will need for three days. Items to pack include:

- Bottled water (1 gallon per person per day) – pint bottles will be easier to pack and less to spill. Unfortunately It will still weigh about the same; 8.4 pounds/gallon.

- Non-perishable foods such as tuna fish, canned meats, peanut butter and include some comfort foods such as cookies and coffee. Bring items that can be eaten out of the container or that only need to be warmed up.
- An extra set of home and car keys,
- Copy of insurance papers, deed and car registration (necessary to prove ownership), don't forget bank account numbers.
- Money in small bills; some coins and a few blank checks.
- Clothing/bedding – think of inflatable mattresses, especially for children.
- First aid kit and manual,
- Medicines and vitamins – don't forget aspirin or aspirin-substitutes. Ask your doctor for copies of everyone's prescriptions so that if you don't have enough you may be able to get a refill,
- Flashlight, portable radio and batteries. Cell phones and I-Pods need to be recharged by plugging in. If you don't have any electricity they won't work.
- Pocketknife, manual can opener and bottle opener ,
- Candles and waterproof matches.
- Duct tape and plastic items: plastics bags, plastic utensils, plastic sheeting.
- You might want some fresh underwear and socks – pack them in plastic bags to keep them dry.
- List of important phone numbers...yes, they are in your cell phone but it doesn't work.
- Small toys and/or deck of cards for entertainment.

Make one kit for the home and another for the car because you never know where you will be when you cannot get back to where you want to be! Periodically be sure to check the contents of your kit and replace the batteries and the water. Don't over pack and bring more than you can carry.

Write down everything and give the family a copy. Keep a copy in the kitchen so everyone knows where it is. Twice a year practice getting out. So if someone says, "Can I get out in a hurry?" You can answer a confident "YES, I can!"

## Links for more information:

American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org>, click on Preparing and Getting Trained

Ready.gov: <http://www.ready.gov/>

Federal Emergency Management Agency: <http://www.fema.gov>, click on Plan & Prepare

More information about EDITH: <http://www.firemarshal.state.md.us/edith.htm>

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