

10 Evacuation Escape Route Tips - How To Avoid Being Trapped With The Masses

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Many of us live in metropolitan areas and deal with mind-boggling commuter traffic every day. We can all agree that being delayed in traffic is frustrating and a time-killer. Add a little rain or the distraction of an emergency vehicle on the shoulder and you're sitting idle.

Now imagine what a mass exodus from your neighborhood, town or city would be like if a disaster requiring evacuation were to hit with tens of thousands of panicked people hitting the streets and freeways all at once. In an absolute worst case scenario, this has the makings for a deathtrap.

There are two ways to avoid this scenario. One is to evacuate ahead of the crowds. Use your own judgment, and trust your instincts. Be ready with packed luggage, pet carriers, a [72 hour emergency kit](#) and a plan. If you wait until government officials announce a mass evacuation, you've waited too long. You will almost certainly have to deal with massive crowds of people all headed in the same direction.

Often, there is no advance warning of a disaster. That is when a second way to avoid being trapped during an evacuation comes into play. Be sure to have several pre-planned emergency routes that will get you safely away from the area of danger. Ideally, those routes will include alternative routes. It's very likely that your planned route will run into unforeseen obstacles, and you'll have to make detours to your route.

Right now, could you identify at least three ways to make an emergency exit from your town or city? If you were miles from home and had to evacuate, what route would you take and where would you go? What if you were at work and needed to get home

to your family? Do you know several routes you could take in case you hit any roadblocks?

Here are some helpful tips to help insure a safe and quick evacuation:

1. Get a detailed road map of your area and road maps for neighboring states. Using a GPS can be handy but a traditional road map will provide you with an instant, larger scale view of all possible escape routes.

2. For a worst case scenario evacuation, determine at least one destination, a place at least 100 miles from your home, as your safe place.

3. Use a highlighter on your maps and identify various routes you could take from your home to your destination. Look for possible detours in case you hit a roadblock or standstill traffic. Events such as earthquakes and violent storms quickly result in roadblocks.

4. Using a city map, identify at least three different routes you could take from your place of work to your home.

5. For those without vehicles, keep current copies of mass transportation schedules and route maps. Choose several destinations in different directions so you have options.

6. Take time to actually travel each route you have plotted out. Watch for potential problem areas, such as water routes that may fill to overflowing in a flood.

7. Label each route you have planned. In an emergency, you can communicate to family members, "We'll be taking the northern route," for example.

8. Make more than one copy of your planned emergency routes. Store copies in each vehicle, each workplace, at home, and with at least one out-of-town friend or relative.



9. Keep a full tank of gas in it if an evacuation seems likely. Keep a half tank of gas in it at all times in case of an unexpected need to evacuate. Gas stations may be closed during emergencies and unable to pump gas during power outages. Plan to take one car per family to reduce congestion and delay.

10. Take your pets with you, but understand that only service animals may be permitted in public shelters. For more information on preparing for a pet evacuation, please read our blog posting, [Is your pet ready if disaster strikes?](#)



Lastly, if time allows:

Secure your home by closing and locking doors and windows.

Unplug electrical equipment such as radios, televisions and small appliances. Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding. If there is damage to your home and you are instructed to do so, shut off water, gas and electricity before leaving.

Leave a note telling others when you left and where you are going.

Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts and a cap.

Check with neighbors who may need a ride.

The amount of time you have to leave will depend on the hazard. If the event is a weather condition, such as a hurricane, you might have a day or two to get ready. However, many disasters allow no time for people to gather even the most basic necessities, which is why good planning is essential.