



# LifeLines

information for your life


## BACKPACK SAFETY

“Mom! My back hurts!” Back-to-school is time for kids to pull out those backpacks. While backpacks are great for carrying books and materials, their use has contributed to increasing complaints of back pain from children. Kids often overcompensate for a heavy load by leaning forward at the hips or arching the back. These can cause an unnatural compression in the spine, leading to shoulder, neck, and back pain. These tips can help:

- 1) Lighten up. A backpack shouldn't weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of the student's body weight.
- 2) Pack heavier items closest to the center of the back.
- 3) Choose a pack with wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back.
- 4) Use *both* shoulder straps to avoid straining muscles and possibly contributing to spinal issues.

Adapted from Backpack Safety, Girlshealth.gov. Retrieved August, 2010.

## Contact Us

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## IS IT TIME TO LOSE THE LANDLINE? You Make the Call

There is a reason that everybody has a mobile phone. Just about anywhere you go they provide immediate access to help in an emergency, constant contact with friends and family, office connectivity, and a whole wealth of information at the press of a key (or a swipe of a screen.) So when you get home do you really need that relic of telecommunications past—your landline telephone?

According to the CDC, one in four American households now relies solely on mobile telephones. Maybe it's nostalgia, or familiarity, or the belief that it is good to have in emergencies, but many of us haven't let go of the landline.

### GO WIRELESS?

Before pulling the plug, consider a variety of factors. How much do you use your mobile phone and what does it cost? Do you have unlimited minutes or do you find yourself going over? If you make a lot of local calls from home, a landline is a better choice unless you have an unlimited mobile plan. Most cell phones have free long distance and that can be a real savings when compared to your

home phone. But don't just consider the monthly usage charges, look into the added features. Call waiting, voicemail and other features are often free with mobile phone plans.

### RELIABILITY

You really can't beat a landline for dependability and sound quality. You never have to worry about dropped calls, coverage areas, or battery life. The calls typically sound better as well. One real advantage to your home phone—you know where it is. Mobile phones can be lost or damaged and can be expensive to replace. With the exception of portable home phones, your landline will work even if the power is out. Most cell phones do too, at least for a period of time. Cell phone towers can be impacted by power outages.

### VOIP

Relying completely on your mobile phone is not the only alternative. VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) services such as Vonage, Ooma, and Skype are provided via Internet or cable depending on your area. VoIP has a distinct advantage in

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## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: Is Your Family Ready for Unexpected Events?

Sponsored by the Ready Campaign, in partnership with Citizen Corps and the Ad Council, September is National Preparedness Month (NPM). This designation aims to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses, and communities.

### MAKE A PLAN

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to plan in advance: how you will contact one another; how you will get back together; and what you will do in different situations. Inquire about similar plans at schools and workplaces where your family maybe when disaster strikes.

### ESTABLISH A CONTACT NUMBER

In a disaster or emergency, family members should have an established plan for how to contact one another. Depending on circumstances, it may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so consider if you have an out-of-town relative or friend who can serve as your emergency contact.

Every member of your family should know the emergency contact number and have either a cell phone, coins for a payphone, or a pre-paid phone card.

### EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Find out what kinds of disasters, both natural and man-made, are most likely to occur in your area and how you will be notified. Methods of getting your attention vary from community to community. One common method is to broadcast via emergency radio and TV broadcasts. You might hear a special siren, or get a telephone call or emergency workers may go door-to-door.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

In addition to information available from your work-life service, contact FEMA for copies of emergency preparedness publications by calling 800-480-2520. Also, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) to find more information, downloadable files, a list of items needed in your emergency supply kit, and links to other helpful sites.

Adapted from [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov). Retrieved August 2010.

## IN CASE OF EVACUATION Pack a "to go" bag with essentials

In the event of an emergency or disaster that requires evacuation from your home, be sure to have a "to-go bag" ready that includes:

- Water
- Non-perishable food and a can opener
- Battery-operated radio and batteries so you can get important information from local officials
- First aid kit
- Flashlight
- Maps
- Proof of residence
- Pictures of each family member, as well as photos of any pets
- Copies of insurance policies, tax records, personal identification, marriage certificate, and other important documents such as bank account records
- Comfortable clothing
- Blankets
- Prescription medications
- Other family needs such as pet supplies, infant supplies or any other unique supply your family may require
- Cash or other means of payment
- Personal hygiene supplies
- Cell phone with charger
- Disinfectant



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price, pay-ahead plans can take your monthly phone bill as low as \$10 a month. Handy applications include the ability to view your voicemails on your computer screen. A standard telephone will work with an adaptor or specialized VoIP phones can be used. Some services require that you and whomever you call are both subscribers to the service, but most do not. Remember, if your cable or Internet service goes out, so will your phone, but you can always use your cell as a back-up. Make sure you investigate complications in regard to 911 service—most services require special applications to allow emergency operators to recognize where you are calling from.

## TIME OUT: Make Sure You Get Away on Your Getaway

Time away from the job shouldn't be time worrying about the work piling up while you're gone. A few simple tips can help you keep your mind calm while taking time for yourself.

- **Plan for it:** Let your boss, co-workers, and clients know you will be out a few weeks before and that you won't be checking messages or e-mail. Make sure everyone knows who to contact in your absence.
- **Write it Up:** Make a list of deadlines that exist while you are gone and in the few days after your return so you can schedule accordingly.
- **Delegate:** Where you can, have co-workers or team members pitch in for you.
- **Ease Back In:** Try to return home at least a day before you start work to go through calls, inbox messages, or service requests before work starts in earnest. Make sure you let everyone know you are back on-the-job.

Workplace Options. 2010.