



HOME  
SAFETY  
COUNCIL™



PROLITERACY  
WORKS!



Fire Protection Publications  
Oklahoma State University

Home Safety Literacy Project



# Are We Ready?

By Cynthia Nye



## Chapter 1: A Severe Weather Warning

It is 9 p.m. and Carrie is writing a letter to her husband.  
He is away in the Army.  
Their son Lamar is in bed. He is 10 years old.  
Lamar's dog is sleeping near her chair. His name is Charley.

Carrie has the radio on.  
She listens to the news.  
The man on the news says, "A severe thunderstorm warning has been issued by the National Weather Service in Charleston, South Carolina."

Bad storms?  
That is not good news for Carrie.  
Carrie lives on the coast north and east of Charleston.  
She listens for more news about the storms.  
The man says that the warning will last until 11 p.m.  
The storms may bring heavy rain, high winds, and hail.

Carrie stands up. She closes all her windows.  
She does not want rain in her home.  
She gets a flashlight, in case the power goes out.  
She turns it on to be sure it works.



At 9:20, the storm comes.  
Carrie hears heavy rain.  
She sees lightning flashes and hears thunder.  
The wind blows hard.  
She hears hail hitting the roof.

Then the storm goes away.  
Everything is quiet again.  
This time, the power didn't go out.  
At 10 p.m., Carrie goes to bed.

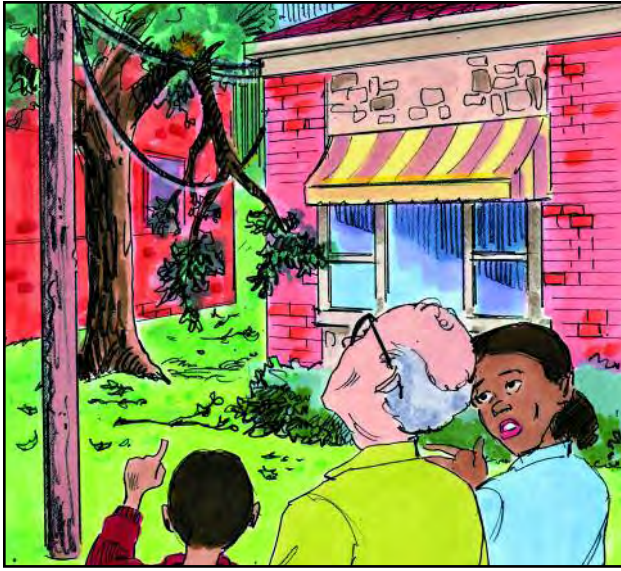


## Chapter 2: After the Storm

The next morning, Carrie turns on the TV.  
She and Lamar watch the news.  
The thunderstorm hit a town 20 miles away.  
The river and creeks were already full of water.  
The rain from the new storm caused a flood.  
The streets are flooded. Some homes are flooded.  
The water is high, and some people can't get out of their homes.  
Police officers and firefighters are helping people.  
Many people are helping their neighbors.

“What a mess!” says Lamar.  
“That’s a bad flood. I bet they were scared.”

“I bet they were, too,” says Carrie.  
“But it looks like everyone is safe.  
The people are helping each other.”



After breakfast, Carrie and Lamar go outside.  
They see their neighbor, Walter Hillman.  
Walter is looking up. Carrie and Lamar look up, too.  
A big tree branch is on the power line.

Walter says, “No power line is safe to touch, ever.  
I will call the power company.”

Lamar says, “I’m glad that branch didn’t fall on your roof.”

Carrie thinks about Walter.  
He is 80 years old.  
His wife Jane can’t walk very well.  
Walter and Jane were lucky this time.  
But they could have trouble in a bigger storm.

Carrie says, “Walter, I have been thinking about this storm.  
I have been thinking about all the bad hurricanes this year.  
I think we need a plan.  
We need a plan so we know what to do in an emergency.”

Lamar asks, "Will we be safe if we have a plan?"

Carrie puts her hand on Lamar's arm.

She says, "If we have a plan, we can help each other be safe."

Walter looks at Lamar.

Then he looks at Carrie and nods his head.

He says, "I have been thinking about the same thing."

"Good," says Carrie.

"Can you and Jane come over after supper tonight?"

I will ask our new neighbor, Debbie, too.

We can talk. And we can make a plan."

"That's good," says Walter. "We'll see you tonight."



### Chapter 3: Talking About Disasters

Carrie is glad she invited Debbie, too.  
Debbie lives alone. Her family is far away.

Debbie says, “Before I came here, I lived in Kansas.  
Kansas has a lot of tornados.”

Lamar says, “I know what a tornado is.  
My teacher told me.  
It’s a tower of spinning air. It comes from a storm cloud.  
It breaks trees and buildings. And sometimes people get killed.”

Lamar asks Debbie, “Were you ever in a tornado?”

“Yes,” says Debbie. “I was in our apartment.  
I lived with my mother and father.  
A friend said there was a chance of tornadoes.  
So we were listening to the radio.  
We had just finished dinner.  
That’s when we heard the tornado warning.”

“What did you do?” asks Lamar.

“Did you get in your car and drive away?”

Debbie says,

“No. Tornadoes come too fast.

You need to go to a safe place quickly.

Our apartment was in the basement.

It had a hall with no windows.

That’s important because windows break in a tornado.”

“They break in hurricanes, too!” says Lamar.

“People can get hurt or killed by the broken glass.”

Carrie says, “And broken windows can let in strong winds.

The winds can destroy homes.”

“Yes,” says Debbie.

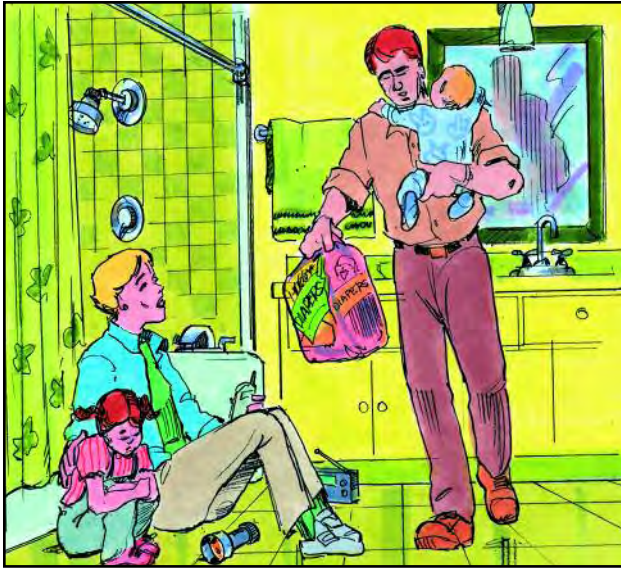
“That’s why the hall was a safe place to go.

But I wanted to check on our neighbors.

They lived upstairs.

I ran up and banged on their door.

I told them about the tornado.



They went to their bathroom.  
The bathroom was in the middle of the apartment.  
It didn't have windows.  
So it was safe, too.  
Our neighbors took their two small babies to the bathroom.  
And they took a big bag of diapers!"

Carrie laughs. She says, "That was good thinking!  
Tornadoes don't last long.  
But sometimes babies need a lot of diapers!"

"What happened when the tornado came?" asks Lamar.

Debbie says, "The tornado did not hit our building.  
But it took the roof off a house down the street.  
It took down the power lines, too.  
It was very dark in the apartment.  
But we had good flashlights and plenty of batteries."

Lamar asks,  
"How did you know when to come out?"

Debbie says, “We listened to the radio.  
The radio had batteries. It worked when the power was out.  
We heard weather reports on the radio.  
The reports told us what was happening outside.  
After two hours, a report said the tornadoes were gone.  
No more tornadoes were coming.  
So we could all leave our safe places.  
But we didn’t go outside until morning.  
At night, you can’t see the broken power lines.

“You should never touch a power line,” says Lamar.  
“That’s what Mr. Hillman says.”

Carrie looks at Debbie.  
She says, “Your story shows how neighbors can help each other.  
We can do that here, too. We can make a plan.  
We can be ready if an emergency happens here.”



## Chapter 4: Where Can We Go?

At 7:30, Charley barks.  
“The Hillmans are here!” says Carrie.

Lamar opens the door.  
The Hillmans come in.  
Jane and Walter Hillman say hello to Carrie and Lamar.  
They say hello to Debbie.

Everyone sits around the kitchen table.  
The neighbors talk.

Debbie says, “I am new here.  
I know what can happen in Kansas.  
But I don’t know much about South Carolina.  
What kind of disasters can happen here?”

Lamar says, “A truck blew up one time!  
It had chemicals inside.  
It crashed on the highway.  
There was a big fire. We had to leave.”



“That’s right,” says Walter.

“Those things happen, too.

But our biggest problem is hurricanes. Hurricanes and floods.”

Debbie says, “I saw the flood on TV this morning.

And I know that hurricanes are dangerous.

What do you do in a hurricane?”

Carrie says, “We listen to the TV or the radio.

People on the news tell us what to do.

Sometimes they tell us to evacuate.

We have to leave our homes and go to a safer place.

We have to evacuate quickly.

We live in a low place, and water from the ocean can come fast.

If we stay in our homes too long, we may not get away.”

Debbie asks, “Where do you go?”

Carrie says, “Some people go to a shelter.

A shelter is a safe place to stay.

The radio will tell you where the shelters are.

Sometimes the school is a shelter for people in our area.

But they wouldn’t use the school for a bad hurricane.”

Jane says, “If it’s a bad storm, you might have to leave town.  
We go to my sister’s home.  
She lives in Atlanta. We know the safest roads to use.”

“I don’t have a car,” says Debbie.  
“I use the bus.”



Carrie says, “You can evacuate on a bus.  
But you have to get a ticket.  
You have to go as soon as you can.”

Lamar says, “We go to my aunt’s house if there’s a storm.  
We can take Charley there.  
We can’t take Charley to a shelter.  
You can’t have pets in a shelter for people.”

Carrie tells Debbie,  
“If you can’t get a bus ticket, we can help you.  
We can take you in our car.  
But let’s call the town office tomorrow.  
We can ask what the town plan is.  
We can ask how the town will help people who don’t have cars.”



## Chapter 5: Get Your Supplies Together

Jane says, “Sometimes people can’t evacuate.  
We had a flood about 10 years ago.  
The water came fast.  
We couldn’t drive through the water.  
We couldn’t get out of town.”

Walter says, “The water started to come inside.  
It was dangerous. We had to get out fast.  
We went to our neighbor’s home.  
It was on a hill. It was safe from the flood.  
We stayed there for two days.”

Carrie looks at her neighbors.  
Carrie says, “Our home has two floors.  
If we can’t get out, we can go to the second floor.  
If you can’t get out, you can come here with us.”

Debbie says, “We will need supplies.  
We will need supplies if we stay at home.  
And we will need supplies if we leave.”

Carrie makes a list of things they need.

Walter says, “If we stay, each person needs 3 gallons of water. We need bottled water in case the city water gets cut off.”

“Or in case it’s not safe to drink,” says Carrie.



“Right,” says Walter.

“And each person needs food.

We need enough food for a few days.

We need food that won’t go bad.

We need a can opener to open cans of food.

Each person needs a flashlight and batteries.

We need a first aid kit.

And we need toilet paper!”

Jane adds, “I take a lot of medicines, so I need a supply of them. And Walter and I need our eyeglasses!”

Walter tells his neighbors,

“We can think about other things we will need if we stay here.”

Lamar asks, “But what if we have to leave?  
What if we can’t carry all those things?”

“You’re right, Lamar.

We have to think about that, too,” says Walter.

“We have to think about what we can carry if we have to leave  
in a hurry.”

“Yes,” says Debbie.

And remember that some people don’t have cars!”

“That’s important,” says Walter.

It looks like we still have more work to do.

We can finish our lists next time.

Then we can each get our supplies ready.

Jane and I will put our supplies in bags.

Then we’ll put the bags in the closet by the door.

If we evacuate, we will take our supplies.

If we come to Carrie’s home, we’ll bring our supplies here.”

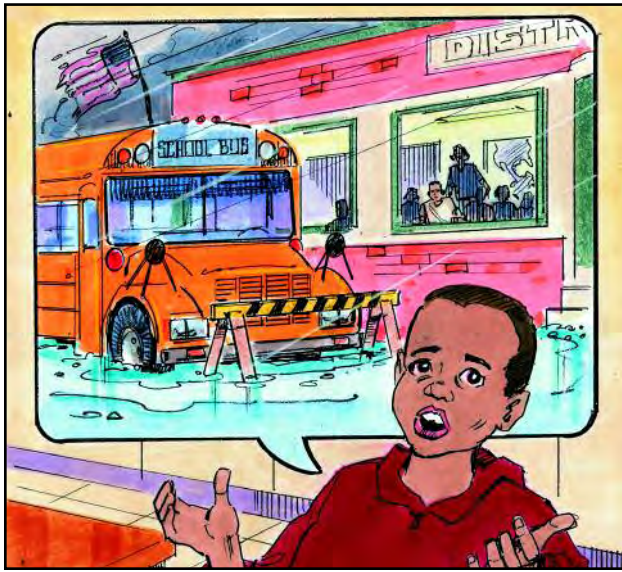
Carrie says,

“You and Jane can’t carry all those supplies!

They will be too heavy for you.

Lamar and I will help you.

We’ll help you carry your supplies.”



## Chapter 6: More Things to Think About

Lamar looks at his mother.  
He asks, “What if I’m not home?  
What if I’m at school when a flood comes?  
What will I do?”

Carrie says, “Listen to your teacher.  
She will tell you what is safe.  
Don’t come home if it is not safe.  
Stay at school.  
The school will call me on the phone.  
Or the radio will tell me what is happening.  
If you are at a friend’s home, find an adult.  
Ask the adult what to do.”

Debbie asks Carrie, “Do you have a landline phone with a cord?  
It will work if the power goes out.  
Cordless phones don’t work if the power goes out.  
And sometimes cell phones don’t work.”



Carrie says, “Yes, we have a landline phone.  
And I have a radio with batteries.”

Walter says, “Make sure you have extra batteries for that radio!  
We need them for flashlights, too.  
And they have to be the right size!  
I will keep batteries with our supplies.”

Carrie tells everyone, “If you come to stay with us, bring your  
supplies.  
Bring extra clothes.  
Bring a blanket.  
Bring books or games to keep busy.”

Walter says, “Take your identification, too.  
Sometimes you don’t know where you will have to go.  
Sometimes you need to show your identification so you can come  
back home.  
If you evacuate, take your important papers, too.  
You don’t want to lose them in a flood.”



## Chapter 7: Make An Emergency Phone List

Carrie puts a piece of paper on the table.  
She tells everyone,  
“Write your phone number on this paper.  
If we have an emergency, we can call each other.”

Debbie says, “Write the name of an emergency contact, too.  
Pick someone who doesn’t live here.  
Pick a family member or a friend who does not live in this area.  
Write the person’s name, address, and phone numbers.  
You need that information in an emergency.  
It’s good for a neighbor to have it, too.  
We will know who to call if you have an emergency.”

Walter says, “We can call Jane’s sister in an emergency.  
We can both call her if we can’t find each other.  
Then she will know where we are.  
She will know we are safe.  
She will help us find each other.”

Lamar looks at his mother.  
He asks, "What if you get lost?  
Who will I call?  
Who will help me find you?"

Carrie says, "Aunt Elsie is our emergency contact.  
I will write the information for you to keep.  
And I will help you learn her address and phone number.

Carrie taps Lamar on his head.  
She says, "If you lose your paper, you will have the number right  
in here."

Everyone writes the information.

Carrie says, "OK! I think we're done for tonight.  
We can meet again next week.  
We can finish our supply lists then.  
I will make copies of the supply lists and the emergency  
phone list.  
I will give everyone a copy.  
If there is a disaster, we will be ready!"

Everyone feels good about the meeting.  
They know what can happen.  
They are thinking about their supplies.  
They are making a plan.  
They will know what to do in an emergency.  
They will help each other be safe.



Lamar feels better now.  
He knows there is a plan for him.  
His mother and his neighbors will help him be safe.  
Just then Charley barks.  
Lamar looks at the dog.  
He says, "Don't worry, Charley.  
We have a plan for you, too.  
And I'll write dog food and leash on the list of supplies!"



[www.homesafetyliteracy.org](http://www.homesafetyliteracy.org)

The Home Safety Literacy Project is supported by the Home Safety Council along with 2003 and 2004 Fire Prevention and Safety Grant funding through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security/Office of Domestic Preparedness.

The copyrighting of this publication is not intended to prevent use of the material for injury prevention purposes. You may freely duplicate the Project materials, including the addition of your agency logo. Changing the content is not permissible. Please use with attribution to the Home Safety Literacy Project, Copyright 2006, Home Safety Council.

[www.homesafetycouncil.org](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org)