

Your Family Communication Plan

Having mesh hardware is only half the plan. The other half is knowing *what* to communicate, *when*, and *how*. A simple, agreed-upon procedure keeps messages short, actionable, and interpretable under stress.

Designate a Mesh Coordinator

Choose one person — usually whoever is most comfortable with the technology — as the family's mesh coordinator. Their role during an event:

- Initiating scheduled check-ins and logging responses
- Relaying messages if a family member is out of direct range
- Deciding when to escalate (move to rally point, contact outside help)
- Keeping a written log of who has checked in and their status

Name a backup coordinator in case the primary is the one who is unreachable.

Important: the coordinator cannot confirm a message was delivered unless the recipient explicitly replies. Mesh delivery is best-effort with no guarantee. Treat no reply as a failed contact and fall back to the contingency plan immediately — do not assume the message got through, and do not treat the coordinator or the mesh as a reliable dispatch layer for life-safety decisions.

Check-In Schedule

Agree on a check-in schedule before any emergency — not during one. A predictable schedule reduces unnecessary worry and keeps the channel clear:

- **Routine event (power outage, approaching storm):** Check in every 2–4 hours, or immediately if your situation changes.
- **Active emergency (evacuation, earthquake aftermath):** Check in as soon as you reach safety, then every 1–2 hours.
- **Missed check-in:** Coordinator makes two contact attempts 15 minutes apart. If no response, activates the pre-agreed contingency (go to rally point, contact a relay

neighbor).

The Status Message Format

LoRa packets are small. Keep messages short. Agree on a standard format everyone can remember under stress:

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NAME / STATUS / LOCATION / NEEDS
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Examples:

- MOM / OK / HOME / NONE
- JAKE / OK / WORK / NONE
- DAD / OK-MOVING / HWY 12 NORTH / NONE
- SARAH / NEEDS HELP / 3RD AND MAIN / WATER

Agreed status codes

- **OK** — Safe, no immediate needs
- **OK-MOVING** — Safe, currently evacuating or in transit
- **NEEDS HELP** — Needs assistance, not life-threatening
- **EMERGENCY** — Immediate life-threatening situation (also attempt 911)
- **ALL CLEAR** — Arrived at rally point or final destination

Remember mesh delivery is best-effort — sending an EMERGENCY message does not guarantee anyone received it. Always attempt 911/voice for a life-threatening situation and treat the mesh message as a supplement, confirmed only when someone replies.

Write these codes on a small card and tape it to the back of each node so anyone can use it without training.

Rally Points

Agree on two physical meeting locations before any emergency — do not rely on mesh to communicate them during one:

- **Primary rally point:** Close to home — a neighbor's house, a street corner, a nearby park. Used when you need to leave your immediate area but can stay in the neighborhood.
- **Secondary rally point:** Further away — a relative's house, a community center, a town outside your immediate area. Used when the primary area is unsafe or inaccessible.

Both locations must be known to every family member from memory. Walk or drive to them at least once so everyone knows the route.

If a Device Fails

Plan for at least one node failing. Options to build in advance:

- **Designate a relay neighbor** — a nearby neighbor with a mesh node helps extend coverage: their powered node automatically relays messages between your family's nodes that are in range of it. Understand the limit, though — a neighbor's node cannot recover a message from a node that is dead, destroyed, or completely out of range. Treat it as extra coverage, not a guaranteed human backup.
- **Keep a written backup plan** — channel name, rally points, check-in schedule, and coordinator contact info on a waterproof card stored in each go-bag. If mesh fails entirely, fall back to this plan.
- **Know the secondary rally point by memory** — the plan must work with zero technology.

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