EMERGENCY!

Even in the most prepared home, emergencies happen. One of the toughest parts of an “emergency” for newly home alone youths is determining what aid they actually need to handle the situation. Recognizing what type of emergency it is helps.

Non-Emergency Emergencies – spilling milk, losing homework, not being able to get the Wi-Fi working—these may seem like a big deal, but they are not actual emergencies. Make sure you are aware these things will happen, and they are capable of handling them by themselves until a parent comes home. Ask about their fears of what may happen when they are alone, even those that are minor, to help alleviate them and educate them on how to handle these non-emergencies.

A Small Emergency – these situations usually do require some sort of intervention, but not necessarily major help from someone outside of the home. Things like a water leak, power outage, small injury or scrape that can be clean and bandaged etc. Explain that they can reach out to a parent or trusted adult via phone for advice for these emergencies but can typically handle them at home without someone coming immediately.

Big Emergencies – These are actual emergencies – large injury to themselves or a sibling, a fire inside the house, the smell of gas, allergic reactions, unsafe weather situations like a flood or hurricane, someone trying to get into the house, etc. Discuss the action plan for what to do when a real emergency is taking place – what number to call, to always call 911 first, where is a safe family meeting place if they need to leave the home, who is a trusted neighbor to call on immediately for assistance. It is important to also be sure they know what needs to be communicated on a 911 call – try and stay calm, speak clearly, and tell the operator what happened, the address, their name and a number to contact them. Even cell phones without data or minutes can call 911, so be sure they know they should always try to call no matter what if they are in need of emergent help.

This topic can make youth feel more nervous about staying home alone. Play the attached “Is it an Emergency?” Game (from the imAlone 4-H military partnership curriculum) to prepare and gage their feelings on handling these possible situations.
Is it an Emergency?

Use the cards to answer whether the following scenarios are emergencies.

1. Your sister falls down the stairs. She is not moving and does not answer you.

2. While you are walking down the hall you stub your toe and it hurts.

3. You are washing the dishes and the plate breaks.

4. You look out the window and see someone breaking into the house next door.

5. There is a bad storm and you hear thunder and lightning.

6. You notice a stranger hanging around outside your house.

7. You can’t figure out a math problem that you got for homework.

8. The washing machine overflows and is causing a flood.

9. You have lost your key and can’t get into your house.

10. The air conditioning or heat is not working when you get home.

11. The smoke alarm goes off.

12. There is no peanut butter left and you want a sandwich.

13. You get home and notice that a window is broken.

14. Your brother won’t leave you alone.

15. You can’t find the remote control for the television.
Big Emergency, you must call emergency numbers.

Small Emergency, you must call a neighbor or parent to help you handle it best.

No Emergency – a situation you can handle yourself until your parents come home.

Answer Key:
1. A
2. C
3. C
4. A
5. C
6. B
7. C
8. B
9. B
10. B
11. A
12. C
13. A
14. C
15. C