

Disaster Preparedness For Seniors by Seniors



American Red Cross
Greater Rochester Chapter
Lifeblood of our community.



HOMELAND SECURITY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
A MONROE COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATIVE



This information was developed by the Greater Rochester Chapter of the American Red Cross

Dear Friends,

We are a group of older adults who experienced a two-week power outage when a massive ice storm hit the Greater Rochester, New York area. We were unprepared for such a disaster. If we had only taken a few simple steps to prepare ourselves for such an event, we could have eliminated many of the hardships we had to endure.

We are just like many of you. Some of us are in good health but aren't quite as agile as we used to be. Some of us have hearing or vision problems; others use a cane or wheelchair. Whatever our limitations, we still need to be prepared. We can be prepared!

To avoid getting caught unprepared, we urge you to immediately review the enclosed information and fill in the appropriate local emergency numbers. Be sure to keep this helpful booklet in a handy place for quick reference.

Sincerely,

Vi, Melvin Q., Julia L., Nancy C., Marion V., Jam, Dorothy M., Janet H., Fran, Roger H., Mary S., and LaVinia

Disaster Preparedness for Seniors by Seniors

Take Responsibility

Prepare NOW for a sudden emergency.

Emergencies and disasters can strike quickly and without warning and can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or be confined to your home. What would you do if your basic services - water, gas, electricity or communications - were cut off?

Learn how to protect yourself and cope with disaster by planning ahead. Even if you have physical limitations, you can still protect yourself.

Local officials and relief workers may not be able to reach everyone right away. You can deal with disaster better by preparing in advance and by working with those in your support network: your family, neighbors and friends as a team. Knowing what to do is your responsibility. Follow the steps listed in this booklet to be more prepared.

The Four Steps to Preparedness

1. Get Informed
2. Make a Plan
3. Build a Kit
4. Maintain your Plan & Kit

When Disaster Strikes

Emergency Contact Page

Four Steps to Preparedness

1. Get Informed

Community Hazard Assessment

What hazards threaten your community and neighborhood? Make a list of how they might affect you. Think about both natural (e.g. hurricanes, flooding, winter storms and earthquakes) and human-caused (e.g. hazardous materials and transportation accidents) and about your risk from those hazards.

Which of these Hazards are most likely to happen in your community?

-  Earthquakes
-  Hurricanes
-  Winter Storms
-  Tornadoes
-  Thunderstorms
-  Flooding
-  Toxic Spills
-  Fires



Preparing for a disaster that is most likely to happen in your area will help you be prepared for any disaster. Remember things can happen at any time.

Self Assessment

What are your personal abilities and limitations that may affect your response to a disaster?

- Do you live alone?
- Do you drive and own a car?
- How good is your sense of smell?
- Do you have any cognitive or motor skill limitations?
- Has your sense of hearing or vision decreased?
- Are you reliant upon any medical equipment?
- Are you reliant upon a caregiver?

Community Disaster Plans

Ask about the emergency plans and procedures that exist in your community.

Know about your community's response and evacuation plans (e.g. hurricane, nuclear, extreme weather). If you do not own a vehicle or drive, find out in advance what your community's plans are for evacuating those without private transportation or make arrangements with a neighbor who would drive you.

If you receive home care, speak with your case manager to see what their plan is in times of emergency and how they can assist with your plan.



Community Warning Systems

(How will you be notified of a possible emergency?)

Know how local authorities will warn you of a pending or current disaster situation and how they will provide information to you before, during and after a disaster.



Friends, Family Caregivers & Neighbors

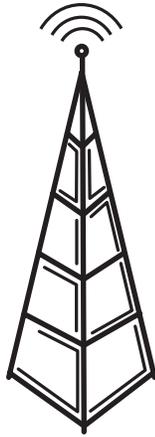
Before a disaster happens it is a good idea to have a conversation with those in your support network; your friends, family and neighbors. Let them know your needs in an emergency situation; ask them how they could assist with your plan and whether they would be willing to help. Consider that during some emergencies travel is severely limited and they may not be able to get to you.

1. Local Neighborhood Emergency Teams

Connect with a group in your local neighborhood. Some of these could include CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), neighborhood watch, community block associations, churches, etc. Even if you feel you cannot become a member let them know your needs and ask them how they could assist with your disaster plan. If available, take advantage of advance registration systems in your area for those who need help during community emergencies.

2. Local Volunteer Fire Departments

Connect with your local volunteer fire department or ambulance and let them know your needs (especially if you live in a less urban area). Discuss with them how they might be able to assist in your disaster plan.



3. Local EAS (Emergency Alert System) TV Stations

Certain television and radio stations will broadcast emergency messages from local authorities. Find out which stations broadcast on the Emergency Alert System (EAS).

4. NOAA Weather Radio/All Hazard Alert Radio

These special radios provide one of the earliest warnings of weather and other emergencies and can be programmed to alert you to hazards in your specific area. To learn more, call your local National Weather Service office or visit www.nws.noaa.gov for more information.



5. Door to door warning from local emergency officials.

In some emergencies local responders may come door-to-door and deliver emergency messages or warnings. Listen carefully and strictly follow their instructions!

6. Be aware of those in your neighborhood who may need special help.

There may be people in your community that need extra assistance when a disaster occurs. Consider how you can assist them in their preparedness planning.

7. Senior Living & Assisted Living Communities

If you live in a senior community become familiar with any disaster notification plans that may already exist. Talk to your community management or resident council about how you can all be more prepared together.

Post emergency phone numbers near your phones

Post emergency numbers near all of your phones. Include the numbers of those in your support network. Remember that in some emergencies telephone lines might not be operational.

Plan for Those with Disabilities and Other Special Needs

Keep support items like wheelchairs & walkers in a designated place so they can be found quickly.



This step is essential for those who have home-health caregivers, particularly for those who are bed-bound.

Plan for Your Pets or Service Animals



Take your pets with you if you evacuate. However, be aware that pets (except service animals) are not permitted in emergency public shelters for health reasons. Prepare a list of family, friends, boarding facilities, veterinarians, and ‘pet-friendly’ hotels that could shelter your pets in an emergency.

Utilities

Talk to your utility company about emergency procedures and know how and when to turn off water, gas and electricity at the main switches or valves. Share this information with your family. Keep any tools you will need nearby. Turn off the utilities only if you suspect the lines are damaged, you suspect a leak or if local officials instruct you to do so. **(Note: Only turn off your gas in the event of a real emergency)**

Smoke Detectors & Other Alarms



Test your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors regularly. Consider strobe or vibrating alert systems that might meet your needs. Change the batteries in all alarms every six months.

Insurance Coverage

Talk with your insurance agent to be sure that you have adequate insurance coverage. Homeowners insurance does not cover flood damage and may not provide full coverage for other hazards.

Vital Records and Documents

Copies of vital family records and other important documents such as birth and marriage certificates, social security cards, passports, wills, deeds, and financial, insurance, and immunizations records should be kept in a safe location.

Hearing Aids

If you wear hearing aids consider storing them in a container by your bedside which is attached to your nightstand using Velcro. Some disasters (e.g. earthquakes) may shift items that are not secured making them difficult to find quickly.



Prepare for Different Hazards.

Include in your plan how to prepare for the different hazards that could impact your local community and how to protect yourself. For instance, the actions you would take to prepare yourself from an ice storm are different from those you would take for a fire. See the back cover for websites that can help you prepare for different hazards.

Four Steps to Preparedness

3. Build a Kit

Disasters can happen at any moment. By planning ahead you can avoid waiting in long lines for critical supplies, such as food, water and medicine and you will also have essential items if you need to evacuate.

- ✓ For your safety and comfort, have emergency supplies packed and ready in one place before disaster hits.
- ✓ You should assemble enough supplies to last for at least three days.
- ✓ Store them in an easy-to-carry container, such as a backpack or duffel bag.
- ✓ You may want to consider storing them in a container with wheels.
- ✓ Be sure your bag has an ID tag.
- ✓ Label any equipment, such as wheelchairs, canes or walkers that you would need.
- ✓ Keeping your kit up to date is also important. Review the contents at least once every six months or as your needs change. Regularly rotate food, water, batteries, medications and other perishable items.

On the following pages are some suggestions for building your disaster supplies kit. Include any additional items that you feel might be useful for your particular needs.

RECOMMENDED DISASTER KIT SUPPLIES

Basic Needs and Supplies (check off)

- Three-day supply of nonperishable food (canned, dry, etc. it is a good idea to include foods that do not need cooking)
- Three-day supply of water (one gallon per person, per day)
- Manual can opener
- Flashlight with extra batteries and bulbs (do not use candles)
- First aid kit and manual.
- Cell phone with an extra battery and charger(s)
- Sanitation and hygiene items (toilet paper, feminine products)
- Matches in waterproof container
- Whistle (to attract the attention of emergency personnel)
- One change of clothing
- Blanket
- Photocopies of identification and credit cards
- Insurance agent's name and number
- Cash and coins (ATMs may not be accessible)
- Pet supplies (including food and vaccination record)
- Map of the local area
- Pack of cards
- Extra set of keys (car, house, etc)
- Plastic garbage bags
- Family & friends emergency contact information

Special considerations for your disaster kit

- Oxygen
- List of the style and serial numbers of medical devices such as pacemakers
- Medical insurance and Medicare cards
- Prescription medications (three-day supply)
- List of medications, including dosage)

- Doctors & pharmacists contact information, list of any allergies
- Extra eyeglasses, contact lens solution
- Extra hearing aid batteries
- Extra wheelchair batteries

Cold Climate Supplies

It is possible that you will not have heat during or after a disaster. Think about your clothing and bedding needs. Be sure to include one set of the following for each person:

- Jacket or coat
- Long pants and long sleeve shirt
- Sturdy shoes
- Hat, mittens, and scarf
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket

Supplies for your Vehicle

- Flashlight with extra batteries and extra bulbs
- Maps
- First aid kit and manual
- Tire repair kit
- Jumper cables
- Flares
- Bottled water
- Non-perishable foods such as granola bars

- Winter: Blanket, hat, mittens, shovel, sand, tire chains, windshield scraper, florescent distress flag
- Summer: Sunscreen lotion SPF 15 or greater, shade item (umbrella, wide brimmed hat, etc)

Other items you might need

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Four Steps to Preparedness

4. Maintain Your Plan & Kit

Every Six Months

- Review your plan with all of your friends and family.
- Check your disaster supplies kit and rotate all perishable items (e.g. food, water, medications, and batteries).
- Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills on a regular basis with your family.
- Change batteries in all essential devices. (e.g. smoke detectors).

A good idea is to do this every Fall and Spring when you change to/from daylight savings time.

When Disaster Strikes

Sheltering In Place

In some emergencies such as a chemical emergency, or a winter storm you may be told to shelter in place. This means stay where you are and make yourself as safe as possible until the emergency passes or you are told to evacuate. In this situation it is safer to remain indoors than to go outside. Stay in your home and listen to instructions from emergency personnel. Listen to your television or radio for emergency messages.

If You Need to Evacuate:

Coordinate with your family and home care provider for evacuation procedures.

- Try to carpool if possible.
- Wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Take your Disaster Supplies Kit – go bag (evacuation).
- Lock your home.
- Use the travel routes specified or special assistance provided by local officials. Don't take any short cuts, they may be unsafe.
- When you arrive at a shelter notify the shelter management of any needs you may have. They will do their best to accommodate you and make you comfortable.



- Let others know when you left and where you are going.
- Make arrangements for your pets.

Public Shelters

Relief organizations, like the Red Cross, may open shelters if a disaster affects a large number of people or the emergency is expected to last several days.



Be prepared to go to a shelter if:

- Your area is without electrical power
- There is a chemical emergency affecting your area
- Flood water is rising
- Your home has been severely damaged
- Police or other local officials tell you to evacuate



Services Provided at a Red Cross Shelter

- Food
- Temporary shelter
- Basic first aid

All American Red Cross Emergency services are provided free of charge.

To learn about Red Cross shelters that have been opened in your area, listen to your local media or check with your local Red Cross chapter.

After a Disaster

- If the emergency occurs while you are at home, check for damage using a flashlight. DO NOT light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches. Check for fires, chemical spills and gas leaks.
- Shut off any damaged utilities.
- Check on your neighbors, especially those who are elderly or disabled.
- Call your out-of-town contacts.
- Stay away from downed power lines.
- Do not drive through flooded roads.
- Monitor local broadcasts for information about where you can get disaster relief assistance.

Financial Exploitation/Scams

Unfortunately, after a disaster there may be some people who will try to take advantage of your vulnerability. Beware of high pressure sales, disclosing personal financial information (account numbers and credit card information) and services provided with no written contract.



If Electrical Power is Lost

- Use a flashlight or battery-operated lantern.

Do not use candles.

- Turn off all major appliances (e.g. stove, refrigerator, dryer). They could overload electric lines when power is restored, causing a second outage.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Food can be kept cold for a day or two if the doors are kept closed.
- Use portable generators cautiously. Make sure they are operated only out-of-doors in a well-ventilated area. Refuel a generator only after it has cooled. Do not connect a generator to your home's electrical system except through an approved transfer switch installed in compliance with local electrical code.



Before a Fire

Plan two escape routes out of each room.

If you cannot use stairways, make special arrangements for help in advance. Never use elevators.

Sleep with the bedroom door closed. This gives you extra minutes of protection from toxic fumes and fire.

Test your smoke detector battery every six months, and as a reminder, change batteries on the same day each year. Vacuum it occasionally to remove dust.

In Case of Fire

- **Remain calm.** Drop to the floor and crawl. Most fire fatalities are due to breathing toxic fumes and smoke. The cleanest air is near the floor. Breathing toxic fumes and smoke is more dangerous than the risk of injury in getting to the floor quickly.
- Feel any door before you open it. If it is hot, find another way out.
- If your smoke detector goes off, never waste time to get dressed or collect valuables or pets. Get out of the house immediately.
- Do not try to fight the fire! Call for help from a neighbor's phone.
- **Never go back into a burning building for any reason.**
- If your clothes catch on fire, drop to the floor and roll to suffocate the fire. Keep rolling (running from the fire only "fans" the flames and makes it worse).
- If you are in a wheelchair or cannot get out of your house, stay by the window near the floor and signal for help.



Grandparents & Grandchildren

Many children visit their grandparents often; they may even live with you. The following safety advice for children can help grandparents prepare a safe environment at home for children:

- Store matches and lighters up high, away from children.
- Install plastic covers over all exposed electrical outlets.
- Move cleaning chemicals like cleansers, soap, drain cleaner and other poisons to high cupboards OR install a child-proof lock if you must keep these items in low cabinets.
- Store prescription medicines and over-the counter drugs like aspirin, cough medicines, and stomachache remedies in a cabinet out of reach of children.
- If children are playing outside or in a pool when skies grow dark or you hear thunder, ask them to come indoors right away.



Children Can Help Grandparents too

Have children test each smoke detector in your home to make sure it is working by using a broom handle to push the test button.

Ask children to draw a floor plan of your home and show two ways out of every room in case of fire.



Ask your grandchildren to help you assemble your disaster supplies kit and get them to assemble one for their family at the same time.

Home caregivers special considerations

Prepare a Disaster Supply kit for your family member who cannot do so. If this person receives home care, speak with the case manager to see what the agency's role would be in case of emergency at home or if evacuation is indicated.

Develop and practice evacuation drills in case of fire and other disasters particular to your area. Enlist the assistance of other family members if possible.

Find out what provisions are available in your area should evacuation be needed, especially if your family member requires an uninterrupted power source for survival.

Know that you may be directed to a hospital or a special needs shelter and you may need to assist in the continuing care for that person during the emergency situation.

Be sure to make your back-up assistants/family members aware of all emergency plans.

Emotional & Psychological Effects

Disasters often cause emotional distress. Being prepared will lessen your anxiety. When an emergency occurs know that you may experience some emotional and physical reactions.

Some typical physical effects:

Stomachaches

Headaches

A worsening of chronic conditions, like arthritis or high blood pressure

Difficulty sleeping/fatigue

Appetite disturbances

Some typical emotional effects:

Sadness

Depression

Excessive anxiety

Irritability and anger

Emotional numbness

Some typical mental effects:

Confusion

Disorientation

Memory problems

Lack of focus and concentration

Difficulty making decisions

Some typical spiritual effects:

Anger with God

Questioning one's spiritual beliefs

An increase in prayer

A need to find spiritual reasons for the disaster

A need to be comforted by spiritual leaders

Emotional & Psychological Effects *(continued)*

When a disaster occurs, it often reminds you of previous events in your life. Try to remember what you did then to help you get through it and see if you can do that again.

Sometimes this new disaster just seems like the final straw! Memories can be distressing and can bring up old grief, sadness, fear and anger. Try to separate your reactions to previous events from what is happening now. Remember that you were able to cope last time and you can do it again.

Everyone is affected by disaster, - not just seniors!

Emotional and other kinds of responses are expected and will mean that you are not in your best shape. That's okay. You may be afraid that others will think that you can't handle your life; in a disaster, many people have problems taking care of routine tasks.

Support is most important! Ask for help. If there are family or friends nearby, let them support you. Let the Red Cross or other agencies assist you. Don't worry about not appearing independent. Everyone needs help when disaster strikes.



Preparation makes a difference

When you're upset or confused, already having your disaster plan in place will allow you to do what needs to be done to take care of yourself. It's much easier to remain calm when you know what to do. Use this booklet to help you prepare.

Summary and Reminders

Take responsibility by planning now.

Listen for information on radio and TV about hazardous weather and other events, and heed the advice of local officials. Leave right away if told to do so.



In some communities, people who need help or transportation during an evacuation are asked to register that need with their local government.

Call your local emergency management office for information about what to do during an evacuation.

Gather essential supplies, and be sure to keep a copy of your eyeglass prescription, list of medications and their dosage, and other important papers to take with you if you have to leave your home.

Useful Websites Include:

Greater Rochester Chapter www.RochesterRedCross.org

National American Red Cross www.redcross.org

US Dept. of Homeland Security www.ready.gov

National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
www.noaa.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency www.fema.gov

Homeland Security Management Institute
www.monroecc.edu/depts/hsmi/

AARP www.aarp.org

For more information, please contact your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter.

The American Red Cross, a humanitarian organization led by volunteers, guided by its Congressional Charter and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement, will provide relief to victims of disasters and help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies.

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American Red Cross Greater Rochester Chapter
Emergency Disaster Services
50 Prince Street
Rochester, NY 14607
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Important Numbers

Police: _____

Fire Department: _____

Ambulance Agency: _____

Family Doctor: _____

Poison Control Center: _____

Visit www.redcross.org for more information

Emergency Contact Information

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Household Members: _____

Family Members' Contact Information:

Out of Town Contact Information:

Family Meeting Place Outside the Neighborhood:

