

Disaster Safety & Preparedness Guide for Seniors

In spite of our best planning, sometimes a personal support network must be created on the spot. For example, you may find yourself in a shelter and need to assemble help for immediate assistance. Think about what you will need, how you want it done and what kind of person or people you would select. Forming a self-help team, customizing an emergency kit and knowing steps to take for an emergency or disaster will prepare anyone no matter what their physical abilities or age.

Develop a Disaster Plan

- **Decide where you will reunite with family, friends or caregivers after a disaster.** Identify two places to meet: one outside your home and another outside your neighborhood such as a library, community center or place of worship.
- **Notify everyone on your self-help team** of the address and phone number of all meeting places.
- **Know and practice all possible exit routes** out of your home and neighborhood.
- **Designate an out-of-state friend or relative** that your team, family and friends can call if you are separated during a disaster. If circuits are busy or local cell towers are down, a long-distance call may be easier to make and can help you communicate with others.
- **If you have home healthcare service**, include caregivers when developing your plan and learn your homecare agency's emergency plan.
- **Always take your emergency kit and medical information** when you evacuate!
- **If you receive dialysis or other medical treatments**, find out your provider's emergency plan, including where your back-up site is located.

Customize an Emergency Kit

An emergency kit will give you quick access to necessities that might not otherwise be available if you have to evacuate. Keep your emergency kit in a safe, reachable place where you and your self-help team can easily access it at a moment's notice. The supplies in your kit should allow you and your team to leave your home quickly and give you the capability to survive in another location for a minimum of three days.

Basic emergency kit supplies:

- A brightly colored bag or backpack in which to store your belongings
- Battery-powered or crank radio and flashlight, with extra batteries

- Non-perishable food that will last for three days and does not require heating or refrigeration (granola bars, canned fruit, ready-to-eat canned meals).
- A manual can opener.
- At least a gallon of water per person per day for three days, stored in plastic bottles. If you are taking medication, consider storing more water than suggested.
- First Aid Kit and guide
- Blanket or compact sleeping bag
- Personal hygiene products (toothbrush, soap, etc.)
- One complete change of clothes including sturdy, comfortable shoes, heavy gloves and raingear (large trash bags work too)
- Emergency medical information sheet (laminated if possible)
- Backup medical equipment (oxygen, hearing aids, mobility aids, etc.) as needed
- Whistle (to help others locate you if necessary)
- Cash (ATMs won't work if the electricity is out.)
- Copies of personal ID and proof of residency

For those who use battery powered or electronic assistance, keep an extra, charged battery and even a manual wheelchair near your emergency kit. In case you wheelchair must be transported, know the size and weight of your wheelchair and if it is collapsible.

Keep a medical information sheet in your bag. The list should include instructions for medications or devices along with copies of important medical papers. Update this list any time information changes.

Your list should include:

- Medicine prescriptions and dosage instructions
- Blood type and any allergies
- Eyeglass prescription
- Medicare cards and medical insurance papers
- Style and serial numbers of a pacemaker or other medical devices and use instructions
- Contact information for your doctors and pharmacist
- Store extra, up-to-date eyeglasses, hearing-aids, oxygen and prescriptions in your kit.
- **It is not only important to prepare yourself but also to prepare your loved ones. For more information on preparedness, visit us at www.nyredcross.org or contact us at 1-877-REDCROSS.**