

Just *in* Case

Emergency Readiness for Older Adults and Caregivers

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**Health Care Association
of New Jersey**
and its members



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Introduction

Estimates are that older adults made up only 15% of the population of New Orleans before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Yet they accounted for nearly three quarters of those killed. This statistic is a sobering reminder that seniors are disproportionately at risk in disaster situations. It also drives home the message that emergency preparedness is just as important – if not more important – for seniors and their caregivers, as it is for the population at large.

If your job or profession – or your role as a volunteer – involves the issues and challenges associated with emergency readiness for older people and those who love and care for them, we’ve created this *Community Education Kit* with you in mind. A person doesn’t need special credentials to educate, motivate, and support seniors on this issue. But it is important to be informed and prepared on TWO distinct aspects of the topic – *first*, the fundamentals of emergency preparedness which apply to everyone, and *second*, the special issues, concerns, and obstacles the elderly and their families and caregivers face in preparing for emergency situations.

You know the cliché, “don’t reinvent the wheel, if you can help it.” Our goal in putting this package together is to assemble for you the information, strategy, and instructional aids you need to give a quality presentation on emergency readiness for older adults and caregivers. We can’t give the presentation. We can’t read the audience, respond to their questions, and – hopefully – send them home firmly committed to taking the steps they haven’t yet taken. That’s your assignment. But we can give you tools that will help reduce your preparation time and ensure that your message is communicated clearly and persuasively.

Acknowledgments

This *Community Education Kit* – consisting of consumer education video and related community education aids – supplements the *Just in Case* factsheet and forms prepared by the authors of *Aging in Stride* in collaboration with the U.S. Administration on Aging’s National Family Caregiver Support Program. The companion *Just in Case* factsheet and forms are available to the public as a free resource at www.AgingInStride.org and at www.AoA.gov.

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Background Information for Presenters

You're scheduled to speak to an audience of mostly older adults and their families on the subject of personal emergency readiness. How should you prepare? What information should you include? What special considerations apply in addressing a group of seniors and their loved ones?

We'd like to suggest a simple, two-part approach for covering the basics. *First*, prepare by learning about your audience; and *second*, keep your message focused and down to earth.

Know Your Audience

You might think that emergency readiness for older adults and their loved ones is essentially the same as emergency readiness for any other audience. You might also expect that the issues and concerns on the minds of one older audience would be largely the same as those on the minds of any other older audience. Both of these assumptions would be wide of the mark.

As a demographic group, seniors tend to be dealing with numerous and sometimes serious issues involving:

- Personal mobility
- Managing multiple medications
- Use of medical equipment and assistive devices
- Chronic illness, frailty, and disability
- The need for caregiver assistance with basic activities of daily living.

As a presenter, you need to keep in mind that older adults represent a wide spectrum in terms of independence, function, and health status. Your audience may include seniors who are active, in good health, and play golf once a week. It may also include seniors – or their caregivers – who are heavily dependent on others for a range of health care and personal care services.

So, you'll want to tailor your presentation a bit. Here are some pre-event questions to ask about the audience you are expecting:

Where do they typically live?

There are two distinct trends to be aware of. The first is that more and more community resources are available to support older persons who choose to remain in their own homes. For example, a broad range of health care services – including many that used to be available only in the hospital or at an out-patient clinic – are now available in a person's own home. Personal care services, such as house-keeping, meal preparation, and help with activities of daily living, are also expanding. The result is that more older adults – and more older adults who are frail or dealing with chronic illness or disability – are living in the community at large. They represent a population segment that will have special needs in the event of an evacuation or prolonged interruption of power and other utilities.

The second trend is that growing numbers of older adults are moving to retirement living communities. These communities range from fully independent living to facilities and communities that combine independent apartments with health care and personal care support services. "Assisted living" is, itself, a term that typically covers a broad range of care, extending from very modest services, to relatively heavy care that used to be provided in nursing homes.

Knowing where most of those in your audience live will let you prepare for the questions and concerns they will have. You will also be able to come prepared with information about the resources available where they live.

To what extent are they dealing with issues of dependence and disability?

If your event has a sponsoring organization, they should be able to make some educated guesses on this. Is personal mobility a common concern? Will some in the audience be on oxygen? How about home health care services? Home dialysis? Home infusion therapy?

Should the role of caregivers be a major focus?

A big part of the emergency readiness message for older adults involves teamwork. Your audience may include family caregivers who will be interested in learning how best to support their loved one on the issue of emergency readiness. You may also be speaking to many who wear two hats – they are a primary caregiver for a frail or chronically ill spouse, relative, or friend, AND they are themselves over 55, 65, 75, or even 85.

Is this the group's first exposure to emergency readiness? Or is this a refresher session?

This is another good question. Is this likely to be new information for most of your audience? Or, is this an opportunity to remind participants of needs and opportunities they've already heard about? How many in the audience will have already "done their homework?" Is there likely to be a pool of talent and experience in the audience that you can tap to help inform and motivate those who have not yet prepared?

Keep Your Message Focused and Down To Earth

An older audience will appreciate it if you keep your points clear and focused as much as possible on their unique situation and concerns. We're suggesting you consider presenting personal preparedness as a three-step process:

Step 1 – Gathering Some Basic Information

The first step you want the audience to take is to be informed in some fundamental ways. What risks does this particular community and region face? What plans are already in place for early warning, possible evacuation, emergency shelter, communications in the aftermath of a disaster, etc.?

Knowing one's neighbors can also be important. In many of today's urban neighborhoods, that can be a challenge to older persons as to any of us, but knowing some of one's neighbors can be critical in a natural disaster or other emergency.

Step 2 – Gathering Your Disaster Supplies Together

The second step you're recommending is to gather together both the household supplies and the evacuation kit they may need in case of an emergency. For a speaker, this is a perfect opportunity to bring along some "props" to show your audience. Having a well-stocked "grab and go" bag gives you the opportunity to unpack, and then repack, the bag with your audience looking on. Or, have two participants check the bag using a checklist handout. Individual items – like a safety whistle, a hand-crank radio that can also be used to re-charge a cell phone battery, chemical light sticks, and date-marked, non-perishable food items – can also be passed around the room for close up, hands-on inspection.

Step 3 – Making a Personal Plan

The last step is the most important. With the possible exception of the healthiest and most active in the audience, each person should be able to identify a unique, personal mix of needs, physical limitations, and care-related concerns. Step three

for your audience is to take stock of these in an honest, realistic way. What needs do I have? How would my personal needs be dealt with in case of evacuation, an extended stay in an emergency shelter, or prolonged loss of electrical power, heat, or water?

Teaching Aids and Handouts

This *Just in Case* Community Education Kit includes a variety of teaching aids and handouts for your convenience.

The kit's centerpiece is the *Just in Case* video. This is a sixteen-minute program created to support your presentations by bringing everyone in the audience up the learning curve quickly. The video presents the challenges of emergency readiness for older adults and caregivers in a balanced, positive, proactive way. It's designed so that your community-specific, audience-specific content can take over where it leaves off.

Also included are these copy-ready handouts: The Aging In Stride/AoA *Just in Case Factsheet*, *Emergency Readiness Checklist*, *Emergency Contacts List*, and *Current Medications List*; an emergency readiness wordfind activity sheet; and an audience evaluation form.

Please remember to remind your audience that most of these items are also available as free consumer resources at both the *Aging in Stride* website, www.AgingInStride.org, and the U.S. Administration on Aging's website, www.AoA.gov. Those in your audience who would like to watch the video again – possibly with friends or family – may do so online at no charge at www.AgingInStride.org.

Practical Tips for Connecting with Seniors

You probably already know the standard elements for a good presentation. Begin with an engaging opening. Hold your audience's attention with a well-organized program. Use concrete examples. Include visual aids, if appropriate. Incorporate audience participation and hands-on demonstrations. Review important points at the end.

If you're presenting to a group that includes older adults, those factors all come into play. And here are a few more tips and background facts to help you connect with a senior audience.

Some Background Facts to Know About the Learning Style of Seniors

- Older adults base their learning and decisions on a lifetime of experience, knowledge and skills. It's important to acknowledge and show respect for that. Think of your presentation as building on and updating past learning.
- Many older adults learn best when they have the opportunity to discuss new information with their peers in a group setting. They want to share their knowledge with others, and hear examples of how others deal with the issues being discussed.
- Older adults tend to be a bit more skeptical—they want to know “who says?” So take the time to identify the experts who have come up with the information in your presentation. Offer additional information, such as handouts or Internet resources, for those who want it.

A Fine Line Between Fear and Motivation –

Disasters can be a pretty scary subject matter. Without causing undue anxiety, be honest and direct about the possible consequences of not being prepared. Sometimes the message needs to be, “You know, this is pretty sobering stuff– but not nearly as scary as being in the middle of something you should have prepared for but didn't.”

Planning the Presentation: Things to Remember

- Check beforehand to find out if members of the group have sensory deficits, such as hearing or visual impairment. Ask for suggestions; the host organization may have a system in place for assisted communication.
- If you will be using audio-visual aids, such as overhead transparencies or PowerPoint slides, try to provide a large-screen TV or monitor. Try to arrange seating so that everyone is as close as possible to the screen and speakers and no one's view is blocked. Arranging chairs in a semi-circle often works better for smaller audiences than theater-style.

Tailoring the Message –

Find out about your audience ahead of time. There's a big difference between a group of mostly active seniors who live in the community and have cars they could use in an evacuation, versus one made up of the frail elderly and their caregivers. Nobody wants to listen to issues and recommendations that just don't apply to them.

Be Ready to Talk About Pets –

It's possible you will be speaking at a retirement community where animals aren't allowed. But otherwise, be prepared for questions about pets. Be ready for questions on: pets and emergency shelters, pets and evacuations, pet food as part of household emergency supplies, and special concerns of service animals.

- Some participants may be uncomfortable sitting for an extended period. Consider including a few breaks to allow attendees to stretch, move around, visit with one another, and use the restroom.
- Allow time for questions and discussion. Sharing experiences helps audience members identify with the information you're presenting. Don't allow a few speakers to monopolize the discussion. Draw as many into the discussion as you can.

Setting the Stage, Reaching Your Audience

No matter how well you've prepared for your presentation, you'll lose audience attention if they can't see, hear or understand you. Some things to consider....

- Be sure the room has adequate lighting, and minimize glare. Don't stand in front of a window or mirror while you're speaking.
- If you provide handouts, be sure the type is at least 14-point, and the font is easy to read. Consider offering larger-print versions of handouts.

Let the Audience Do Some of the Work –

In almost every audience, there are at least some who are already up to speed. Draw them out and let them make or reinforce as many of the key points as possible. What emergency readiness steps have they taken? Why did they decide to act? What was their approach – did they use a checklist? Did they work on this alone or with someone's help and encouragement? What advice do they have for the audience?

- Eliminate distractions and background noise. Ask if people can hear you as you begin the presentation. Use a microphone if available. If using a TV or computer, adjust the volume.

- Don't speak too fast, and enunciate your words clearly. People with even a mild hearing impairment can understand you better if they can see your lips—so face the audience directly, and don't look away while you are speaking.

- Some audience members may need a little more time to take in and process the information you are giving them. Watch your audience. If some listeners are frowning, look puzzled, or seem to be leaning forward, ask if they understand what you are saying, or how you can explain more clearly.
- On the other hand, you'll sound patronizing if you speak too loudly, too slowly, or if you over-enunciate. Avoid what senior communication experts call "elderspeak"—an exaggerated, babytalk-like style.

Bring Some Props –

Audiences will appreciate it when you can "show and tell." Take a fully packed "grab and go" kit with you. That way everyone can see exactly what you're talking about.

- If your presentation includes a discussion of physical limitations and disability, do your homework about what terminology is preferred. Talk about it in a matter-of-fact, empowering way — not with a tone of pity.

Don't Forget Your "Call to Action"

Your bottom line needs to be that anyone who hasn't done their emergency readiness homework needs to. So, don't beat around the bush. As you close, ask your audience very clearly to take the checklist and other materials, get together with a friend or loved one, and take the steps they need to take.

- Be aware of your body language. Keep your body loose and animated. Gesture naturally, and make eye contact.

The key to connecting with older adults is to present information with respect, in a style that allows the best comprehension. Honoring the needs, strengths

and challenges of the group to which you are presenting best ensures that they will come away from your presentation with a good understanding of the valuable information you want them to have.

Small Group Discussion Topics

If time permits, consider inviting your audience to break into small groups for informal discussion of what they've heard and what they're thinking.

Depending on your audience, a lot of moving around and changing of seating arrangements may not be comfortable or practical. If so, you may still be able to get participants visiting with one another, at least in twos and threes. You will also want to watch for hearing problems – there may be some in the audience who will be able to hear you well enough, but who will find it difficult to hear and participate in discussion over the background sound of several small groups conversing on all at once.

That said, small group discussion offers a real opportunity for those in the audience to share what they know, what they plan to do about it, and how they may be able to benefit from one another's experience and help.

Ask your small groups to organize their conversations around a discussion topic you give them. Allow five minutes or so, then follow up with another discussion topic.

Here are some possible discussion topics:

One “emergency preparedness” step I’ve already taken care of is . . .

One point in the video we just watched that rang true for me was . . .

One important thing I still need to deal with to be ready in case of an emergency is . . .

The thing that worries me most about a possible natural disaster is . . .

One place or person I’d be comfortable asking questions or asking for help on personal emergency readiness is . . .

Sample Presentation Outline

Scheduled Date/Time: _____

Location: _____

Presenter(s): _____

Notes on demographics and concerns of those who are expected to attend:

Presentation Goals:

1. Inform those attending about the fundamentals of personal emergency readiness
2. Motivate those attending to take the steps they need to take to be ready for the types of emergencies they may face in their community
3. Encourage teamwork and open communication about the subject of what might happen in an emergency, and what steps are called for to be prepared at a personal level
4. Identify specific ways caregivers can support their loved ones on the issue of emergency readiness
5. Identify additional resources those attending can access to learn more.

Teaching Aids

- _____ *Just in Case* video
- _____ VCR or DVD player
- _____ Sample “Grab and Go” Evacuation Kit
- _____ Other sample supplies, such as chemical light sticks
- _____ Audience handouts (checklist, contacts list, medications list, wordfind activity sheet)
- _____ Audience evaluation form

Topic Coverage

1. Introduction
 - a. Attention-getting question or illustration
 - b. Presenter(s)
 - c. Program's goals
 - d. Topics to be covered
2. Watch the *Just in Case* video
3. Discussion of Step One – basic information everyone should have just in case an emergency situation happens
 - a. Audience suggestions
 - b. Hand out checklist and emergency contacts form
 - c. Discuss community risks and past experience
 - d. Readiness steps at the community level
 - e. “First response” actions, especially if earthquakes or tornadoes are a threat
 - f. Knowing some of your neighbors
4. Discussion of Step Two – gathering emergency supplies
 - a. Household items
 - b. “Grab and Go” Evacuation kit – show an example; pass around items of possible interest (handcrank radio that recharges a cell phone, chemical light sticks, etc.)
5. BREAK – hand out wordfind activity sheet
6. Discussion of Step Three – making a personal plan
 - a. Ask for audience examples and reaction to video
 - b. Hand out current medications list
7. (Time Permitting) BREAK or small group discussions
8. Summarize and urge attendees to take any basic emergency readiness steps they haven't yet taken. Encourage working together and informal mentoring.
9. Questions and comments.

Emergency Readiness Wordfind

Use this wordfind puzzle as a fun way of reviewing the main points you should know about emergency readiness. The words in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS are hidden in the box to the right. Can you find them all? Be sure to look up, down, across, backwards, and diagonally. (The words also appear in a list under the puzzle.)

EMERGENCY readiness for yourself or a loved one doesn't have to be complicated. Think of it as a simple, three-step process.

Step 1 is “Know the basics.” Learn about the risks your particular COMMUNITY faces. Know how to do things like turning off your gas and ELECTRICITY. Get to know your neighbors.

Step 2 is “Have your emergency SUPPLIES ready.” This includes items you would need in order to survive in your home until help arrives. It should also include a personal EVACUATION bag partially packed and ready to go.

Your household emergency supplies should include: FOOD AND WATER to last for 3 to 6 days; FLASHLIGHT, portable RADIO, and extra BATTERIES; first aid kit; hand-operated can opener; an emergency supply of your prescription medications; some cash; and your emergency contacts list.

Your “GRAB AND GO” bag should have room for most of the items listed above and should also be pre-packed with the following items: personal HYGIENE ITEMS, such as TOILET PAPER, gel hand sanitizer, TOOTHBRUSH and toothpaste; extra pair of glasses; change of CLOTHING, rain slicker, and sturdy shoes; BLANKET; a bottle or two of water, some breakfast bars, and some hard candy; and a copy of your emergency CONTACTS LIST and your current medications list.

Step 3 is “Make a PERSONAL PLAN.” Many older adults have special needs relating to MEDICATIONS, medical equipment, mobility, and support services. Making a personal emergency readiness plan increases the likelihood that essential needs will still be met, even in an emergency situation.

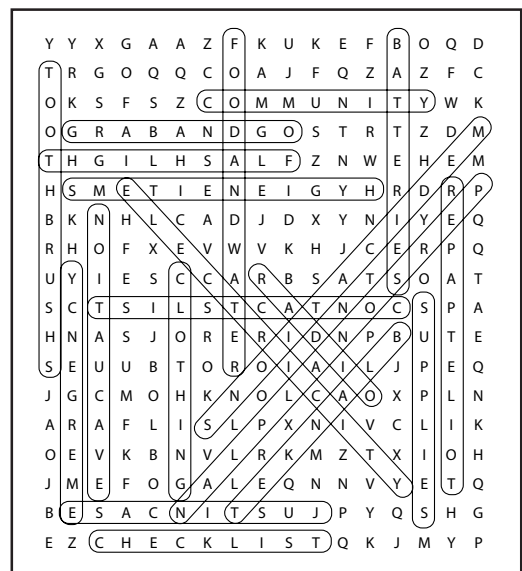
Using a CHECKLIST is a good way to make sure you've taken the safe, smart steps to be ready for an emergency. Our *JUST IN CASE* Emergency Readiness Checklist is available as a free consumer resource at www.AgingInStride.org. You may also print two other handy forms: an Emergency Contacts List and a Current Medications List.



BATTERIES
BLANKET
CHECKLIST
CLOTHING
COMMUNITY
CONTACTS LIST
ELECTRICITY
EMERGENCY
EVACUATION
FLASHLIGHT

FOOD AND WATER
GRAB AND GO
HYGIENE ITEMS
JUST IN CASE
MEDICATIONS
PERSONAL PLAN
RADIO
SUPPLIES
TOILET PAPER
TOOTHBRUSH

Solution to "Emergency Readiness" wordfind



Participant Evaluation Form

Program Title: _____

Presenter's Name: _____

Thank you for attending our program on emergency readiness for older adults and caregivers. Please help us plan for future programs like this by letting us know what you liked and didn't like about this program.

How would you rate this presentation?	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Subject Matter – Was this presentation informative? Interesting? Worth your time?	4	3	2	1
Speaker – Was the person presenting this information easy to understand?	4	3	2	1
Video – Did it help you appreciate the issues and what “emergency readiness” means?	4	3	2	1
Handouts – Do you think these will be helpful to you or your loved one?	4	3	2	1
Questions and Discussion – Did we allow enough time for questions and discussion? Did you get your own questions answered?	4	3	2	1
Location – Did the room work for you? Were you able to see and hear the speaker and video without difficulty?	4	3	2	1

Continued on Page 2

Did attending this program make it more likely that you or your loved one will take specific follow-up actions?

☐ Definitely Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ Probably Not

If you answered YES or MAYBE to the last question, what steps do you expect to take? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Gather basic information about possible emergencies
- ☐ Have household emergency supplies ready
- ☐ Pack and have ready an evacuation bag with supplies
- ☐ Discuss emergency readiness with friends or family
- ☐ Help others take steps to be ready for an emergency
- ☐ Other (describe):

If this program is offered again, would you recommend it to a friend or loved one?

☐ Definitely Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ Probably Not

What suggestions do you have for improving this program?

I am . . .

☐ under 65 ☐ 65 – 75 ☐ 76 – 85 ☐ over 85

I decided to attend this program because (Check all that apply):

- ☐ I wanted to get started on emergency readiness
- ☐ I wanted a refresher on emergency readiness
- ☐ I want to help a family member or friend

Thank you for your feedback

Just in Case Factsheet Audience Handout

N F C S P R E S O U R C E S

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration on Aging



National Family Caregiver Support Program

Just In Case



Emergency Readiness for Older Adults and Caregivers

QUICK SUMMARY:

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita reminded us that personal emergency readiness needs to be a priority for everyone, including older adults and caregivers. This supplement to *Aging in Stride – Plan Ahead, Stay Connected, Keep Moving* recommends a simple, three-step approach:

Step 1 – Know the basics. Learn about the risks your particular community faces; know how to do things like turning off your gas and electricity; get to know your neighbors.

Step 2 – Have your emergency supplies ready. This includes items you would need to survive in your home until help arrives; it should also include a personal evacuation bag, partially packed and ready to go.

Step 3 – Make a personal plan. Many older persons have special needs relating to medications, medical equipment, mobility, and support services; making a personal emergency readiness plan increases the likelihood that essential needs will still be met, even in an emergency situation.

This *Aging in Stride* supplement also includes three companion forms, *Emergency Readiness Checklist for Older Adults*, *Emergency Contacts List*, and *Current Medications List*

Just In Case

Emergency Readiness for Older Adults and Caregivers

For older adults and caregivers – as for all Americans – Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were a stark reminder of how quickly and completely a sudden, unexpected emergency can disrupt normal living. We can't prevent emergencies, but there are things we can do to be prepared, just in case.

SOME PERSPECTIVE

Planning for an emergency that might never happen – and that we certainly hope will never happen – may not seem like a priority. But it should be.

No matter where you live, you and your home are part of a larger community. It might be the neighborhood where you've lived for decades. Or maybe you've recently moved to a retirement community. Either way, your community is already working on emergency planning – that's the good news. But it's also counting on individuals like you to take responsibility for being prepared at a personal level.

Chances are your personal emergency planning will never be put to a test like Katrina. But keep in mind that emergencies – and the disruptions they cause – can come in many levels of intensity. You may never need your flashlight, portable radio and extra batteries because of a powerful earthquake; but you'll be glad you have them the next time a windstorm knocks out power to your area.

GETTING STARTED

Somewhere in your home you probably already have an emergency readiness checklist – one you've clipped out of the paper, or a family member gave you, or you downloaded off the Internet. A checklist can help you get started and know you've taken the steps you should be taking. The form we include as a supplement to *Aging in Stride* is attached and is also available as a free download at www.AgingInStride.org.

As our *Checklist* suggests, emergency preparedness for yourself or your loved one doesn't have to be complicated. Think of it as a simple, three-step process.

STEP 1: KNOW THE BASICS

As we've all learned from years of experience, the first ingredient in preparing for almost anything is a little practical information.

Start by learning what kinds of risks your community faces. Do you live on the Atlantic or Gulf Coast where hurricanes are a concern? Are you in an earthquake zone? What about tornadoes? Do you live near a nuclear power plant or chemical storage complex? Knowing what risks you face will help you prepare. If disasters that strike with little or no warning (such as earthquake, tsunami, or tornado) are a risk for your community, you'll want to know exactly what to do as your first response.

These days, information on emergency planning for your community should be easy to find. Search on the Web; stop by the library or city hall; or ask at your area's emergency management agency or fire department.

Our *Checklist* suggests you test your readiness by asking – and being able to answer – these questions:

- ☐ If there were an evacuation order, what is the recommended route from where you live? If you don't drive, what are your transportation options? Where is the nearest emergency shelter?
- ☐ Where are the shut-off valves for your household utilities (gas, electricity, water)? Do you know how to use them? If they take a special tool, is it kept right there, ready to use?
- ☐ In an emergency, local phone service may be down for an extended period. Have you designated someone out-of-area as your emergency contact? Do your loved ones know who your emergency contact will be?
- ☐ Neighbors helping neighbors can be critical in an emergency. Do you know your neighbors? Do they know you and any special needs you may have?

STEP 2: HAVE YOUR EMERGENCY SUPPLIES READY

Being ready for an emergency means having the supplies you would need. There are two aspects to this:

First, your "stay at home" supplies. These are the things you would need to survive safely in your home until help can arrive. In a major disaster, this can mean several days or perhaps even a week or more. For planning purposes, you need to assume you would be without power and would not be able to go out for food or water. Your household emergency supplies should include:

- ☐ enough water to last 3 to 6 days (recommended quantity: one gallon per person per day)

-
- ☐ food – also enough for 3 to 6 days – consisting of high energy items that won't spoil and don't require cooking
 - ☐ flashlight
 - ☐ portable radio
 - ☐ spare batteries
 - ☐ first aid kit
 - ☐ hand-operated can opener
 - ☐ light sticks (Along with your flashlight and spare batteries, these are a safe, inexpensive alternative to candles. **Remember, any open flame in a post-disaster situation requires extreme caution, since the fire department will have its plate full and may not be able to respond quickly, or at all.**)
 - ☐ waterproof matches
 - ☐ a 3 to 6 day supply of your prescription medications, together with an up-to-date list of the medications you're taking
 - ☐ cell phone, if you have one
 - ☐ some cash or travelers checks
 - ☐ your emergency contact list, including the names, phone numbers, and email addresses you would want to have and be able to give aid workers in an emergency.

Second, your "Grab and Go" evacuation bag. These are the things you would need to have for a safe evacuation, if that became necessary. Your evacuation bag should be a backpack or travel bag, preferably one that rolls, that has room for many of the items listed above and that is pre-packed with the following items:

- ☐ basic personal hygiene items, such as toilet paper, alcohol wipes, and gel hand sanitizer
- ☐ extra pair of prescription glasses
- ☐ change of clothing
- ☐ compact rain slicker
- ☐ good pair of walking shoes
- ☐ blanket or sleeping bag
- ☐ bottle or two of water, some breakfast bars, and some hard candy
- ☐ some disposable dust masks
- ☐ a copy of both your emergency contacts list and your current medications list.

Remember, the goal here is to give yourself a margin of preparedness to see you through until help can arrive, or to get you safely through an evacuation. So, think about what other items you might need, given your situation.

For example, if you have a car and would expect to use it if you had to evacuate, you'll want to keep the gas tank at least half or even three-quarters full. This will be a bit inconvenient, because you'll need to fill your tank twice as often; but that clearly beats worrying about running out of fuel in a real emergency!

And if you own a pet, you'll want to add an extra supply of pet food to your list. Again, this just means getting in the habit of buying it at least a week or two before you run out. Keep in mind, by the way, that most emergency shelters do not allow pets, unless they are service animals, such as a seeing eye dog.

STEP 3: MAKE A PERSONAL PLAN

You've gathered the information you need. You've pulled together the emergency supplies you should have on hand. You're ready, right?

Not quite. The third step – and for many, the most important – is to make a personal emergency response plan. What special needs do you have? And how will they be met in an emergency?

No one knows your situation better than you. So, you are in the best position to plan ahead. If you have limited mobility or are disabled, you may be able to register with your local fire department or office of emergency services for special assistance. If you use an electric wheelchair or scooter, consider keeping your old, unpowered model around for emergency use.

If you are receiving health care services at home, ask your home health provider about emergency procedures. For example, if you depend on electric power for home dialysis or infusion, you'll want to know your options for temporary emergency power, or in the case of home infusion, you may want to discuss having a back-up drip system.

If you live in a retirement community, assisted living facility, or adult family home, learn about emergency planning and procedures. How will you be kept informed? What will the facility or community expect of you and your fellow residents?

This is personal planning. But that doesn't mean doing it all on your own. If you can, work through the checklist with a family member or friend. Chances are they'll jump at the opportunity; and it will be a good reminder for them to be ready, as well.

A WORD ABOUT THE RISK OF PANDEMIC FLU

Seasonal influenza – or flu – kills about 35,000 Americans each year, with older adults being at especially high risk. You’ve probably read about bird (or avian) flu. Health officials are watching it closely. They’re worried bird flu might trigger a worldwide pandemic, like the deadly Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918.

Because influenza – whether pandemic or seasonal – poses a serious health risk to older people, there are some simple precautions we should all be taking:

First, get your annual flu shot as protection against seasonal flu. And check with your doctor about vaccination for bacterial pneumonia. The actual cause of death for many who die in a flu outbreak is pneumonia. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recommends pneumonia vaccination for all adults 65 and older.

Second, keep your body’s natural immunity as strong as possible. Eat right. Drink plenty of water. Get your rest. Make physical exercise a regular part of your day.

Third, take the smart, usual precautions against spreading any infection. Keep your hands clean by washing them with warm water and soap – remember, the recommended time to really get them clean is 10 to 20 seconds. If washing is inconvenient, use an alcohol hand sanitizer or wipe. Cover your coughs and sneezes. And, don’t touch your eyes, mouth, or nose, unless you’ve cleaned your hands first.

WORTH THE EFFORT

No doubt about it, completing your emergency readiness checklist will take some time and attention. But look around you – we’re talking about your home, your safety, and your peace of mind in knowing you’re prepared.

And once you’ve finished your own checklist, you become a valuable resource to friends and neighbors, helping them get prepared.

Invest the time today, and then get on with your life. It’s the smart thing to do...just in case.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



The Red Cross website offers information on disaster preparedness, including “Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs.” Go to www.redcross.org for news, safety tips and updates.



The FEMA website includes a 204-page booklet to help you prepare for specific emergencies (www.fema.gov/areyouready). The site also offers information on assisting people with disabilities during a disaster (www.fema.gov/rrr/assistf.shtml).



More information is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Emergency Preparedness and Response website, www.bt.cdc.gov, and from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s consumer site, www.ready.gov. The Department of Health and Human Services website also features “Disasters and Emergencies” (www.hhs.gov/disasters/index.shtml), a comprehensive list of resources.



For more on Pandemic Flu, including a personal planning checklist, visit www.pandemicflu.gov, the official U.S. government web site for information on the topic.



Information about your own community’s preparedness policies can be found on city, county and state Office of Emergency Management websites. For a directory of state agencies, see www.fema.gov/fema/statedr.shtml.



For additional copies of this Factsheet and the companion checklist, visit www.AgingInStride.org or www.AoA.gov.

THIS FACTSHEET IS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE BOOK,
AGING IN STRIDE – PLAN AHEAD, STAY CONNECTED, KEEP MOVING.

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EMERGENCY READINESS CHECKLIST FOR OLDER ADULTS AND CAREGIVERS

Use this four-page form to: (1) organize your emergency preparations, (2) list your emergency contacts, and (3) keep a record of your current medications. You may want to give a copy to your main contact person or caregiver, if you have one. And don't forget to review and update this information often – at least every two or three months.

STEP 1: KNOW THE BASICS

- _____ The most important disaster issues for the area where I live.
- _____ The recommended life-saving responses for disasters that could strike with little or no warning.
- _____ If there were an evacuation order, the recommended route from where I live. My evacuation transportation options. The location of the nearest emergency shelter.
- _____ The location of shut-off valves for my household utilities (gas, electricity, water) and how to use them. (If they take a special tool, it should be kept right there, ready to use.)
- _____ Designate an out-of-area emergency contact, in case local phone service is disrupted. Make sure my loved ones know the emergency communications plan.
- _____ Make it a point to meet my neighbors, in case we need to help one another in an emergency.

STEP 2: HAVE ESSENTIAL EMERGENCY SUPPLIES READY

“Stay at Home” Emergency Supplies – Pull these items together for quick, easy access in your home; have quantities to last at least 3 to 6 days; rotate any items with expiration or “use by” dates:

- | | |
|---|--|
| _____ drinking water | _____ light sticks |
| _____ food (non-perishable; ready to eat) | _____ waterproof matches |
| _____ flashlight | _____ supply of prescription medicines |
| _____ portable radio | _____ current medications list |
| _____ extra batteries | _____ cell phone |
| _____ first aid kit | _____ cash or traveler's checks |
| _____ hand-operated can opener | _____ emergency contacts list |

Evacuation Bag – have a backpack or bag (preferably one on rollers) that has room for many of the items listed above, and is also ready to go with these items:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| ___ personal hygiene items, such as toilet paper, alcohol wipes, and gel hand sanitizer | ___ a bottle or two of water |
| ___ change of clothing appropriate for your climate | ___ some breakfast bars |
| ___ compact rain slicker | ___ blanket or sleeping bag |
| ___ good pair of walking shoes | ___ disposable dust masks |
| | ___ copy of emergency contacts list |
| | ___ copy of current medications list |
| | ___ spare pair of glasses |

Additional Precautions:

- ___ gas tank kept at least half full
- ___ spare hearing aid batteries
- ___ emergency supply of pet food

STEP 3: MAKE A PERSONAL PLAN

- ___ If I have any special needs, do I have a plan for meeting them in an emergency?
 - ___ Mobility issues?
 - ___ Reliance on medical equipment that requires electric power?
 - ___ Incontinence supplies?
 - ___ Other: _____
- ___ If I am receiving home health or home care services, have I discussed emergency procedures with my provider?
- ___ If I live in a senior living community, am I familiar with its emergency planning and procedures?

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EMERGENCY CONTACTS LIST

Name: _____ Last Updated: _____

	Name/Relationship	Phone	E-mail Address
Primary Emergency Contact:			
Out of Area Contact:			
Other Emergency Contacts:			
Healthcare Providers:			
Pharmacy:			
Homeowners insurance:			
Auto insurance:			

CURRENT MEDICATIONS LIST

Name: _____ Emergency Contact Name/Phone: _____

Date Last Updated: _____

Prescription Medications

<i>Name of Medication</i>	<i>Strength and Frequency</i>	<i>Taken For</i>	<i>Prescribed By</i>	<i>Notes</i>

Allergies

Pharmacy/Prescription Drug Plan