

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS FOR SENIORS BY SENIORS

The following information was taken from a brochure created by a group of older adults who experienced a two week power outage when a massive ice storm hit. The group was unprepared for such a disaster and emerged from their situation dedicated to researching and discussing disaster preparedness information for senior citizens. This document contains the results of their findings.

### PREPARE NOW FOR A SUDDEN EMERGENCY

- Learn how to protect yourself and cope with disaster by **planning ahead**.
- Even if you have physical limitations, you can still protect yourself.
- Disaster can strike quickly and without warning!**
- Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away.
- Take responsibility – Save your life!**
- Keep in touch with your neighbors and look out for each other.
- Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility.**
- Preparing for a disaster that is most likely to happen in your area will help you to be prepared for any disaster. Remember anything can happen at any time.
- What disasters are most likely to happen in your area?



### NOTIFICATION

How You May Be Notified Of a Possible Emergency:

- NOAA weather radio. These special radios provide the earliest warning with an alarm that will alert you in case of anticipated bad

weather. To learn more, call your local Office of Emergency Preparedness.

- Commercial radio and television stations. Know your designated Emergency Alert System stations (EAS).
- Door to door warning from local emergency officials. **Strictly follow their instructions!**
- Be aware of anyone in your neighborhood who may need special help. If available, take advantage of advance registration systems in your area for those who need help.

### FAMILY DISASTER PLAN

Plan Ahead! The next time disaster strikes, you may not have much time to act. Prepare now for a sudden emergency. By planning ahead you can avoid waiting in long lines for critical supplies, such as food, water and medicine. Remember to review your plan regularly.



Use the following checklist to get started:

Assemble disaster supplies (see details to follow).

Arrange for someone to check on you. Plan and practice the best escape routes from your home.

Plan for transportation if you need to evacuate to a Red Cross shelter.

Find the safe places in your home for each type of emergency.

Have a plan to signal the need for help.

Post emergency phone numbers near the phone.

If you have home health care service, plan ahead with your agency for emergency procedures.

Teach those who may need to assist you in an emergency how to operate necessary equipment; write instructions if needed. Be sure they will be able to reach you.

Choose an emergency meeting place you are familiar with where you and others can reunite after exiting your home.

Choose an alternate place to stay, such as with friends or family outside your area in case you are told to leave your home.

For your safety and comfort, you need to have emergency supplies packed and ready in one place before a disaster hits.

**You should assemble enough supplies to last for at least three days.**

Assemble the supplies you would need in an evacuation, both medical and general supplies. Store them in an easy to carry container such as a backpack or a duffel bag.

Be sure your bag has an ID tag.

Label any equipment, such as wheelchairs, canes or walkers that you would need.

## MEDICAL EMERGENCY SUPPLIES



- First-aid Kit.
- Prescription medicines, list of medications including dosage, list of any allergies.
- Extra eyeglasses and hearing aid batteries.
- Extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen if necessary.
- List of the style and serial numbers of medical devices.
- Medical insurance and Medicare cards.
- List of doctors and relatives or friends who should be notified if you are injured.

## GENERAL DISASTER SUPPLIES



- Battery powered radio and flashlight with extra batteries for each.
- Change of clothing, rain gear and sturdy shoes.
- Duct tape and plastic sheeting.
- Blanket or sleeping bag.
- Extra set of keys.
- Cash, credit cards, change for the pay phone.
- Personal hygiene supplies.
- Phone numbers of local and non-local relatives or friends.
- Insurance agent's name and number.

It may not be necessary to evacuate or you may be ordered to stay in your home. If this happens, you will need in addition to the above items:

- Water supply – one gallon per day per person. Remember, plan for at least 3 days. Store water in sealed, unbreakable containers that you are able to handle. Identify the storage date and replace every six months.
- Non-perishable food supply – including any special foods you require. Choose foods that are easy to store and carry, nutritious and ready-to-eat; rotate regularly.
- Manual can-opener you are able to use.
- Non-perishable food for any pets.

## RESIDENTIAL FIRES



**One emergency we could all face at any time is a home fire. A home fire could be a special challenge for one with physical limitations. However, there are some things we can do to improve our safety:**

### **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 regularly, 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 home.
- 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. If you are able, signal the need for help.

### **EARTHQUAKES**



#### **Before an Earthquake:**

- Identify safe places to go during an earthquake – sturdy table or desk, or an inside wall away from windows and heavy objects.

- Arrange and secure furniture and other items to provide multiple barrier-free passages.
- Make sure your disaster supplies kit is well stocked and you have extra medication with your emergency supplies.
- Keep a list of medications, allergies, special equipment, names and numbers of doctors, pharmacists and family members with you at all times.
- Keep extra emergency supplies at your bedside and by your wheelchair.
- Walking aids should be kept near you at all times. Have extra walking aids in different rooms of your home.
- Put a security light in each room. These lights plug into any outlet and light up automatically if there is a loss of electricity. They continue operating automatically for four to six hours and they can be turned off by hand in an emergency.
- Have a whistle near you to signal for help.
- Make sure you have a personal support network in place. Make arrangements to have at least two people you trust check on you after an earthquake. Make sure they are aware of your special needs and show them how to operate any equipment you use, as well as where your emergency supplies are located. Give them a spare key if necessary.



#### **During an Earthquake:**

- If you are in bed or out of a wheelchair, stay where you are and cover your head.
- If you are in a wheelchair, move near an inside wall of your home, lock your wheels and cover your head.

- Listen to a portable radio for instructions and news reports. Follow the advice of local officials.
- Be prepared for aftershocks!
- If there is structural damage and you need to evacuate your home, leave a message at your home telling family members and others where you can be found.

### **SHELTER IN PLACE**

In a chemical emergency you may be told to shelter in place.

**This means staying where you are and making 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 where the air is unsafe to breathe.



#### **If You Are Told To Shelter in Place:**

- Close all windows in your home.
- Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.
- Close the fireplace damper.
- Go to an above ground room (not the basement) with the fewest windows and doors.
- Take your Disaster Supplies with you.
- Wet some towels and jam them in the crack under the doors. Tape around doors, windows, exhausts fans or vents. Use plastic garbage bags to cover windows, outlets and heat registers.
- If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds or curtains. To avoid injury, stay away from the windows.
- Stay in the room and listen to your radio until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate.



## **American Red Cross**

### **RED CROSS SHELTERS**

#### **Red Cross shelters may be opened if:**

- A disaster affects a large number of people.
- 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.

#### **To learn about Red Cross shelters serving your area:**

Listen to your battery powered radio.  
Check with your local Red Cross Chapter.

**All American Red Cross emergency services are provided free of charge.**

#### **If You Need To Evacuate:**

- Coordinate with your home care provider for evacuation procedures.
- Try to carpool if possible.
- If you must have assistance for special transportation, call the American Red Cross or your local officials.
- Wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Take your Disaster Supplies Kit.
- 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.

- Notify shelter authorities of any need you may have. They will do their best to accommodate you and make you comfortable.

**If you are sure you have enough time...**

- Shut off water, gas, and electricity *if* instructed to do so and *if* you know how. Gas must be turned back on by a professional.
- Let others know when you left and where you are going.
- Make arrangements for pets. Animals other than working animals may not be allowed in public shelters.



**GRANDCHILDREN'S SAFETY**

It is estimated that 3.4 million children live in a household headed by grandparents. And, many children visit their grandparents often. 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.
- 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.
- Install plastic covers over all exposed electrical outlets.



**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 and suggestions 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.

**For more information on disaster preparedness, please call the American Red Cross, Knox Chapter at (865)584-2999 or Knox County Health Department, Emergency Preparedness Division at (865) 215-5093**



**American Red Cross**



**KNOX COUNTY  
TENNESSEE**