

Disaster Preparedness for Seniors by Seniors

This information was developed by the Rochester-Monroe County Chapter, 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, however, we need to be prepared. We can be prepared.

For six months we have researched and discussed disasters and preparedness with the American Red Cross. 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 reference tool in a handy place for quick reference.

Sincerely,

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

Provided by: American Red Cross, Cape Cod and Islands Chapter

286 South Street, Hyannis, MA 02601, tel. (508) 775-1540, www.capecodandislandsredcross.org

All disaster relief services are provided free of charge, but the Red Cross does not receive government funds.

The chapter is totally dependent upon donations from individuals and businesses in the local community.

Take Responsibility

- 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.

Every day some part of the country is affected by one or more of the following emergencies:

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

Which three are most likely to happen in your area?

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

See the section, "[For More Information](#)," at the end of this document to obtain information on potential disasters that can 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 National Weather Service office.

Commercial radio and television stations.

Know your designed Emergency Alert System stations (EAS).

My EAS Radio Station is:

My EAS Television Station:

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:

Your Disaster Checklist

- Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit (see below).
- 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. Be sure they will be able to reach you.

Disaster Supplies Kit

Medical Emergency Supplies

For your safety and comfort, you need to have emergency supplies packed and ready in one place before 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 duffel bag.
- Be sure your bag has an ID tag.
- Label any equipment, such as wheelchairs, canes or walkers, that you would need.

For Your Medical Needs

- First-aid kit
- Prescription medicines, list of medications including dosage, list of any allergies
- Extra eyeglasses and hearing-aid batteries
- Extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen
- List of the style and serial numbers of medical devices such as pacemakers
- Medical insurance and Medicare cards
- List of doctors and relatives or friends who should be notified if you are injured
- Any other items you may need

General Disaster Supplies

- Battery-powered radio and flashlight with extra batteries for each
- Change of clothing, rain gear, and sturdy shoes
- 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
- Other items you want to include

In Addition

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 them regularly. See section, "[For More Information](#)".
 - Manual can opener you are able to use.
 - Non-perishable food for any pets.

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 Kit with you.
- Wet some towels and jam them in the crack under the doors. Tape around doors, windows, exhaust 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.

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 car pool 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.

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 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. If you are able, signal the need to help.

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.

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. See that the battery is changed in each detector that doesn't work.
- Ask children to draw a floor plan of your home and show two ways out of every room in case of fire.

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:

If you would like more information on disaster planning or on the disasters likely to happen in your area, the following information is available from your local American Red Cross Chapter:

- [Emergency Preparedness Checklist](#)
- [Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit](#)
- [Are You Ready for a Tornado?](#)
- [Are You Ready for an Earthquake?](#)
- [Are You Ready for a Hurricane?](#)
- [Your Family Disaster Plan](#)
- [Food and Water in an Emergency](#)
- [Are You Ready for A Flood?](#)
- [Are You Ready for a Fire?](#)
- [Are You Ready for a Winter Storm?](#)

The following may be ordered **free** from the U.S. Fire Administration

Smoke Detectors and Fire Safety: A Guide for Older Americans
Pub. #L-126

FEMA/U.S. Fire Administration
P.O. Box 2012
Jessup, MD 20794-2012

NOAA Weather Radio information from

NOAA Weather Radio
Stock #: NOAA PA 76015

Contact your local National Weather Service office.

Includes frequency information, type of information broadcast and where to obtain a NOAA Weather Radio.

For more information from the [National Weather Service](#).

The following may be ordered from FEMA

FEMA
P.O. Box 2012
Jessup, MD 20794-2012

Preparedness for People with Disabilities (earthquake)
Pub. # FEMA-75

Hurricane Awareness-Action Guidelines for Senior Citizens
Item #8-0440

Or, consult [FEMA](#).

Emergency information may also be obtained from your utility company.

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Monroe County Office of Emergency Preparedness - Catholic Family Center - Monroe County Community Home Health Agency
Rochester Gas and Electric - Monroe County Office for the Aging - Rochester Telephone - Visiting Nurse Service

Emergency Phone Numbers

Local emergency services number: _____

Ambulance: _____

Nearest relative: _____

Local contact: _____

Out of state contact: _____

Doctors: _____

Local Red Cross Chapter: _____

Insurance Agent: _____

Other: _____

Medications List With Dosage

Notes

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