

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

## FOR SENIORS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In the event of a serious disaster, everyone should be self-sufficient for at least three days without help or emergency services. Streets may be closed and stores or other services may not be open. In addition, there may be no electricity, gas, water or telephone service. Dealing with a disaster can be especially difficult for seniors and people with disabilities. Remember, your home is the best place to be - if it is not too badly damaged to be safe. The following information will help you prepare to survive the difficult days following a major disaster.

### **The Most Important Things To Have:**

- **Bottled water** (at least 3 gallons per person in small, easy to open bottles)
- **Several flashlights** (by the bed and around the house, in case the electricity is out)
- **One week supply of medicines** (rotated regularly)
- **Instructions for use of the medications** - dosage, frequency, doctor's name and phone number. This information should be labeled "Emergency Instructions" and posted on your refrigerator or other area where it can be readily seen.
- **First aid kit**
- **Battery operated radio or TV** (to receive information about the disaster)
- **Whistle or loud bell** (to attract attention)
- **Smoke alarm** (Battery should be checked once a year; people who are hearing impaired may want to obtain flashing light alarm)
- **Fire extinguisher** (Know how to use it)
- **Wrench for gas turn-off** (Use only if the smell of gas is noticeable).
- **Shoes under the bed** (to protect feet from broken glass and other debris)
- **Garbage bags** (for personal waste)

### **Other Important Things You May Need:**

- **Extra eye glasses, hearing aid, mobility aid** (in case of equipment damage)
- **Manual can opener** (in case of power outage)
- **Non-perishable, ready to eat food** (canned food and juices, dried fruit, crackers, etc.)
- **Extra blankets** (If gas or electricity is out, you may not have heat)
- **Toilet paper, paper towels, paper plates, personal hygiene supplies** (Don't let your stock on hand get lower than three days supply)
- **Pet food and extra water for pets or service animal**

### **Other Good Supplies to Have:**

- **Money** (Banks may be closed/ATMs inoperable)
- **Duct tape, masking tape** (for temporary repairs)
- **Rubber or heavy gloves, broom, etc.** (to clean up broken glass and other unsafe conditions)

### Tips for the Home

- **Reduce hazards in your home.** Securely anchor medical equipment, appliances, bookcases, hanging plants, etc. Place heavy objects on low shelves. Fasten water heater to the wall. Identify a desk, table or other safe place that you can quickly get under for protection during an earthquake.
- **Know the location of your electrical box and gas and water shut-off valves.**
- **Keep family or personal records in a watertight, fireproof container.**
- **Install child-proof latches** to keep cupboard doors closed.

### Special Planning Tips

- **Make a plan with your personal care attendant.** If you use an attendant from an agency, see if the agency has special provisions for emergencies. If the attendant is not from an agency, make your own emergency plans.
- **Develop a buddy system** with family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers and plan how you will help each other in an emergency.
- **Determine at least two usable exits** from each room and your building. Make it a habit to do this whenever you are out shopping, at the movies visiting friends, etc.
- **Pick one out-of-state and one local friend/relative** for family and others to call if separated. Identify a location where you can reunite with family/friends.

### Prepare an Emergency "Go Kit"

Prepare an emergency "go kit" that you could grab and take with you if there is a need to evacuate.

- **Include necessary medications** (in their original bottles), basic toiletries, and any special sanitary aids.
- **Prepare a list of important information** that includes the names and dosages of your medications, what allergies you have, and the special equipment you use.
- **Prepare a contact list** of who to notify in emergencies with names address(es), and telephone numbers (cell phone numbers, too).
- **If you are a person who has trouble communicating**, you will want to include other important information in your go kit such as special toileting needs or how to lift and move you should that become necessary.
- **Give a copy of all of the above information** to each buddy and keep a copy with you, as well.
- **Store copies** of family records, wills, deeds, social security number, charge and bank accounts, etc.

### Take Care of Your Emotional Health

Persons with disabilities and older adults feel more vulnerable during times of crises. In a major disaster, feelings of acute anxiety, confusion and fear will be issues as critical for these individuals as their pre-existing physical condition.

**Ask those who form your personal support network to:**

- Check on you immediately after an emergency (earthquake), and offer personal assistance as needed.
- Have a spare copy of important keys.
- Know where emergency supplies are kept.
- Have copies of relevant emergency documents that specify medication, special equipment, and other life support needs.
- Have an agreed upon communications system regarding how to contact each other in an emergency. This plan should account for the fact that telephones may not be working after a major earthquake.
- Know when each other will be out of town and the expected date of return.
- Learn about your personal needs and how to be of support in an emergency (e.g. interpreting, making sure food, water and medications are in place).

**Protect Yourself During and After an Earthquake**

- Duck, cover and hold. If possible, get down and underneath a sturdy object (table or desk).
- If you are in a bed or out of a wheelchair, stay put and cover your head.
- If you are in a wheelchair, stay in it and go into a doorway that doesn't have a door. Cover your head and neck with your hands.
- Be prepared for aftershocks. Turn on your portable radio for instructions.

**Special Issues to Consider in Preparing for Earthquakes**

1. **For those who rely on assistive devices** such as hearing aids, wheelchairs, crutches, respirators, eye glasses, etc. . . . .
  - ◆ Keep important equipment and assistive devices in a consistent, convenient and secured place so you can quickly and easily locate them after the shaking.
  - ◆ Develop an emergency kit where extra hearing aids, batteries, eyeglasses, etc. are kept, to replace damaged or lost equipment in an earthquake.
  - ◆ Store mobility aids (e.g. canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs) as a backup to primary equipment.
2. **Write down the instructions needed** to secure your house and to provide for your personal safety. It may be difficult to remember these things due to shock and confusion following the earthquake. Keep a copy with you, post a copy in a highly visible place (such as on the refrigerator) and share with your personal support network.
  - ◆ How to turn off utilities
  - ◆ How to operate and safely move any essential equipment you have
  - ◆ How to safely transport you if you need to be carried
  - ◆ How to provide personal assistance services
  - ◆ How you will evacuate, and where you will go.

- ◆ Documenting important life saving information is vital. Create an emergency health information card, to be kept in your wallet or purse, to communicate to rescuers what they need to know about you if you are unconscious, incoherent, or if there is a need for your evacuation. List the medications and equipment you use, communication, hearing or mobility difficulties, preferred treatment, medical providers and important contact people.
  - ◆ Remember to include a list of emergency contacts that includes the names and phone numbers of members of your personal support network, family members, doctors, equipment vendors and utility companies.
3. **Develop a three-day food supply** of the types of food that will provide the nourishment you require and can tolerate. An adequate supply of drinking water will help to prevent dehydration.
- ◆ Select non-perishable foods that meet your dietary requirements for sodium and sugar content.
  - ◆ Maintain three gallons of stored drinking water per person in sealed, easy-to-open unbreakable containers. That will provide one gallon per day/per person for three days. Replace stored water with fresh water every six months.