



10 Ways to Help Seniors Prepare for Disaster

Following are 10 ways that seniors, their families and caregivers can prepare for a natural disaster, according to Home Instead Senior Care and the American Red Cross.

1. Be informed. Contact the local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter to learn about the most likely natural disasters to strike your area.
2. Complete a personal assessment. A senior should determine what he or she can or can't do before, during and after a disaster. Make a list of those needs and resources that can meet them.
3. Make a plan. Schedule a family meeting to assess your needs in an emergency and develop a plan of action. Include in your plan key people in your life – such as neighbors, friends, relatives and professional caregivers – who could help. Remember to include pets in your plan.
4. Know where to get information during an emergency, either through the local television, radio or NOAA weather radio. Have available a battery-operated radio. Different alarms are available to notify people with medical conditions of impending disaster, such as a strobe alarm for the hearing-impaired.
5. Discuss multiple escape routes. Like all families and households, seniors should develop at least two escape routes, one out of their home in case of a fire when they need to get out of the home quickly and out of the area in case they need to evacuate their community. Designate a place to meet other relatives or key support network people outside the house, as well as a second location outside the neighborhood, such as a school or church. Practice the plan at least twice a year.
6. Know when to go or to stay and how to make the decision to stay or leave. When deciding to evacuate, older adults should go sooner rather than later. By waiting too long, they may be unable to leave if they require assistance from others.
7. Assemble a disaster supplies kit. Have an easy-to-carry kit with three days non-perishable food and water with an additional four days of food and water readily accessible at home. Have at least one gallon of water per person per day. Bottled water may be easier to store and carry.
8. Remember medications and other essentials. Copies of prescriptions, extra eye glasses and hearing-aid batteries, along with paper products such as toilet paper, should be part of your disaster supplies kit.
9. Make a list of contact telephone numbers. The list should include people on a senior's support network as well as doctors and other important health-care professionals. Log on to www.redcross.org/contactcard for a sample contact card that can be used.
10. Call a professional CAREGiver if you or your loved one needs extra help. If a senior needs assistance and you can't be there, contact Home Instead Senior Care at **301-846-9922**. Or find a Home Instead Senior Care office nearest your loved one by logging on to www.homeinstead.com.