

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Maryann Hibbs RN, BSN, MSCN, BSBA, MSPL

MS Nurse Coordinator

VA Pittsburgh Health Care System



Disasters and emergencies can affect people in any part of the United States at any time of the year, swiftly and without warning.



I am giving the presentation today in the hope that by encouraging & informing family caregivers on developing personal preparedness plans, they will keep themselves and their loved ones safe in a disaster or emergency.



Ask yourself :

- ▣ What would you do if no one is able to reach you?
- ▣ What would you do if you are suddenly told to shelter in place or evacuate?
- ▣ What would you do if basic services such as water, gas, electricity, or phones are not available?
- ▣ Would you be prepared for 72 hours minimum without assistance?

4 steps to safety



- ▣ 1. Get informed-be aware
- ▣ 2. Make and communicate your plan
- ▣ 3. Gather supplies, make a kit, and develop a check list
- ▣ 4. Practice and maintain your plan and kit

1. Be Informed

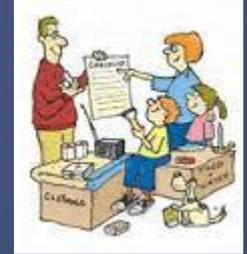
- ▣ Planning for a disaster means knowing what to do in each possible situation.
- ▣ Whether you have to evacuate your home or you need to shelter in place, it's important to have a plan ahead of time.
- ▣ Before creating your disaster plan, it's important to know what types of emergencies are likely in your area and the best way to respond.

Do your homework

- ▣ Know the risks in your area for all-hazards (human-made and natural) and acts of terrorism
- ▣ Natural hazards such as floods, fires, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, and blizzards affect thousands of people every year, as do human-made hazards such as hazardous material incidents, explosive devices, transportation events (such as train accidents), or even pandemics.

- ▣ Contact your local emergency manager, American Red Cross chapter, or visit local emergency preparedness websites for information on hazards in your area.
- ▣ How will you receive emergency instructions?
- ▣ Learn about your community's warning signals, what they sound like, what they mean and what actions you should take when they are activated.
- ▣ Learn how residents will be informed about local, state or federal disaster : cell phone texts, TV, internet, or radio.
- ▣ **The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** is a federal agency ... It provides local and regional forecasts, and emergency alerts

2. Make & communicate your plan



- ❑ Meet with family or household members and caregivers to develop your plan.
- ❑ Discuss how you will respond to emergencies likely to occur in your area.
- ❑ Contact your local emergency management office now. Many local emergency management offices maintain registers of people with disabilities and their needs so they can be located and assisted quickly in a disaster.
- ❑ Be sure to contact local utility companies as many keep a list and map of the location of power dependent customers. Keep in mind even priority reconnection may take days

Create a Disaster Team

- ▣ Caregivers often feel they are “on their own” during normal times
- ▣ This feeling may intensify during times of disaster when people are hurrying to take care of their own family and property.
- ▣ People will be more than glad to help, but they will need to know exactly what you need and when you need it.



Questions for your plan:

- ❑ Do you use adaptive feeding devices?
- ❑ Do you use personal care equipment such as shower chairs?
- ❑ Do you use electricity dependent equipment such as dialysis machine, wheel chair, or feeding pumps?
- ❑ How will you cope with debris or if ramps are damaged?
- ❑ Do you need specialty equipped transportation?
- ❑ If you use a personal care attendant obtained from an agency, have you checked to see if the agency has special provisions for emergencies?
- ❑ Do you have a back-up plan for other services such as meals on wheels, O2 providers?
- ❑ What about if you are at work or vacation?

- ▣ Should you wear medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your disability?
- ▣ Do you need a medical alert system that will allow you to call for help ? (keep in mind phone lines and or cell towers may be down)
- ▣ Determine what you will need to do for each type of emergency.
- ▣ The American Red Cross has online safety checklists for most emergencies.

Remember you need to communicate

- ▣ Take time now to plan how you will talk to friends or emergency workers in an emergency.
- ▣ During an emergency, your normal way of communicating may be affected by changes in environment, noise, or confusion.
- ▣ Know how and what you will need to communicate during an emergency.
- ▣ Is social media part of your family communication plan?

- Prepare something now that describes your needs in short, meaningful phrases.
- You may not have much time to get your message across.
- Prewritten cards or text messages can help you share information during a stressful or uncomfortable situation.
- Phrases can include:
 - I may have difficulty understanding what you are telling me.
 - Please speak slowly and use simple language.
 - I use a device to communicate.
 - I am Deaf and use American Sign Language.
 - Please write down directions.
 - How to contact another care giver if you are unavailable.

- ❑ Your cards should apply to emergencies in and outside your home.
- ❑ Give copies of the list to the members of your caregiving team and place a copy where it can be easily found. Many people put this kind of information on a **boldly written note securely taped to the front of the refrigerator**. Emergency personnel know to look there and chances are good that the refrigerator will stay in place.
- ❑ Be sure to keep a copy with you at all times.
- ❑ If you have difficulty creating cards, ask family, friends, or caregivers to help.
- ❑ Give written instructions on how best to assist you.
- ❑ Clear concise instructions can include:
 - -Please take my oxygen, wheel chair, insulin from the fridge.
 - -Do not straighten my knees.

3. Stay or go- you will need a check list and supplies

- ▣ Use common sense and available information following official recommendations.
- ▣ Emergency kits and survival supplies are needed either way.
- ▣ You can put together a list of supplies yourself or purchase already made kits.
- ▣ Maintain a list of important items and store it with your emergency supplies.

If you stay

- ▣ Learn how to shut off water, gas, and electricity at main switches.
- ▣ Develop a buddy plan with friends or neighbors
- ▣ Know how to connect or start back up power if available
- ▣ Have disaster supplies available. Make sure you have a 7-day supply





If you go

- ❑ Know where you will meet family, friends, or caregivers after an emergency.
- ❑ Pick two places to meet: one right outside your home and another outside your neighborhood, such as a library, community center, or place of worship.
- ❑ Pick friends or family with whom you can stay in case you cannot stay at home.
- ❑ For people who have no other place to stay, emergency shelters may be set up in schools, City buildings, and places of worship. They provide basic food and water.
- ❑ Shelters DO NOT have special equipment (e.g., oxygen, mobility aids, batteries). Be prepared to bring your own.

- Shelters are subject to change depending on the emergency.
- Check shelters to see if they are equipped for people with disabilities and service animals.
- Let relief workers know your disability and how it may effect your stay such as you can't wait in long lines for instance. Label equipment and attach instruction cards on how to use and move items. Laminate if possible (stronger, may get wet)
- Everyone in your household should have a “Go Bag” — a collection of things you would want if you have to leave in a hurry.
- Your “Go Bag” should be sturdy and easy to carry, like a backpack or a small suitcase on wheels.
- Don't forget to go bag for all family members including pets



Go Bags



4. Practice and maintain your kit

- ▣ Practice your plan at least once a year. It's important to vary the times of your drill and if you have seasonal occurrences practice more often.
- ▣ Consider different situations you may face, such as blocked paths or exits when practicing your plan. Include service animals in your drills so they become familiar with exit routes.
- ▣ Make sure service animals are familiar with and know people in your network.
- ▣ Update lists and stock emergency supplies, check dates and change out or replace out dated items.

- ▣ If you use a motorized wheel chair or scooter have an extra battery – a car battery can usually be used but may not last as long.
- ▣ Also store a light weight manual wheel chair for back up



There are numerous online planning tools available, a few are listed below:

- ▣ www.redcross.org › ... › [Prepare Your Home and Family](#)
- ▣ Disastercenter.com › ... › [Family Disaster Plan](#)
- ▣ www.fema.gov › ... › [National Preparedness](#)
- ▣ www.bt.cdc.gov/preparedness/plan
- ▣ In addition to your VA resources, the U.S. Government website www.Ready.gov is an excellent resource to help Veterans and their families develop family disaster plans and family communications plans.
- ▣ There are even mobile Apps available.

Questions?