

## Disaster Planning Tips for Older Adults<sup>1</sup>

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Disaster can strike without warning. An important part of planning for a disaster is to have a plan for what you will do if you have to leave your home. Pick a place to meet family members or a close friend in the event that you have to evacuate. Communications often are down early in a disaster, so knowing where to meet loved ones or friends ahead of time is helpful. Use the special tips below to plan and prepare for any emergency.

Disaster Planning Tips	Special Tips for Older Adults
<b>Water</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 gallon/person/day.</li> <li>Store <b>at least</b> 3–5 days worth. A two-week supply is ideal.</li> <li>Use for drinking and sanitation.</li> <li>Store extra water if you have pets.</li> <li>Water in swimming pools and spas can be used only for flushing toilets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dehydration is a serious health problem for older adults. If possible, store more than the recommended amount.</li> <li>Gallon jugs of water are heavy. Use containers that are small enough to easily handle, such as clean and sanitized two-liter plastic soda bottles, if you choose not to purchase commercial water storage containers.</li> <li>Be certain that the caps are easy to remove by persons with arthritis.</li> </ul>
<b>Food</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Store at least a 3–5 day supply of non-perishable food.</li> <li>Include foods from all food groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examples include: <u>Grains</u> - breads, dry cereals, crackers, biscuits; <u>Vegetables</u> - canned (your favorites); <u>Fruits</u> -canned (in juice) and dried; <u>Milk</u> - canned and boxed shelf-stable; consider small sizes; <u>Meat and Beans</u> - jerky, canned beans, canned tuna and chicken, shelf-stable chicken, nuts and seeds, peanut and nut butters.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider special dietary needs, such as low-sodium, high-fiber, or other special foods.</li> <li>Store small cans of food that can be eaten at one meal or snack.</li> <li>Have a manual can opener that is easy to use.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>First Aid Kit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One for home</li> <li>• One for the car</li> <li>• To assemble your own first aid kit include the following:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adhesive bandages, various sizes</li> <li>○ Sterile dressings</li> <li>○ Conforming roller gauze bandages</li> <li>○ Triangular bandages</li> <li>○ Sterile gauze pads, various sizes</li> <li>○ Cotton balls</li> <li>○ Cohesive bandage roll</li> <li>○ Germicidal hand wipes or waterless alcohol-based hand sanitizer</li> <li>○ Antiseptic wipes</li> <li>○ Medical grade non-latex gloves</li> <li>○ Adhesive tape</li> <li>○ Anti-bacterial ointment</li> <li>○ Cold pack</li> <li>○ Thermometer</li> <li>○ Scissors (small, personal)</li> <li>○ Tweezers</li> <li>○ Assorted sizes of safety pins</li> <li>○ CPR breathing barrier, such as a face shield</li> <li>○ Sunscreen</li> <li>○ Flashlight and extra batteries</li> <li>○ Whistle to signal for help</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy a prepared kit and add anything different that you might need.</li> <li>• If using a kit you have, restock used or expired supplies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Contacts</b> - List of whom to notify in an emergency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All doctors names, phone numbers, addresses, and what they treat you for (e.g. cardiologist)</li> <li>• Phone numbers of a few in and out-of-town relatives or close friends</li> <li>• Keep all of these lists in a waterproof plastic bag or container.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Important papers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification cards</li> <li>• Insurance cards</li> <li>• Birth/death/marriage certificates</li> <li>• Social security card</li> <li>• Bank account and credit card information</li> <li>• Keep all documents in waterproof plastic bags or containers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Medicare and/or Medicaid cards</li> <li>○ Living will and medical power of attorney</li> <li>○ Veteran's papers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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<b>Electronics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Battery-powered radio and/or television</li> <li>• Cell phone and chargers for the house and car</li> <li>• Extra batteries for each electronic device</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Battery-powered wheel chair</li> <li>• Learn how to connect and start backup power supply for wheel chair or other necessary medical equipment.</li> <li>• Have a manual wheelchair for backup.</li> </ul>
<b>Time passers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board games, puzzles, playing cards</li> <li>• Books</li> <li>• Paper and pens for letters and notes; envelopes and stamps</li> <li>• Sewing, crocheting, knitting supplies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paperback books weigh less than hardcover books.</li> <li>• E-book readers store hundreds of books (but do need charging).</li> </ul>
<b>Medical needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lists of prescription medications and dosage</li> <li>• Doctors' and pharmacy phone numbers and addresses</li> <li>• Extra glasses</li> <li>• Pain relievers</li> <li>• Stomach medicine</li> <li>• Poison-response drugs</li> <li>• Supplements</li> <li>• Check expiration dates and replace as needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra hearing aid batteries</li> <li>• Medical alert tag or bracelet</li> <li>• Wheel chair batteries</li> <li>• List of serial numbers and styles of medical devices (i.e. pacemakers)</li> <li>• Photocopies of all prescription drugs with dosage, directions, interactions, refill dates</li> <li>• Consult with your doctor about which non-prescription drugs and supplements are safe for you.</li> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> 2-week supply of all essential medications</li> </ul>
<b>People with special needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons with diabetes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Keep travel packs of insulin in the refrigerator.</li> <li>○ Testing supplies (enough for <b>at least 2 weeks</b>)</li> <li>○ Extra batteries for your meter</li> <li>○ Insulin-delivery supplies</li> <li>○ Insulin</li> <li>○ Lancets and Lancing device</li> <li>○ Oral medications</li> <li>○ Quick-acting source of glucose</li> <li>○ Extra glucagon emergency kit</li> <li>○ Medical waste container for used needles</li> <li>○ Keep insulin as cool as possible; if on ice, be careful not to freeze.</li> <li>○ If necessary, insulin may be stored at room temperature (59°F–86°F) for 28 days.</li> <li>○ Do not use insulin that clumps or sticks to the side of the bottle.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons with Alzheimer's               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Register with local police and fire departments.</li> <li>○ ID bracelet or necklace indicating special or peculiar behaviors (e.g., memory loss)</li> <li>○ Written instructions for reaching family members, friends, and physicians.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bed-Bound Persons               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Emergency transportation plan</li> <li>○ Supplies of daily care items - bed pads, adult diapers, linens (enough for <b>at least 2 weeks</b>)</li> <li>○ Dietary needs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Oxygen-Dependent               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Oxygen supplies (including alternate power source such as a battery)</li> <li>○ Extra water for oxygen condensers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Persons with Incontinence               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Incontinence under garments</li> <li>○ Disposable wipes</li> <li>○ Cleansing products</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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<b>Emotional support/ Stress reduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special photos</li> <li>• Spiritual support</li> <li>• A special memento</li> <li>• Comfort food</li> <li>• Addresses and phone numbers of friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep a journal about your experience.</li> <li>• Form an informal 'support group' to share concerns and information.</li> <li>• Write letters to your grandchildren or other family and friends.</li> </ul>
<b>Pets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra food in plastic containers</li> <li>• Carrier</li> <li>• ID tags (2 sets, one on the animal and one extra) with name and your contact information</li> <li>• Proof of ownership (e.g., registration papers and pictures)</li> <li>• Medications and pet first aid supplies</li> <li>• Medical and vaccination records</li> <li>• Veterinarian's phone number and address</li> </ul>	
<b>Evacuation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have backpacks handy to put supplies, clothing, and bedding in if you must evacuate or move to a shelter.</li> <li>• Plan in advance for someone to care for your pet if pets not welcome at shelter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prearrange transportation with neighbors.</li> <li>• Identify local shelters that accommodate older adults and persons with disabilities.</li> </ul>

### References & Resources

**Psychosocial Issues for Older Adults in Disasters.** DHHS Publication No. ESDRB SMA 99-3323. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Centers for Mental Health Services.

**Tips for Seniors and People with Disabilities - Disaster Preparedness for Seniors by Seniors.** Available at your local chapter of the American Red Cross, or online at <http://www2.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/seniors.html>.

**Disaster Supply Kits.** Available at your local chapter of the American Red Cross, or online at [http://www2.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0\\_3\\_00.html](http://www2.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_3_00.html).

**Diabetes Disaster Preparedness.** Division of Healthy and Family Services, State of New Jersey. Available online at [http://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/documents/diabetes\\_disaster\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/documents/diabetes_disaster_guidelines.pdf).

**Disaster Preparedness Guide for Elders.** Florida Department of Elder Affairs. Available online at <http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/english/disasterguide/2009.pdf>.

**Family Disaster Plan.** Red Cross: *Talking About Disaster: Guide for Standard Messages*. Available online at [http://www.redcross.org/images/pdfs/code/family\\_disaster\\_plan.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/images/pdfs/code/family_disaster_plan.pdf).