

Red Cross: Disaster Preparedness Information for Seniors

The Importance of a Personal Support Network

The American Red Cross recommends that senior citizens create a personal support network made up of several individuals who will check in on you in an emergency, to ensure your wellness and to give assistance if needed. This network can consist of friends, roommates, family members, relatives, personal attendants, co-workers and neighbors. Ideally, a minimum of three people can be identified at each location where you regularly spend time, for example at work, home, school or volunteer site.



There are seven important items to discuss and implement with a personal support network:

1. Make arrangements, prior to an emergency, for your support network to immediately check on you after a disaster and, if needed, offer assistance.
2. Exchange important keys.
3. Show them where you keep emergency supplies.
4. Share copies of your relevant emergency documents, evacuation plans and emergency health information card.
5. Agree on and practice methods for contacting each other in an emergency. Do not count on the telephones working.
6. You and your personal support network should always notify each other when you are going out of town and when you will return.
7. The relationship should be mutual. You have a lot to contribute! Learn about each other's needs and how to help each other in an emergency. You might take responsibility for food supplies and preparation, organizing neighborhood watch meetings and interpreting, among other things.

Get Informed

Want to know what else you can do to better care for your loved ones as they get older? Download our [Disaster Preparedness guide](#) so you both can prepare for emergencies.

Ohio Department of Aging – Emergency Preparedness

Safety begins at home. The Department of Aging works with partners to ensure that older residents, their families and others who care for and serve them have the information they need in the event of an emergency. Working together, we strive to protect all of our citizens from severe weather, natural disasters and other adverse events.

Your Area Agency on Aging Can Help

Ohio's [area agencies on aging](#) make sure that each community has a plan for assisting older adults during severe weather or other emergencies. Your area agency can also help you identify resources, such as energy assistance, chore service and minor home repairs that can help you stay safe in your home. Call 1-866-243-5678 to be connected to the agency serving your community.



Be Prepared

Have a plan that will allow you to remain in place for at least three days should you be unable to leave your home due to weather conditions or other emergencies:

Emergency Supplies - Create an emergency kit that contains: a battery operated radio, a flashlight, extra batteries, a signaling device (such as a loud whistle, horn or bell), food that you can open and prepare easily, water (one gallon per person per day), extra blankets and a first aid kit. Make sure you have access to a phone that will work if the electricity goes out.

Medications - Keep a backup supply of the medications you take every day (check expiration dates every couple of months and replace if necessary). Ask your doctors for extra copies of your prescriptions for your emergency kit. Have an ice chest on hand and keep ice packs in the freezer for medications that need to be kept cool. Keep a backup stash of medical supplies such as bandages, alcohol, etc.

Equipment and Assistive Devices - Make sure your medical equipment and assistive devices (such as canes, walkers, wheelchairs, lifts, oxygen tanks, etc.) are easy to locate in an emergency. Have spare batteries or non-powered options for any equipment that will not work if there is no electricity. Keep written instructions on how to operate and move your medical and adaptive equipment in your kit.

Readiness - Know where the main valves and switches are for gas, water and electricity, and make sure you can operate them. Have at least one fire extinguisher and know how to use it. Designate a safe place to go (such as a friend or neighbor's house or shelter) and have a plan for getting there if it becomes unsafe to stay in your home.

Reasonable accommodations - Be prepared to quickly explain to rescue personnel how to move you or help you move safely and rapidly (e.g., "take my oxygen tank," "get my insulin from the refrigerator").

Safety Net - Ask a reliable family member, friend or neighbor to visit or call you in the event of severe weather or other emergency to make sure you are okay. Agree on a plan for what they should do if they are unable to reach you or find you needing help.

(Adapted from "Emergency Management Be-Prepared Kit," available at www.disabilityrightsohio.org)