



June 2008 Newsletter

Emergency Preparedness for Seniors

Recently I have been reading up on the challenges that our senior population faces during a natural disaster. With the on slot of tornado's, floods and the upcoming hurricane season I decided to dedicate this newsletter to this subject... Senior Emergency Preparedness.

I just returned from a two week trip to Texas, Florida, and Georgia. I was stunned at the amount of tornado's that showed up over one weekend. I was also amazed to see first-hand, the devastation they leave and how little time people have to find protection.

In *My Life in a Box...A Life Organizer*, I recommend that everyone plan a *Get Away Bag*, providing everything needed for a quick exit and 48 hour survival. It is important to take into consideration that whether you live alone or with other family members, pack your own rolling bag. Then if the time arises, you will be prepared to quickly leave your home and have everything you need for surviving a few days.

Aside from everything I suggest for your personal *Get Away Bag*, here are a few more suggestions for Seniors:

- Create a list of emergency phone numbers and store it in your *Get Away Bag*. These numbers should include family, friends and neighbors.
- Planning and practicing an escape route from your home is also very important, especially if you use a cane, walker, or wheelchair.
- Have a good supply of small bottles of water that are easy to access.
- Put a whistle or noise maker of some type in your *Get Away Bag* in case you are stuck in your home and need to get attention. Also make sure to take your *Get Away Bag* with you if you need to hold up in a basement or attic for safety.
- Have a contact person who will call or check on you in case of an emergency. If you live alone it is vital that someone makes sure you are out of your house and in a safe place.

During a recent tornado I read about a woman who was stuck in her basement. It took several days before anyone found her because she lived alone and didn't have close friends or neighbors who checked in with her regularly.

- If you drive a car and need to evacuate, plan an emergency car pooling group.

- If you use special equipment such as a respirator, it is a good idea to teach someone how to operate the equipment if you were to need help.
- Plan transportation if you need to evacuate to a Red Cross shelter. If you need oxygen, let them know ahead of time as they keep a list of local residents who have special needs.
- If you live in a nursing home, or boarding home, make sure the administrator has an emergency/evacuation plan in place. If they do not have emergency drills, motivate them to get started and tell them about *My Life in a Box!*
- Along with your 4-day supply of all medication and first aid supplies in your *Get Away Bag* create written instructions for your specific medication use and medical care.
- If you use a hearing aid, or wear glasses, make sure to pack extra batteries for your hearing aid and an extra set of glasses.
- Pets are usually not allowed in public shelters so make plans for your pets in advance.

Scam Artists

In the days and weeks after a disaster, many decisions must be made that can be confusing and difficult for elderly people to deal with. It can be overwhelming when this occurs and unfortunately there are scam artists who take advantage of people after personal losses and natural disasters.

Disaster victims who receive offers that seem too good to be true from contractors and other business people, should:

- Ask for references
- Get a second estimate
- Check with friends and relatives before signing anything.
- Do not sign a contract or pay for services in advance.

Administration on Aging Assistance

The Administration on Aging is able to respond to the special needs of older disaster victims. It is very normal for older people to have difficulty getting assistance because of physical and mental impairments and other frailties due to their age. When a disaster strikes, the Administration on Aging's National Disaster Preparedness and Response Office coordinates with FEMA and State Emergency Management Agencies and works closely with private disaster response organizations such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army. Together these organizations help with meals, transportation, information on temporary housing and other important services that are required.

The toll free number for the Administration on Aging is 800-677-1116

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