



Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies always seem to happen when we least expect them, but that doesn't mean we can't be prepared. Being prepared can save you and your Veteran significant time, energy and hardship. Emergencies may range from a leaking roof, to a power outage, to a large flood, fire or hurricane requiring complete evacuation and relocation. Whatever the emergency, preparing now can help ease the burden later. As a caregiver, when disaster strikes, you will be responsible not only for the care and well-being of your Veteran, but for your own needs. Do you know what to do?

Take some time to consider your daily activities including those caregiving activities you complete for your Veteran. What items do you use every day? Consider eyeglasses, medications, and clothing needs. What items are necessary and what can you do without? How will you pay bills if you have to be relocated? What if the power is out for an extended period of time and your Veteran is dependent upon oxygen or a ventilator? If you have to leave quickly, are medications readily available? Do you or your Veteran have pets? How will they be taken care of? These are just a few of the questions we encourage you to begin asking yourself and have some quick tips to help you plan. The tasks we do every day, often without thinking, are the ones most impacted by emergencies.

VA wants to help provide you with some tools to assist in planning for the unexpected. Checklists are available to provide some examples of ideas to consider. The following information is not meant to be all inclusive, rather topics to help you begin thinking about "what if..."

Emergencies don't have to become disasters, and disasters can be managed. Preparedness matters!



How to Prepare For an Emergency

What is an emergency?

An emergency is any unexpected event which may interrupt your ability to provide care to your loved one. This may range from a medical emergency or a temporary power outage to a natural or manmade disaster such as flooding, fire, and hurricane or bomb threat.

How can I prepare?

Certainly, we know we cannot control Mother Nature, but we can prepare by identifying the types of natural disasters for which we are at most at risk, depending upon geographical areas. Are you most at risk for a blizzard or ice storm where you may be trapped in your home for days at a time? Perhaps you live in an area where wild fires or hurricanes are common, and you are at high risk of needing to be evacuated from your home. Maybe you live near a power plant which is at risk of gas leaks or a river which has a history of flooding.

The American Red Cross offers valuable information on the various types of natural and man-made disasters, including specific factors to consider and prepare for. You may wish to visit the link at: <http://www.redcross.org>.

While it is impossible to plan for every contingency, there are some basic things you can do. Planning for what you CAN control, allows you to better manage crises when they occur.

Prepare an emergency supply kit

Do you have a week's worth of medication, enough food and water in the event of an extended power outage, and a flashlight with extra batteries? If you are caring for someone who requires oxygen, what is the plan to ensure a continued supply? These are just a few of the questions to consider when preparing for emergencies or disasters.

Consider supplying your kit has the following:

- Non perishable food items, including a can opener for canned goods
- Water- plan on 1 gallon of water, per person, per day. If you have pets, ensure you are planning on them as well!
- Basic first aid kit
- Cell phone with charger and extra battery



- Flashlights with batteries
- Candles & Matches
- Battery operated radio
- Emergency contact names and numbers in waterproof sheath
- Identification (photocopies of identification, driver's license, Social Security card, Medicare card, other health insurance information, credit cards)
- Cash and coins
- Sanitation-related items, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, basic personal hygiene items such as toothbrush, toothpaste, denture needs, soap, shampoo, feminine products, wipes, bathroom tissue, garbage bags
- Change of clothing and specific clothing items for varying types of weather to include shoes/sneakers/boots

Keep medications in a central location so that they may be easily located and packed into your kit in the event of an evacuation!

All kits should also include important documents, stored in a water proof pack, which includes:

- Copy of your birth certificate
- List of your medical conditions
- Medication list
- List of current physicians
- Allergies
- Immunization records
- Bank account information
- Names and phone numbers of emergency contacts
- Legal paperwork such as Power of Attorney or Advance Directives
- Copies of insurance card(s) or numbers
- Personal identification
- Copy of any Advanced Directives, including Health Care Proxy or Living Will documents

Consider using checklists to help you organize this information, including medication lists and emergency contacts. The following link will guide you to examples of pre-made checklists for you and your veterans.

http://www.aginginstride.org/emergencyprep/docs/Just_in_Case.pdf

Whether you create your own, or use those already developed, enjoy peace of mind that you are prepared!



Don't forget to take care of your own needs!

While it will be crucial to ensure the needs of your Veteran are met during times of emergencies, it is equally important to attend to your own needs. As you prepare your Veteran for the unexpected, prepare for yourself. When gathering important documents for your Veteran, also make sure to gather your own documents. Create your own medication list, and your own list of emergency contacts. Your needs are critical too!

Summary

Emergencies are a stressful, but knowledge and awareness of resources are the key. The following resources provide additional information on developing disaster plans, and ensuring you have the necessary supplies in the event of an emergency.

<http://www.survival-food.com>

All you ever wanted to know about emergency food supplies for the home emergency preparedness kit. Consumers can purchase bottle water, water sterilizing products, freeze-dried foods (30yr shelf-life) and dehydrated foods (decade shelf-life).

<http://www.ready.gov>

Recommendations for how to prepare and respond in disasters. Site has specific information for emergency preparedness for unique family needs and people with disabilities.

<http://www.fema.gov/areyouready>

In depth guide to citizen preparedness for various types of disasters. Site contains checklist, Windows Media video, video transcripts, and reference guides (also available in Spanish).

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention website covers preparedness for public health emergencies in 11 languages other than English to include , Chinese, Filipino, French , German, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korea, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Search for information by type of hazard: Bioterrorism, chemical, radiation, mass casualties, Natural disaster, and outbreaks.

<http://www.Preparedness.com>



Includes basic information on preparing for disaster. Website offers a comprehensive stock of various emergency supplies that are available for purchase.

<http://www.nfpa.org>

National Fire Protection Association NFPA provides basic information for emergency preparedness and safety tips related to evacuation. Also includes information on special topics such as emergencies associated with Holidays, outdoor specific, gasoline and propane, and others.