

Recognizing Emergencies and Knowledge of Emergency Procedures

- Recognizing emergencies and knowledge of emergency procedures, including basic first aid and implementation of a client's emergency preparedness plan.
- **Natural Disasters**
 - Natural disasters do occur and many times with short-notice.
- **Natural disasters include:**
 - Hurricanes
 - Tornadoes
 - Earthquakes
 - Flash Floods
 - Wind Storms
 - Rain Storms
 - Forest Fires
- **Fires** in the house are usually preventable and because of this are not considered a natural disaster. Preventing household fires and how to respond safely are also part of emergency planning.

Prepare Ahead of Time for natural disasters and emergencies: Think through what you would do for each of the possible natural disasters and if the home lost electricity or experienced a fire or flood. If you are providing caregiving services at a facility such as a nursing home or assisted living community, learn their disaster and emergency procedures. They will have instructions available and notices on doors and exits for evacuation procedures. Know where the flashlight and matches and candles are at a senior's home.

Follow these steps when you begin care for a senior in their home:

- 1) Home Assessment: Know the layout of the entire home, including basement and attic to be prepared for an emergency. You will need to know where smoke and water can go in the home.
- 2) Power Failure: Establish the location and make note in the Care Plan for where to find flashlights, batteries, candles and matches.
- 3) Smoke and Fire Alarms: where are they located in the house? Check batteries each month.
- 4) Where would you go if evacuation were necessary for a fire, hurricane, flood, wind-storm or tornado? Always call the office of the home care agency first and know the evacuation plan and for immediate emergencies call 911.

Hurricanes: As hurricanes show up on weather radars, you will have prior warning before a hurricane will strike and time to prepare yourself and your client for this disaster. Many times areas are evacuated prior to a hurricane and your company will provide guidance.

Tornadoes: Tornadoes often strike suddenly. A **Tornado Watch** means a tornado is a possibility due to the weather conditions. A **Tornado Warning** means a tornado has been spotted and is in your area. You should take cover immediately, going to a basement or tornado shelter if possible. Be sure to know where to take cover if you are located in a tornado alley.

Earthquakes: Earthquakes usually happen without warning. While earthquakes are more common in California, there is also the New Madrid fault line near the Mississippi river, causing earthquakes to even occur in Illinois and Missouri. Know where to go for safety in the home when a sudden earthquake happens and where to go for shelter after the earthquake.

Floods: Floods usually are predicted but be aware that flash-floods occur quickly. Find out if the senior's home is in a flood zone and know the evacuation procedure if you are in an area which experiences flash floods.

Forest Fires: Usually you will have prior notice to evacuate. Take the warning seriously as fires can advance more quickly than you can imagine. Implement the emergency plan and take necessary items and evacuate.

Fire: As most fires can be prevented it is important to review fire safety tips.

1. Do not smoke while working.
2. Do not allow a senior client to smoke in the home, if possible. If they must smoke in the home, make sure they only smoke while using an ashtray. Do not allow them to smoke in the bed or to smoke when oxygen is in use.
3. Check electrical cords to be sure they are not cracked or frayed.
4. Notice if light bulbs blink or seem to burn-out quickly. This could be a sign of an electrical issue which should be reported.
5. Turn off and unplug electrical appliances when you are not using them.
6. Be cautious to turn off ovens and stoves when not in use - always check everything twice.
7. Keep flammable items away from the stove, radiators and reading lamps.
8. Do not use candles. If a candle must be used for a dinner celebration or birthday, be very aware of the importance to extinguish them when you leave your work assignment as a senior may not remember to do so. Seniors also may have lost their sense of smell making it even more dangerous to have candles in the home. Candles are one of the most popular causes of fires. Be mindful to keep candles away from flammable objects and burn them only for short time periods.

Fire Preparedness:

1. Know where fire extinguishers are located and understand how to use them.
2. Fire Extinguisher Directions: Be sure you understand how to use a fire extinguisher. Read the directions.
3. Blankets: Know where extra blankets and sheets are kept in the home as a back-up fire extinguisher. A blanket can be thrown over the fire to extinguish it.

Should a Fire Start:

- 1) Call 911
- 2) Extinguish the fire if possible (small kitchen fires on the stove-top)
- 3) Escort the senior out of the home
- 4) Confine the fire by closing doors of empty rooms to slow the spread of smoke and flames

Note: Fire Extinguishers should be in the senior's home if you are doing senior home care. Make sure the location of the fire extinguisher is known to you and make sure it works.

- **Fire Prevention**

- You can help prevent fires by looking for fire hazards and correcting the problem. Smoke alarms are the first line of defense for early warnings of fire.
 1. Smoke alarms save lives. Install a smoke alarm outside each sleeping area and on each additional level of your home.
 2. If people sleep with doors closed, install smoke alarms inside sleeping areas also.

3. Use the test button to check each smoke alarm once a month. When necessary, replace batteries immediately.
4. Change batteries in smoke alarms at least yearly.
5. Vacuum away cobwebs and dust from your smoke alarms monthly.
6. Smoke alarms become less sensitive over time. Replace your smoke alarms every ten years.
7. Have a fire escape plan that includes at least two exits from each room and plan ahead for assistance if you are limited in your ability to move quickly. Include notification of your local fire department in your plan.
8. Consider escape ladders for sleeping areas on the second or third floor. Learn how to use them and store them near the window.
9. Consider having one or more working fire extinguishers in your home. Get training from the fire department in how to use them.
10. Consider installing an automatic fire sprinkler system in your home.
11. Never overload electrical circuits or use the cord to unplug- grasp the plug at the wall.
12. Do not run cords under rugs.
13. Keep combustibles and flammables away from heat or spark sources.
14. Dispose of combustibles properly.
15. Store oxygen upright, safely away from open flames or sources of spark or heat sources and in a well ventilated area. Do not store under the bed or in the closet.
16. Do not smoke in your home if oxygen is in use.
17. Keep space heaters at least 3 feet from anything that can burn.
18. Do not use or apply any lubricant in the nose while using oxygen.

- **What to Do in the Event of Fire**

- Contact your local fire department.
- Leave the building immediately.
- Do not use elevators in multi-story buildings.
- Feel doors for warmth or look for smoke seeping under the door before opening. .
- If you see smoke or feel warmth, do not open the door and use another escape route.
- If you cannot escape, stuff cloth around doors and cover vents to keep the smoke out.
- If you must exit through smoke, CRAWL! Down toward the floor is where the air is.
- If smoke, heat, or flames block your exit routes, stay in the room with the door closed. Signal for help using a bright-colored cloth at the window. If there is a telephone in the room, call the fire department and tell them where u are.
- If your clothing catches fire, STOP, DROP, & ROLL or smother the fire with a blanket.
- Once you are out, stay out! Call the fire department from a neighbor's home.
- Select a location outside the home where everyone would meet after escaping.
- Practice your escape plan at least twice a year.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

Being **PREPARED** is Your Best Defense for Natural Disasters and Emergencies.

Emergency Preparedness Plan Includes This Information:

- How to Evacuate
- Where to Evacuate to (where to go)
- How to Help Clients During the Emergency (what items to take while remaining calm and keeping them calm)
- Who does what (will your Care Manager call the family and relieve the caregiver? Will a back-up caregiver arrive?)
- How to Know When an Emergency Plan is Being Implemented

Make sure your employer provides you with an Emergency and Disaster Plan when you are hired. Ask them to review it with you. If you work in an area which has had previous disasters such as earthquakes or hurricanes or tornadoes and has a high probability of these natural disasters happening again, ask your senior care employer to share experience stories with you on how the previous natural disaster emergencies were handled.

When preparing for a possible emergency situation, it's best to think first about the basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air, and warmth.

Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

- Water- one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation.
- Food- at least a three day supply of non-perishable food per each person.
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both.
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Dust mask- to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps

Prepare a Home Tornado Plan

- Pick a place where family members could gather if a tornado is headed your way. It could be your basement, or if there is no basement, a center hallway, bathroom, or closet on the lowest floor. Keep this place uncluttered.
- If you are in a high-rise building, you may not have enough time to go to the lowest floor. Pick a place in a hallway in the center of the building.

Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit Containing:

- First aid kit and essential medications.
- Canned food and can opener.

- At least three gallons of water per person per day.
- Protective clothing, bedding, or sleeping bags.
- Battery powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members.
- Written instructions on how to turn off electricity, gas, and water if authorities advise you to do so. (Remember, you'll need a professional to turn natural gas service back on.)

Stay Tuned for Storm Warnings:

- Listen to your local radio and TV stations for updated storm information.
- Know the difference between a tornado watch and a tornado warning (see page 1 of this section).
- Tornado watches and warnings are issued by county or parish.
- **When a Tornado WATCH is Issued:**
 - Listen to local radio and TV stations for further updates.
 - Be alert to changing weather conditions. Blowing debris or the sound of an approaching tornado may alert you. Many people say it sounds like a freight train.
- **When a Tornado WARNING is Issued:**
 - If you are inside, go to the safe place you picked to protect yourself from glass and other flying objects. The tornado may be approaching your area.
 - If you are outside, hurry to the basement of a nearby sturdy building or lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area.
 - If you are in a car or mobile home, get out immediately and head for safety (as above).
- **After the Tornado Passes:**
 - Watch out for fallen power lines and stay out of the damaged area.
 - Listen to the radio for information and instructions.
 - Use a flashlight to inspect your home for damage.
 - Do not use candles at any time.

Prepare a Winter Storm Plan

- Have extra blankets on hand.
- Ensure that each member of your household has a warm coat, gloves or mittens, hat, and water-resistant boots.

Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit Containing:

- First aid kit and essential medications.
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Canned food and can opener.
- Bottled water (at least one gallon of water per person per day to last at least 3 days).
- Extra warm clothing, including boots, mittens, and a hat.
- Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit for your car, too.
- Have your car winterized before winter storm season.

Stay Tuned for Storm Warnings:

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio and your local radio and TV stations for updated storm information.

Know What Winter Storm WATCHES and WARNINGS Mean:

- A winter storm **WATCH** means a winter storm is possible in your area.
- A winter storm **WARNING** means a winter storm is headed for your area.
- A blizzard **WARNING** means strong winds, blinding wind-driven snow, and dangerous wind chill are expected. Seek shelter immediately!

When a Winter Storm WATCH is Issued:

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, local radio, and TV stations, or cable TV such as The Weather Channel for further updates.
- Be alert to changing weather conditions.
- Avoid unnecessary travel.

When a Winter Storm WARNING is Issued:

- Stay indoors during the storm.
- If you must go outside, several layers of lightweight clothing will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Gloves (or mittens) and a hat will prevent loss of body heat. Cover your mouth to protect your lungs.
- Understand the hazards of wind chill, which combines the cooling effect of wind and cold temperatures on exposed skin.
- As the wind increases, heat is carried away from a person's body at an accelerated rate, driving down the body temperature.
- Walk carefully on snowy, icy, sidewalks.
- After the storm, if you shovel snow, be extremely careful. It is physically strenuous work, so take frequent breaks. Avoid overexertion.
- Avoid traveling by car in a storm, but if you must-
 - Carry a Disaster Supplies Kit in the trunk.
 - Keep your car's gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing.
 - Let someone know your destination, your route, and when you expect to arrive. If your car gets stuck along the way, help can be sent along your predetermined route.
- If you do get stuck:
 - Stay with your car. Do not try to walk to safety.
 - Tie a brightly-colored cloth (preferably red) to the antenna for rescuers to see.
 - Start the car and use the heater for about 10 minutes every hour. Keep the exhaust pipe clear so fumes won't back up in the car.
 - Leave the overhead light on when the engine is running so that you can be seen.
 - As you sit, keep moving your arms and legs to keep blood circulating and to stay warm.
 - Keep one window away from the blowing wind slightly open to let air in.

If a Heat Wave is Predicted or Happening:

- Slow down. Avoid strenuous activity. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4:00 am and 7:00 am.
- Stay indoors as much as possible. If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor, out of the sunshine. Try to go to a public building with air conditioning each day for several hours. Remember, electric fans do not cool the air, but they do help sweat evaporate which cools your body.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy.
- Drink plenty of water regularly and often. Your body needs water to keep cool.
- Drink plenty of fluids even if you do not feel thirsty.
- Water is the safest liquid to drink during heat emergencies. Avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine in them. They can make you feel good briefly, but make the heat's effects on your body worse. This is especially true about beer, which dehydrates the body.
- Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid foods that are high in protein, which increases metabolic heat.
- Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.

Signals of Heat Emergencies :

- Heat Exhaustion:
 - cool, moist, pale, or flushed skin
 - heavy sweating
 - headache
 - nausea or vomiting
 - dizziness
 - exhaustion
 - body temperature will be near normal
- Heat Stroke:
 - hot, red skin
 - changes in consciousness
 - rapid, weak pulse
 - rapid, shallow breathing
 - body temperature can be very high- as high as 105°F
 - If the person was sweating from very heavy work or exercise, skin may be wet. Otherwise, it will feel dry.

Treatment of Heat Emergencies:

- Heat Cramps: Get the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. Lightly stretch the affected muscle and replenish fluids. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, as they can make conditions worse.
- Heat Exhaustion: Get the person out of the heat and into a cooler place. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths, such as towels or sheets. If the person is conscious, give cool water to drink. Make sure the person drinks slowly. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not give liquids that

contain alcohol or caffeine. Let the victim rest in a comfortable position, and watch carefully for changes in his or her condition.

- Heat Stroke: Heat stroke is a life-threatening situation. Help is needed fast. Call 911 or your local emergency number. Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the body. Immerse victim in a cool bath, or wrap wet sheets around the body and fan it. Watch for signals of breathing problems. Keep the person lying down and continue to cool the body any way you can. If the victim refuses water or is vomiting or there are changes in the person's level of consciousness, do not give anything to eat or drink.

Safety Tips During Natural Disasters and Emergencies:

Know the must-have items for the senior in your care:

- Medications
- Clothing
- Medical Equipment (walker/oxygen)
- Food
- Water
- First Aid Kit

Make a list of these items so you will be prepared if an emergency occurs.

1. Know the "Emergency Plan" for your senior care company and know the steps you are to take when it is implemented.
2. Review the Emergency Plan for your company each year so you are familiar with the steps.
3. Exercise safety throughout your work day. If equipment isn't working properly, notify your manager.
4. Know your game plan for your must-have items (create a natural disaster kit).
5. Check your weather forecast each day before you go to work.

Basic First Aid: First aid means being the first to treat an emergency injury such as a cut finger or a twisted ankle which just needs some basic "aid". Thus the name, basic first aid.

Basic First Aid Procedures

- Injury Treatment:
 - Nose Bleeds- pinch nose and tilt head forward
 - Animal Bites- wash wounds, identify animal, and report the bite
 - Serious Falls- **DO NOT** move the victim, call 911
 - Severe Wounds- have the victim sit or lie down, apply direct pressure to stop the bleeding, call 911
 - Small Wounds- wash the wound
 - Bruises- apply a cold compress
- Burns:
 - A First Degree Burn is red, sore, and covers a small area.
 - A Second Degree Burn is blistered and painful.
 - A Third Degree Burn causes the skin to be white or charred and there is a loss of skin layers.

- Burn Treatment:
 - First and Second Degree Burns- put burn in cold water, pat dry. Do not break blisters.
 - Third Degree Burns- do not put water on an open wound, do not remove burned clothing. Cover the burn lightly and get medical help!

Cuts: clean with antiseptic (alcohol or antiseptic wipe) and apply bandage. Deep cuts should have a butterfly wound closure applied (tape together) to link the torn skin.

Sprains: apply ice and elevate, then apply elastic brace.

CPR First Aid:

CPR stands for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation which is performed on people in cardiac arrest and involves chest compressions and exhalations into the person's mouth. Training in CPR should be taken if you are caring for someone with heart disease. Sometimes additional heart defibrillator life vests or machines are maintained in the home of seniors with heart disease. Proper training should be provided for use of these devices.

FOR ALL SEVERE INJURIES, WOUNDS, AND BURNS, CALL 911!