

TAKE CONTROL IN

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Disaster Preparedness Guide for Older Adults

FEMA | Ready®

AUTHENTICATED U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION GPO

STEP 1 | ASSESS YOUR NEEDS

First, know your risk. Then, understand your needs during emergencies. This section guides you through a self-assessment process to identify your specific needs so that you can create a personalized emergency plan.

STEP 2 | MAKE A PLAN

Develop a comprehensive emergency plan and emergency preparedness kit tailored to your unique needs. This section ensures you are well prepared to respond to various emergency scenarios.

STEP 3 | ENGAGE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Build a strong support network and include them in your emergency planning. This section provides recommendations for how you can engage your family, friends, caregivers, neighbors, fellow congregants from your place of worship, and others who can assist you during an emergency.

GET PREPARED TODAY *in three* SIMPLE and straightforward STEPS!



STEP 1
ASSESS YOUR NEEDS

An important first step in preparedness is understanding the risks you may encounter—big and small. While it may seem daunting, there are many ways to learn about common disasters in your community. Knowing what you may face will help you assess your needs and get you started on your preparedness journey.

KNOW YOUR RISKS AND GET INFORMED

- ☐ Learn about the types of disasters that could happen in your community.
  - Ask friends and family who have lived in the area about past disasters and their impact.
  - Read local newspapers or community message boards to learn more about your area.
  - Once you understand the types of disasters you may face in your community, learn more about how to prepare through FEMA's Ready.gov Hazard Information Sheets.
- ☐ Sign up for alerts and warnings to receive information during an emergency.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN ASSESSING YOUR NEEDS

General Considerations

- Do I have any medical conditions or dietary requirements that require specific care or medication?
- What mobility challenges or disabilities do I need to plan for?
- How will I ensure the safety and well-being of my pet or service animal?
- Have I established communication strategies with neighbors and local emergency services?
- Will I need help to transport my emergency supplies?
- Will I need help to put together my emergency plan and preparedness kit?
- Will I require translation services?
- Do I have a completed will?
- How could my day-to-day routine be disrupted during an emergency —what is the worst that could happen and do I have a plan to cope or adjust?

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Older Adults with Disabilities

- What specific accommodations or assistive devices do I need during an emergency?
- Have I identified an accessible evacuation route and shelter?
- Are my caregivers aware of my emergency plans and needs?
- What assistive aids for routine or daily living will I need if I am displaced longer than expected?

Older Adults with Limited Resources

- What resources do I already have access to that I could use in an emergency or if I need to evacuate?
- Have I explored community resources that can assist me during emergencies?
- Do I know what affordable transportation options exist if needed?
- How do I currently address my basic needs (food, water, shelter, etc.) and how will this change during an emergency?

Older Adults Living in Rural Areas

- What community resources are available to me that I can leverage before an emergency?
- What is my communications plan if I lose access to cell phone or internet reception?
- Do I have a reliable means of transportation if evacuation becomes necessary?
- Do I have enough supplies at home in case I cannot access services for a while?
- Where do I go now for support or assistance and are they able to support me during an emergency?



STEP 2
MAKE A PLAN

Now that you have assessed your needs, it is time to make a plan and build a kit. Sometimes disasters strike with little to no warning, so it is important to have a plan and be prepared for a sudden emergency. Be sure to review your plan regularly and share it with neighbors, friends, family, and caregivers. Follow the steps below to create your plan and build your emergency preparedness kit:

STEPS FOR CREATING YOUR PLAN

1. Create a support network of family, friends, caregivers, and others who can assist you during an emergency. Make an emergency plan and practice it with them.
2. Make sure at least one person in your support network has an extra key to your home, knows where you keep your emergency supplies, and knows how to use lifesaving equipment or administer medicine.
3. If you undergo routine treatments administered by a clinic or hospital, find out their emergency plans and work with them to identify backup service providers.
4. Don’t forget your pets or service animals. Not all shelters accept pets, so plan for alternatives. Consider asking loved ones or friends outside of your immediate area if they can help with your animals.

STOCK YOUR EMERGENCY KIT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- ☐ Water (one gallon per person per day for several days, for drinking and sanitation)
- ☐ Food (at least a several-day supply of non-perishable food)
- ☐ Family photos, family mementos, and other keepsakes to take with you if you need to evacuate
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Extra batteries
- ☐ Whistle (to signal for help)
- ☐ Copies of Medicare, Medicaid, and insurance policies
- ☐ Copies of trust or will
- ☐ Copies of homeowner's or rental insurance and car insurance
- ☐ Personal documents such as ID (make sure they are up to date)
- ☐ Dust mask (to help filter contaminated air)
- ☐ Plastic sheeting and duct tape (to shelter in place)
- ☐ Wrench or pliers (to turn off utilities)
- ☐ Manual can opener (for food)
- ☐ Local maps
- ☐ Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery
- ☐ Pet food and supplies
- ☐ Medicine and medical supplies (a few days worth if possible)
- ☐ A complete list of medications and your doctors' phone numbers



ADDITIONAL PREPAREDNESS KIT CHECKLIST FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS:

Older Adults with Disabilities

- ☐ Include assistive devices (hearing aids, mobility aids) and spare batteries.
- ☐ Keep a list of your support network and their contact information.
- ☐ Include food and supplies for service animals.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Older Adults with Limited Resources

- ☐ Look for discounted or free resources for building your emergency kit.
- ☐ Explore community resources that offer assistance during emergencies.
- ☐ Organize key financial and insurance documents in a water proof container that is easily accessible and portable.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Older Adults in Rural Areas:

- ☐ Stock up on essential supplies that might be difficult to obtain during emergencies.
- ☐ Create a network of neighbors who can help during crises.
- ☐ Have a backup power source and reliable means of communication.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

“FACE DISASTERS ***armed*** WITH A PLAN”

STEP 3
ENGAGE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Now that you have assessed your needs, made your plan, and built your preparedness kit, it is time to engage your support network. It is crucial that you create a support network of family, friends, caregivers, neighbors, and others who can assist you during an emergency and engage them in your preparedness planning.

USE THIS CHECKLIST TO ENGAGE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

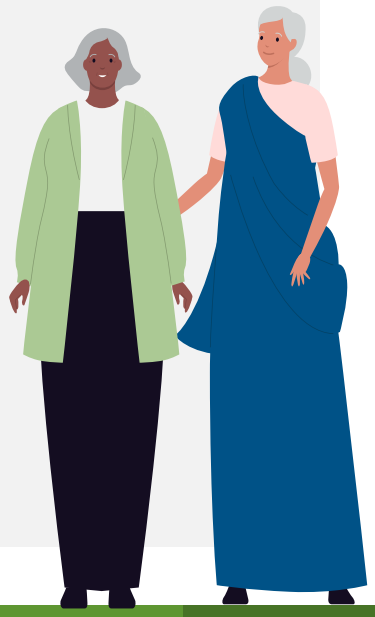
- ☐ I have created a support network of family, friends, caregivers, fellow congregants at my place of worship, and others who can assist me during an emergency.
- ☐ I have shared and practiced my emergency plan with my support network.
- ☐ My support network is aware of any specific needs I have.
- ☐ Someone in my support network has an extra key to my home, knows where I keep my emergency supplies, and knows how to use lifesaving equipment and administer medicine.

Continued on next page

- [ ] I know my clinic/hospital's emergency plans and have identified backup service providers.
- [ ] My support network and I are informed about local emergency alerts and updates.
- [ ] I have or will try to participate in a community preparedness event or initiative.

WEATHERING THE STORM TOGETHER:
The Profound Impact of a Strong Support Network

During the severe tornado outbreak that swept through the lower Mississippi Valley between March 24–27, 2023, three remarkable older women living alone in a rural community demonstrated the power of a strong support network. Seeking safety, each of the three women moved to their closets, maintaining their connection through a three-way phone call. When the tornado had passed, two of the three women found their homes severely damaged and uninhabitable. However, the strength of their bond shone brightly in their time of need. The third friend, fortunate to have a structurally sound home, offered immediate shelter to her companions. This heartwarming story exemplifies the profound impact of knowing and engaging with neighbors and cultivating a robust support network. As we build our own emergency preparedness plans, their experience serves as a poignant reminder that fostering connection can make all the difference in navigating life's unexpected challenges.



Frequently Asked Questions

The following is a list of frequently asked questions about older adult preparedness. Please reference the responses provided here or access the links provided for additional information.



1. How do I create a communication plan?

- Before disaster strikes, have a conversation with your family and others in your support network so they know you are thinking about preparedness.
- Arrange for a family member, caregiver, or neighbor to check on you by phone or in person at the time of a disaster.
- Carry important information, such as family contacts, medical insurance, or veterinary information, in your wallet. Alternatively, fill out Ready.gov's Make a Plan Form and print it out.
- Post important emergency contact numbers near the phones in your home.
- If you are able to travel or evacuate, identify a meeting place with your support network in case you become separated.



2. What should I do if I am unable to evacuate?

In general, you should plan to get inside, find a safe spot, and stay put until local officials say the threat has passed.

- Identify a safe spot in your home to shelter in place with members of your household and your pets. The safest spot will depend on the type of disaster.
- If you are able, let your support network outside of your household know what is happening.
- Make sure you have a radio, television, or phone to receive updates from local officials and emergency contacts.



3. How can I stay informed without a smartphone?

- Certain radio and television stations will broadcast emergency messages from local authorities during disasters through the Emergency Alert System.
- If you are able, connect with local community groups, such as Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTS), neighborhood watches, or houses of worship.
- The National Weather Service broadcasts weather and emergency warnings specific to your community. You can purchase a special receiver to access these alerts.
- If you live in an assisted living community, talk with your community management or resident council about how you can prepare and stay informed during a disaster.



4. After I have taken control with steps 1, 2, and 3, how else can I get prepared or engaged?

- Attend preparedness events at community centers, local government meetings, social clubs, or senior centers.
- Join or contact your local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) to gain community-specific insights and valuable skills to help you and your community prepare. Visit FEMA's CERT Homepage to learn more and find your local program.

This year's Ready Campaign theme, ***Take Control in 1, 2, 3,*** is based on extensive market and focus group research on engaging older adults. The information and resources in this guide were informed by FEMA's Disaster Preparedness and Older Adults National Summit, held in Philadelphia, PA, in July 2023, with leaders who support older adults. FEMA learned from experts what preparedness information and resources older adults need and how to deliver these messages effectively.

Resources

Useful Websites

- AARP: www.aarp.org
- All Healer's Mental Health Alliance: www.allhealersmha.com
- Alzheimer's Association: www.alz.org
- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org
- FEMA Ready Campaign: www.ready.gov
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): www.fema.gov
- Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers: www.rosalynncarter.org

Other Information Sources

- Contact your local emergency management office for additional information.
- Local community centers, senior centers, or assisted living facilities may be able to provide you with support and information.
- Local television and radio stations broadcast information before, during, and after disasters.

Blank Worksheets

Other Emergency Kit Items and Preparedness Actions

Blank Worksheets

Important Numbers

Record important phone numbers here or in your phone contact list. If you don't have these numbers already, look on your city or town's website, in a local phone book, search the internet, or ask a neighbor. Remember, if you are facing a life-threatening emergency, dial 911.

Police: _____

Fire: _____

Ambulance Agency: _____

Family Doctor: _____

Specialists: _____

Pharmacy: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

Emergency Contact Information

Emergency contacts are people you want or need to be connected to during an emergency. It's important to let your emergency contacts know that you have them listed before an emergency happens. Doing this can help you start a tangible and actionable conversation about preparedness.

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Family Members' Contact Info: _____

Out-of-Town Contact Info: _____

Family Meeting Place: _____

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Family Members' Contact Info: _____

Out-of-Town Contact Info: _____

Family Meeting Place: _____

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Family Members' Contact Info: _____

Out-of-Town Contact Info: _____

Family Meeting Place: _____

Medications

Medication Name: _____

Dose:_____

Medication Name: _____

Dose:_____

Medication Name: _____

Dose:_____

Medication Name: _____

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Medication Name: _____

Dose:_____

Other Local Information, Websites, and Addresses

_____

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_____

_____

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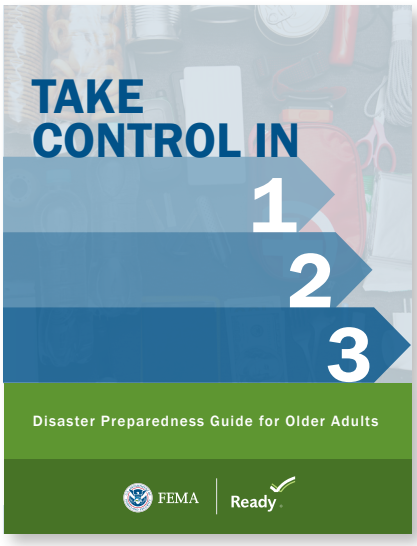

Use the worksheets and checklists in this guide to create your plan, then add it to your emergency kit or put it on your refrigerator as a visible reminder that you are prepared.

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www.ready.gov

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