



Preparing Emotionally for Disasters and Emergencies Information for Older Adults



Why is it important to be prepared emotionally for disasters or emergencies?

Experiencing a natural disaster (e.g., flood, fire, tornado) or an emergency (e.g., health epidemic or man-made disaster) can be stressful. It can also affect how you feel, think, and act because these events often occur with little or no warning and can have a huge impact on your personal safety and well-being. These types of events can bring about a lot of change in your life and it can be hard to adjust to new places, routines, or situations.

Connecting with others, taking care of yourself, and preparing early are just three ways to build emotional wellness. Your ability to cope with, respond to, and recover from a disaster or emergency will depend upon the planning and preparation you do today.

It's important you have a **P.L.A.N.**

Prepare

Be prepared for emergencies. Having emergency supplies ready can help decrease some of your fears and stress. This will help you to better cope during and after a disaster or emergency.

During a disaster or emergency, you may not have access to your home, family, friends, community, medical facilities, pharmacy, and grocery stores. Your electricity, water, and gas may be turned off or you may be asked to leave your home and go to a shelter. If this should happen, it's important to be ready. Have enough food and water on



hand to last for 3 days, plus other basic supplies like a flashlight. To find out what emergency supplies you should have on hand go to: [getprepared.gc.ca](https://www.getprepared.gc.ca)

Have emergency supplies on hand and have a 'go-bag' ready.

To be prepared have a small '**go-bag**' that you can easily carry if you're asked to leave your home or community in a disaster or emergency. Pack important items you would need to take with you to protect your health and safety.



Your 'go-bag' should have:

- at least a 3 day supply of all the medicine you take
- your personal aides (e.g., glasses, cane, dentures, hearing aids, extra hearing aid batteries)
- a list of important contacts(e.g., your family members, friends, and doctors)
- a waterproof bag that seals to hold important documents (e.g., healthcare card, insurance, financial documents, passport)
- your wallet, identification, and enough money to buy items you may need
- extra clothing—make sure it's comfortable
- personal hygiene aids (e.g., toothbrush, comb)



Learn

Learn about what you should do when an event happens. Knowing what steps or skills you can use during an emergency to protect your safety can help you feel more confident and in control.

If you live in supportive housing, ask your building's staff to explain the emergency procedures and plans that are in place for residents during an event. Request presentations and opportunities to practice your building's emergency procedures to help you become familiar with the plan. Practicing these plans can also help you to identify what you need to do or practice to be personally prepared for disasters or emergencies.

If you're living independently, contact your community association or your local municipal government to find out what emergency plans and procedures are in place for your community. You'll also need to develop your own personal emergency plan and make an effort to practice this plan regularly.

Be aware of your own reactions to stressful situations. To help you cope better, learn about and use healthy coping skills. Practicing these skills can help you overcome daily challenges in your life and is a good way to maintain your mental health.

Although you can draw on your past life experiences to help you cope, it's never too late to take steps to maintain and improve your emotional wellness. Learning to be emotionally prepared for disasters and emergencies can help you recover from trauma faster and reduce the harmful impacts of stress on your health and well-being.



Access

There are a lot of programs and sources of information available. It's important to actively look for and use these resources in your community—especially when you have questions or need assistance. Learn to recognize and understand community warning systems. Know how local authorities will warn you about a pending or current disaster or emergency.



Connect with local emergency support groups in your community. Introduce yourself, let them know your needs and ask them how they can assist you during a disaster or emergency. If available, place your name on advance emergency registration systems in your community.

Network

When a disaster or emergency occurs, your neighbours will most likely be the first people to come to your aid. It's important to know your neighbours and be familiar with supports in your building and neighbourhood. Develop connections with people around you and make time to chat with people in the hall or your neighbours on the street. Form a 'buddy system' where you exchange phone numbers with someone who lives close to you. Let your neighbours know if you have any special needs or considerations and get to know theirs. Call or stop-by to check-in on each other regularly to see that everything is okay. This way you can watch out for each other.



Additionally, you may want to give someone you trust a key to your home to be used only in the case of emergencies. However, do this only if you feel comfortable with this idea.

Being actively involved with the people in your community is good for your emotional well-being and health—whether it's your neighbourhood or the building you live in. Having regular contact with people in your community is also a good way to build a healthy support network.

Communication is important during a disaster or emergency. Create an emergency communication plan with the people in your support network.

1. Identify the first person you'll call to let your family and friends know where you're.
2. Identify a backup person if the first person is not available.
3. Inform these people about your communication plan:
 - Let these people know that during an emergency you'll call one of them first and that they're your prime contacts. These people will let others know how you're doing and where you're staying.
 - If you're not able to call your prime contacts yourself during an emergency, ask someone to make this call for you.
 - Share your communication plan with your family and close friends.

If you own a cell phone, know how to make, and receive a call on it. It's also a good idea to know how to text on it.



Having a disaster or emergency communication plan in place before an event occurs is very important and even more important if you have special needs, take medicine, or have challenges communicating.

During an emergency you might not be able to make a call; but you may be able to text other people who have cellphones. This is a very simple and easy way to stay in contact with family and friends. If you do not own a cell phone, find out which of your neighbours has one. Talk to this person about your emergency communication plan. Ask this person if he or she would be comfortable if you were to give his or her cell phone number to two people (let this person know who) in your support network to use only in case of emergencies. Let your family and friends know that your neighbour or friend's cell phone number is for emergency situations only.

Join your local community association or committees in your building or complex. Current disaster literature indicates that positive social supports are important to recovery after a disaster or emergency. People who have a strong social support network in their lives will recover more easily from these experiences and are better prepared to face future challenges as they're recovering from a disaster or emergency.



Emergency Contacts

Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Out-of-Town

Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Neighbour(s)

Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Personal Information

Doctor(s): _____

Pharmacy: _____

Medication and Medical Equipment: _____



Insurance

Home Insurance:

Policy Number:

Vehicle Insurance:

Policy Number:

Pets

Veterinarian:

Kennel:

Animal Shelter:

Local/ Community Emergency Information

Community Meeting Place:

Fire, police, ambulance:
(where available)

9-1-1

Other Information:

Websites

Alberta Emergency Management Agency
www.aema.alberta.ca

Government of Canada www.GetPrepared.ca



Health Link

811

Mental Health Help Line

1-877-303-2642

Open 24 hours a day,
7 days a week

To order free copies of this resource visit

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