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Health, Safety, and Emergency Preparedness Information

1. Importance of TAKING YOUR MEDICATIONS properly - 2
2. Preventing illness with PROPER HANDWASHING - 5
3. PREVENTING FALLS among seniors -7
4. DISASTER PREPAREDNESS for seniors - 9
5. EARTHQUAKE safety tips for seniors - 14
6. Tips for people with MOBILITY CONCERNS - 15
7. Tips for people with LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEMS - 17
8. Tips for people with HEARING IMPAIRMENTS - 19
9. Tips for people with COGNITIVE DISABILITIES - 21
10. Using a FIRE EXTINGUISHER - 22
11. Turning off the electricity and gas - 23
12. CARBON MONOXIDE poisoning prevention - 25
13. Tips for people with DISABILITIES AND MEDICAL CONCERNS - 28

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING YOUR MEDICATION CORRECTLY

Today, many cancer drugs are available in pill form, which means patients can often take some of their treatment at home, rather than in a doctor's office or cancer center. This can provide such time-saving benefits as reduced travel and fewer doctor appointments. However, it also can be challenging for these patients to stay on the prescribed medication schedule for their at-home treatment plan.

Common medication mistakes

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 50% of prescriptions are taken incorrectly. Common reasons why people may not take medication as directed include:

1. A person may feel better and therefore stops taking medication.
2. It may be difficult to remember the prescribed schedule, particularly when a medication needs to be taken more than once a day or has an intermittent schedule, such as once a week.
3. Some medications may not provide an obvious benefit right away, such as improvement in symptoms, and a person may stop taking the medication because they think it is not working. Many people are not sure what to do if they miss or skip a dose of medication.
4. Some medications are expensive, and to avoid the full cost of the treatment, people may skip doses or take reduced doses of their medications.

Talking with your doctor about your medications

Communicating with your doctor is the first step in avoiding these common mistakes. Before treatment begins, create a complete list of all the medications you are taking. Include all prescribed medications, over-the-counter remedies, and dietary supplements, such as vitamin or herbal supplements. On this same list, be sure to note any allergies you may have to medication. The next step is to share and discuss the list with your doctor before starting treatment. Keeping your doctor informed about all medications you are taking is crucial, so you can be sure nothing is interfering with the effectiveness of your cancer medicine. Also, keep a copy of that list with you, such as in a wallet, for easy reference during your treatment period. Once you and your doctor have decided on your treatment plan, be sure to review the following questions with your doctor about each cancer medication you've been prescribed:

- What is the goal of this medication?
- What amounts of medication will I need to take? In what dosage?
- How often will I need to take the medication?

- What length of time will I be on this medication?
- Why is it important for me to stay on schedule with taking my medication?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- What are the common side effects of this medication?
- What follow-up testing will I have to monitor the medication's effectiveness?
- Are there any foods, beverages, or other drugs that can affect the strength of this medication?
- What should I do if I experience an unexpected side effect to the medication?
- Ask the doctor to write down the instructions so you can review them later if necessary. Also, keep the phone number of your doctor in a handy place for other questions, and always talk with your doctor before changing your medication schedule.

Avoiding potential drug interactions

All medication comes with a written insert, called a medication profile, which describes the drug, its side effects, and potential drug interactions. Drug interactions can cause unexpected side effects, or reduce or increase the strength of the medication that you are taking. They can not only be caused by other medications, but can also be caused by eating certain foods or beverages. Review this information with your doctor before you start any new medication to avoid unintended effects. And, keep the medication profile that you receive when you fill your prescription in a safe place, so you can refer to it in the future.

Filling your prescription at the pharmacy

It can be helpful to fill all of your prescriptions at the same pharmacy, since your pharmacist will then be able to maintain an accurate record of all the medications you are taking and can alert you to any possible drug interactions. If you have to fill your prescription in another pharmacy or if you use a mail-order prescription service, notify your usual pharmacist so it can be added to your medication record. Also, be sure to tell your pharmacist if you are allergic to any medications. Your pharmacist may also be able to assist by providing easy-to-read color-coded labels that simplify taking your medications. And, ask if the pharmacy can help remind you to refill medications, such as by sending email reminders. Patients can avoid anxiety and possibly missing a dose by refilling medication before running out of it.

Staying on your medication schedule

Your doctor has prescribed a particular medicine because he or she feels that it will treat your cancer in a very specific way, and it is important that you follow your medication course as prescribed. To help you stay on track with taking medications on a regular basis, here are some tips:

1. Read the entire label of the medication container to make sure you are taking the correct dose. And, take your pills the same time every day, such as first thing in the morning or with lunch.
2. Use a weekly pill organizer case, so you can know whether you've taken each day's medication. However, always keep the original medication container for reference.
3. Develop a chart or pill calendar to keep track of when you take your medication. Keep at least one daily reminder somewhere in your house to help you remember to take your medicine, such as on a bulletin board or in a day-planner. Seek the help of family members or friends to help remind you.

2. HANDWASHING

How well do you wash your hands?

Hand washing is one of the best things you can do to prevent illness-but did you know there is actually a proper way to wash?



The most important thing that you can do to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands. By frequently washing your hands you wash away germs that you have picked up from other people, or from contaminated surfaces, or from animals and animal waste.

What happens if you do not wash your hands frequently?

You pick up germs from other sources and then you infect yourself' when you

- Touch your eyes
- Or your nose
- Or your mouth.

One of the most common ways people catch colds is by rubbing their nose or their eyes after their hands have been contaminated with the cold virus. You can also spread germs directly to others or onto surfaces that other people touch. And before you know it, everybody around you is getting sick. The important thing to remember is that, in addition to colds, some pretty serious diseases -- like hepatitis A, meningitis, and infectious diarrhea— can easily be prevented if people make a habit of washing their hands.

When should you wash your hands?

You should wash your hands often. Probably more often than you do now because you can't see germs with the naked eye or smell them, so you do not really know where they are hiding.

It is especially important to wash your hands:

- Before, during, and after you prepare food
- Before you eat, and after you use the bathroom
- After handling animals or animal waste
- When your hands are dirty, and
- More frequently when someone in your home is sick.

What is the correct way to wash your hands?

- First wet your hands and apply liquid or clean bar soap. Place the bar soap on a rack and allow it to drain.
- Next rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces.
- Continue for 10 - 15 seconds or about the length of a little tune. It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.
- Rinse well and dry your hands.

It is estimated that one out of three people do not wash their hands after using the restroom. So these tips are also important when you are out in public. Washing your hands regularly can certainly save a lot on medical bills. Because it costs less than a penny, you could say that this penny's worth of prevention can save you a \$50 visit to the doctor.

3. PREVENTING FALLS

Tips

Falls are not just the result of getting older. Many falls can be prevented. Falls are usually caused by a number of things. By changing some of these things, you can lower your chances of falling. You can reduce your chances of falling by doing these things:

Begin a regular exercise program

Exercise is one of the most important ways to reduce your chances of falling. It makes you stronger and helps you feel better. Exercises that improve balance and coordination (like Tai Chi) are the most helpful. Lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chances of falling. Ask your doctor or health care worker about the best type of exercise program for you.

Make your home safer

About half of all falls happen at home. To make your home safer:

- Remove things you can trip over (such as papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Have grab bars put in next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. Lamp shades or frosted bulbs can reduce glare.
- Have handrails and lights put in on all staircases.
- Wear shoes that give good support and have thin non-slip soles. Avoid wearing slippers and athletic shoes with deep treads.

Have your health care provider review your medicines

Have your doctor or pharmacists look at all the medicines you take (including ones that don't need prescriptions such as cold medicines). As you get older, the way some medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you drowsy or light-headed which can lead to a fall.



Have your vision checked

Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor. You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition such as glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling.

4. DISASTER PREPAREDNESS FOR SENIORS

Preparedness information for seniors, written by seniors

Take responsibility

Prepare NOW; disasters can strike quickly and without warning. Even if you have physical limitations, you can still protect yourself. Local officials and relief workers will not be able to reach everyone right away, so take responsibility. Keep in touch with your neighbors; look out for each other and be aware of anyone who may need special help. Knowing what to do is your best protection.

How you may be notified of a possible emergency

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio—these special radios provide the earliest warning with an alarm that will alert you in case of anticipated bad weather. To learn more, call your local National Weather Service office.
- Commercial radio and television stations—know your designated Emergency Alert System stations (EAS). My EAS Radio Station is: _____ My EAS Television Station: _____
- Door-to-door warning from local emergency officials—strictly follow their instructions.

Family Disaster Plan

By planning ahead, you can avoid waiting in long lines for critical supplies, such as food, water and medicine. Remember to review your plan regularly. Use the following checklist to get started:

- Assemble a disaster supplies kit
- Arrange for someone to check on you
- Plan and practice the best escape routes from your home
- Plan for transportation if you need to evacuate to a Red Cross shelter
- Find the safe places in your home for each type of emergency
- Have a plan to signal the need for help
- Post emergency phone numbers near the phone
- If you have home health care service, plan ahead with your agency for emergency procedures
- Teach those who may need to assist you in an emergency how to operate necessary equipment; be sure they will be able to reach you

Medical Emergency Supplies

For your safety and comfort, have at least three days' worth of emergency supplies (both medical and general) packed and ready in an easy-to-carry container, such as a backpack or duffel bag. Make sure your bag has an ID tag and label any equipment, such as wheelchairs, canes or walkers that you need. Use the following checklist to get your emergency supplies started:

- First-aid kit
- Prescription medicines, list of medications and dosages, list of allergies
- Extra eyeglasses and hearing-aid batteries
- Extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen
- List of the style and serial numbers of medical devices, such as pacemakers
- Medical insurance and Medicare cards
- List of doctors, relatives or friends to notify if you are injured
- Battery-powered radio and flashlight with extra batteries for each
- Change of clothing, rain gear, and sturdy shoes
- Blanket or sleeping bag
- Extra set of keys
- Cash, credit cards, change for the pay phone
- Personal hygiene supplies
- Phone numbers of local and non-local relatives or friends
- Insurance agent's name and phone number

It may not be necessary to evacuate, or you may be ordered to stay in your home. If this happens, you will need in addition to the above items:

- One gallon of water **per person per day**. Remember, plan for at least 3 days. Store water in sealed, unbreakable containers that you are able to handle. Identify the storage date and replace every six months.
- Non-perishable food supply (including any special foods you require). Choose foods that are easy to store and carry, nutritious and ready-to-eat. Rotate them regularly.
- Manual can opener you are able to use
- Non-perishable food for any pets

Shelter

In a chemical emergency, you may be told to "shelter in place." This means staying where you are and making yourself as safe as possible until the emergency passes or you are told to

evacuate. In this situation, it is better to remain indoors than to go outside where the air may be contaminated. If you are told to shelter in place:

- Close all windows in your home
- Turn off all fans, heating, and air conditioning systems
- Close the fireplace damper
- Go to an above-ground room (not the basement) with the fewest windows and doors
- Take your disaster supplies kit with you
- Wet some towels and jam them in the crack under the doors
- Tape around doors, windows, exhaust fans and vents, preferably with duct tape
- Use plastic garbage bags to cover windows, outlets and heat registers
- If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds or curtains. To avoid injury, stay away from the windows
- Stay in the room and listen to your radio until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate

Red Cross shelters may be opened if a disaster affects a large number of people, or if the emergency is expected to last several days. All American Red Cross emergency services are provided free of charge, including food, temporary shelter and basic first aid. To learn about Red Cross shelters serving your area, listen to your battery-powered radio or check with your local Red Cross chapter.

Be prepared to go to a shelter if:

- Your area is without electrical power
- There is a chemical emergency affecting your area
- Flood water is rising
- Your home has been severely damaged
- Police or other local officials tell you to evacuate

If you need to evacuate:

- Coordinate with your home care provider for evacuation procedures
- Try to car pool if possible
- If you must have assistance for special transportation call the American Red Cross or your local officials
- Wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes
- Take your disaster supplies kit
- Lock your home

- Use the travel routes specified or special assistance provided by local officials. Don't take any short cuts, they may be unsafe
- Notify shelter authorities of any needs you may have. They will do their best to accommodate you and make you comfortable. In some communities, people who need help or transportation during an evacuation are asked to register that need with their local government. Call your local emergency management office for information and suggestions about what to do during an evacuation.

If you are sure you have enough time

- Shut off water, gas, and electricity if instructed to do so and if you know how. Gas must be turned back on by a professional
- Let others know when you left and where you are going
- Make arrangements for pets. Animals other than working animals may not be allowed in public shelters

Residential Fires

One emergency we could all face at any time is a home fire. Despite any physical limitations we may have, there are some things we can do to improve our safety. Plan two escape routes out of each room. If you cannot use stairways, make special arrangements for help in advance. Never use elevators. Sleep with the bedroom door closed, as this gives you extra minutes of protection from toxic fumes and fire. Vacuum your smoke detector occasionally to remove dust, and test the battery regularly. As a reminder, change batteries on the same day each year.

In case of fire

- Remain calm.
- Drop to the floor and crawl. Most fire fatalities are due to breathing toxic fumes and smoke; the cleanest air is near the floor.
- Feel any door before you open it. If it is hot, find another way out.
- If your smoke detector goes off, do not waste time getting dressed or collecting valuables or pets. Get out of the house immediately.
- Do not try to fight the fire. Call for help from a neighbor's phone.
- Never go back into a burning building for any reason.
- If your clothes catch on fire, drop to the floor and roll to suffocate the fire. Do not run; this fans the flames and makes them worse.
- If you are in a wheelchair or cannot get out of your house, stay by the window near the floor. If you are able, signal the need for help.

Grandchildren's Safety

It is estimated that 3.4 million children live in a household headed by grandparents. Many children visit their grandparents often. To prepare a safe environment at home for children:

- Store matches and lighters up high, away from children.
- Move cleaning chemicals like cleansers, soap, drain cleaner, and other poisons to high cupboards OR install a child-proof lock if you must keep these items in low cabinets.
- Store prescription medicines and over-the-counter drugs like aspirin, cough medicines, and stomachache remedies in a cabinet out of reach of children.
- If children are playing outside or in a pool when skies grow dark or you hear thunder, ask them to come indoors right away.
- Install plastic covers over all exposed electrical outlets.

Children can help grandparents, too

Have children test each smoke detector in your home to make sure it is working by using a broom handle to push the test button. See that the battery is changed in each detector that doesn't work. Ask children to draw a floor plan of your home and show two ways out of every room in case of fire.

Emergency Phone Numbers

Local emergency services number: _____

Ambulance: _____

Nearest relative: _____

Local contact: _____

Out of state contact: _____

Doctors: _____

Local Red Cross Chapter: _____

Insurance Agent: _____

5. EARTHQUAKE SAFETY TIPS FOR SENIORS

Before an Earthquake:

- Eliminate hazards. Make it as easy as possible to quickly get under a sturdy table or desk for protection.
- Special equipment such as a telephone and life support systems should be anchored. Tanks of gas (such as oxygen) should be fastened to wall studs.
- Keep a list of medications, allergies, special equipment, names and numbers of doctors, pharmacists and family members. Make sure you have this list with you at all times.
- Keep an extra pair of eyeglasses and medication with your emergency supplies.
- Walking aids should be kept near you at all times. Store extra walking aids in different rooms of the house.
- Put a security light in each room. These plug into any outlet and light up automatically if there is a loss of electricity. They continue operating for four to six hours and can be turned off by hand in an emergency.
- Make sure you have a whistle to signal for help.
- Keep extra batteries for hearing aids with your emergency supplies. Remember to replace them annually.
- Keep extra emergency supplies at your bedside.
- Find two people who will check on you after an earthquake. Tell them your special needs. Show them how to operate any equipment you use. Show them where your emergency supplies are kept. Give them a spare key.

During and After an Earthquake:

- If you are in bed or sitting down, stay there. Use a pillow or blanket to protect your head. Hold on until the shaking stops.
- If you are standing, drop, cover, and hold on, or sit down. You could get thrown to the floor if you are standing.
- Prepare to be self-sufficient for at least three days.
- Turn on your portable radio for instructions and news reports. For your own safety, cooperate fully with public safety officials and instructions.
- Be prepared for aftershocks.
- If you evacuate, call your family contact to let them know where you are going and when you expect to arrive.

6. TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY CONCERNS

Storage

- Store emergency supplies in a pack or backpack attached to your walker, wheelchair or scooter.
- Store needed mobility aids (canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs) close to you in a consistent, convenient and secured location. Keep extra aids in several locations, if available.

Emergency Kit

- Keep a pair of heavy gloves in your supply kit to use while wheeling or making your way over glass and debris.
- If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter, consider having an extra battery available. A car battery can be substituted; however, it will not last as long as a wheelchair's deep-cycle battery. Ask your vendor if you can recharge your batteries (in the event of a power outage) by connecting jumper cables to a vehicle battery or using a special converter that plugs into your vehicle's cigarette lighter.
- If you do not have puncture-proof tires, keep a patch kit or can of "seal-in-air" to repair flat tires and/or keep an extra supply of inner tubes.
- Store a lightweight, manual wheelchair if available.

Evacuation Plan

- Arrange and secure furniture and other items to create barrier-free passages in your home and office.
- If you spend time above the first floor of an elevator building, plan and practice using alternate methods of evacuation. If needed, enlist the help of your personal support network.
- There will be instances where wheelchair users will have to leave their chairs behind in order to evacuate safely. If you cannot use stairs, familiarize yourself with lifting and carrying techniques that will work for you. Alert rescue personnel to any areas of vulnerability. For example, the traditional "fire fighter's carry" may be hazardous for people with respiratory weakness. You need to be able to give brief instructions regarding how to move you.

Checklist

_____ Store needed aids in a consistent, convenient and secured location.

_____ Compile emergency kit extras.

_____ Arrange and secure furniture and other items to create barrier-free passages.

_____ Practice using alternate methods of evacuation.

7. TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Secure Equipment

Secure your life-support equipment to prevent damage from falling. If you use a chain, make sure it is welded (not bent).

Alternate Providers

Determine which facilities/providers can serve you if your home system becomes inoperable or your current provider is unable to assist you.

Alternate Power

- Ask your vendor about alternative power sources that will sustain you for up to seven days.
- Could you use manually-operated equipment?
- Can your equipment be powered from a vehicle battery? If yes, obtain any hardware necessary for the hook-up.

Generators

- For all-day use over several days, a gasoline-powered generator is the preferred alternative power source. Test it periodically and operate it only in an open area to ensure good ventilation. If you store an adequate gasoline supply, make sure you do so safely. Keep a siphon kit on hand in case you need to obtain gasoline directly from your vehicle.
- Some generators can be plugged into house wiring systems. Consult your utility company before you do this.

Oxygen Users

- Ask your provider if a reduced-flow rate may be used during a disaster to prolong the life of the system. Record on your equipment the reduced flow numbers so you can refer to them.
- Be aware of oxygen safety; avoid areas where gas leaks or open flames may be present.
- Post "Oxygen in Use" signs.
- Keep the shut-off switch for oxygen equipment near you so you can get to it quickly in an emergency.

Utility Company Registry

Many utility companies keep a list of names of people dependent on life-support systems and tag their meters. Registering for this service may qualify you for a discount rate; contact the customer service department for more information. Never count on your power being quickly restored. Utility personnel may not be able to reach you right away after a major disaster.

Test Backups Regularly

- If your backup power system relies on batteries, be aware that stored batteries require periodic charging, even if they are unused. A charging routine must be strictly followed.
- Test your alternative power equipment regularly to ensure it will function in an emergency.
- Know the working duration of any batteries that support your system.
- Ask your power company about the type of backup power you plan to use and get their advice.

Personal Support Network

- Show your personal support network how to operate and safely move your equipment if necessary.
- Label equipment and attach instruction cards (laminated for added durability).

Checklist

- _____ Secure all vital equipment.
- _____ Maintain a current list of alternate providers.
- _____ Obtain an alternate power source, such as a generator.
- _____ Know how to use your oxygen safely in an emergency.
- _____ Regularly test your backup power supply.
- _____ Register with your utility company.
- _____ Teach your personal support network how to operate & safely move your equipment.

8. TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

Batteries

- Store extra batteries for hearing aids and implants. If available, keep an extra hearing aid with your emergency supplies.
- Store extra batteries for your TTY and light phone signaler. Check your manual for proper maintenance advice.

Hearing Aids

Store hearing aids in a consistent, convenient and secured place, so you can quickly and easily locate them after a disaster. Consider storing them in a container attached to your night stand or bed post. Missing or damaged hearing aids will be difficult to replace or fix following a major disaster.

Alarms

Install both audible alarms and visual smoke alarms. At least one should be battery-operated.

Communication

- Determine how you will communicate with emergency personnel if there is no interpreter or if you do not have your hearing aid(s). Store paper and pens.
- Consider carrying a pre-printed copy of key phrases, such as "I speak American Sign Language (ASL) and need an ASL interpreter."
- If possible, obtain a battery-operated television that has a decoder chip for access to signed or captioned emergency reports.
- Determine which broadcasting systems will provide continuous news that will be captioned and/or signed.

Advocacy

- Recruit interpreters to be Red Cross emergency volunteers.
- Maintain pressure on TV stations to broadcast all news and emergency information in open caption format and/or secure on-camera interpreters for emergency duties.
- When you travel, ensure hotels have access packets for deaf and hearing impaired persons, including audible alarms. Ask for them when you check in.

Checklist

- _____ Store and maintain extra hearing aids and batteries.
- _____ Install both audible alarms and visual smoke alarms.
- _____ Write down key phrases for emergency personnel.

9. TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

Before, During and After a Disaster

Practice what to do during and after specific disasters that occur in your area. Practice evacuating from places where you spend time (job, home, school, volunteer assignment) until you feel comfortable and confident that you will know what to do during and after an emergency.

Emergency Plan

- Keep a written emergency plan with you and in several locations. Make sure it is easy to read and understand.
- After a disaster, information often comes at you quickly. Think through ways to do things you will need to do after a disaster. Keep a list of tasks, a calendar with room for notes and a small tape recorder with you in order to help you remember things.
- Give copies of your written emergency plan to the people in your personal support network.

Communication

Think about what a rescuer might need to know about you and be prepared to say it briefly, or keep a written copy with you. For example:

"I communicate using an augmentative communication device. I can point to simple pictures or key words, which you will find in my wallet or emergency supply kit."

"I may have difficulty understanding what you are telling me, please speak slowly and use simple language."

"I forget easily. Please write down information for me."

Checklist

- _____ Practice what to do during and after specific disasters that occur in your area.
- _____ Keep a written emergency plan with you.
- _____ Give copies of your plan to people in your personal support network.
- _____ Think of ways to help you remember important things.
- _____ Practice how to tell someone what you need.

10. USING A FIRE EXTINGUISHER

The Red Cross strongly recommends that you visit your local fire department to learn how to use a fire extinguisher properly. You need to practice to ensure you will remember how to respond when you are forced to react quickly. An experienced fire professional will be able to explain the safest, most effective way to use one.

Purchase an A-B-C rated fire extinguisher and teach all responsible family members how to use it. Remember, most household extinguishers are designed to put out very small fires only; attempting to put out large fires can be dangerous. When using a fire extinguisher, stand back 10 feet, keep your back to an exit and remember the PASS sequence:

- Pull the pin out
- Aim the extinguisher
- Squeeze or press the handle
- Sweep from side to side at the base of the fire

11. TURNING OFF THE ELECTRICITY & GAS

During an emergency, it may become necessary to turn off your utilities at your home or business. Post-disaster fires can be caused by damaged electrical and gas lines and appliances.

How to Turn Off the Electricity

1. Know where your home's main electric switch is. It may be a pull handle or very large circuit breakers inside the panel box. These allow you to turn off the electric supply to your entire home quickly in case of an emergency.
2. Know where your fuse box or circuit-breaker box is located.
 - Know the correct sizes of any fuses in your home and keep spares on hand.
 - Blown fuses must be replaced, not repaired.
 - Do not replace a fuse with one of higher amperage.
 - If a fuse blows, disconnect or turn off the appliance(s) that may have caused the problem.
 - Shut off the main electric switch before replacing a fuse.
3. Know how to reset a circuit breaker. After turning off or unplugging appliances on the circuit, push the switch firmly to the off position and then back on. If the overload is cleared, the electricity will come back on. If your circuit breakers trip off repeatedly, there could be a problem with the appliance(s) on that circuit. If the appliances are unplugged but the circuit breaker trips off again, call an electrician.

How to Turn Off the Gas

1. Knowing the location of your main shutoff valve and keeping a wrench handy will help you turn off the gas supply to your entire home quickly. Normally you won't need to shut off a gas meter unless there is a strong odor or sound of escaping gas or if there is major damage to the building. If your gas is turned off, there may be a considerable delay before the gas company can turn your service on, but don't turn it back on yourself. Leave it off until service can be re-established safely by a gas company service person or other qualified professional.
2. Most gas appliances have a valve that lets you turn off the gas to that appliance only. Know which of your home's appliances run on natural gas, and where their shutoff valves are located. In most cases, turning off the gas at the appliance's shutoff valve will suffice.
3. Many older gas appliances have a small, continuously burning gas flame--the pilot light--that ignites the main burner. Newer models have electric igniters. Know which, if any, of your appliances have a pilot light. Keep the manufacturer's relighting instructions within easy reach.

4. Keep a flashlight handy to investigate minor gas odors. Check pilot lights to make sure they are lit. Never use matches or candles, and never turn any electric switches on or off if you smell gas. Always wait five minutes to let gas disperse before trying to relight your appliance. If the smell or sound of escaping gas continues or if you have any doubts, open windows and doors and get everyone out of the building. Call the gas company or 911 from a phone away from the gas odor.

12. CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING PREVENTION FACT SHEET

Carbon Monoxide (known by the chemical symbol CO) is a colorless and practically odorless gas. It is poisonous to people and animals because it displaces oxygen in the blood. It is produced by the incomplete burning of solid, liquid and gaseous fuels. Appliances fueled with natural gas, liquefied petroleum (LP gas), oil, kerosene, coal or wood may produce CO. Burning charcoal produces CO. Running cars produce CO.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, every year over 200 people in the United States die from CO produced by fuel-burning appliances (furnaces, ranges, water heaters, room heaters). Others die from CO produced while burning charcoal inside a home, garage, vehicle or tent. Still others die from CO produced by cars left running in attached garages. Several thousand people go to hospital emergency rooms each year for treatment for CO poisoning.

What Are the Symptoms of CO Poisoning?

Carbon Monoxide can have different affects on people based on its concentration in the air that people breathe. Because you can't smell, taste or see it, you cannot tell that CO gas is present. The health effects of CO depend on the level of CO and length of exposure, as well as each individual's health condition.

The initial symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to the flu (but without fever). They include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Dizziness

Many people with CO poisoning mistake their symptoms for the flu or are misdiagnosed which sometimes results in tragic deaths. Because CO replaces oxygen in the blood, it can make people feel sleepy. Or, if they are asleep, it can prevent people from waking up. At higher concentrations, people can experience impaired vision and coordination, headaches, dizziness, confusion and nausea. In very high concentrations, CO poisoning can cause death.

Buy and Install CO Detectors/Alarms

The American Red Cross recommends that everyone install CO detectors/alarms in homes and recreational vehicles.

- Before buying a CO alarm, check to make sure it is listed with Underwriter's Laboratories (UL), standard 2034, or there is information on the package or owner's manual that says that the detector/alarm meets the requirements of the IAS 6-96 standard.
- Install a CO detector/alarm in the hallway near every separate sleeping area of the home. Make sure the detector/alarm cannot be covered up by furniture or draperies. Follow manufacturer's instructions regarding the specific location where to install it. Avoid corners (where air does not circulate).
- CO detectors/alarms are available for boats and recreational vehicles and should be used. The Recreation Vehicle Industry Association requires CO detectors/alarms to be installed in motor homes and in towable recreational vehicles that have a generator or are prepped for a generator.

What Can You Do To Prevent CO Poisoning?

- Make sure appliances are installed according to manufacturer's instructions and local building codes. Most appliances should be installed by professionals. A carbon monoxide detector/alarm can provide added protection, but is no substitute for proper use and upkeep of appliances that can produce CO.
- Have the heating system (including chimneys and vents) inspected and serviced annually. The inspector should also check chimneys and flues for blockages, corrosion, partial and complete disconnections, and loose connections.
- Only burn charcoal outdoors, never inside a home, garage, vehicle or tent.
- Do not use portable fuel-burning camping equipment inside a home, garage, vehicle or tent.
- Always make sure to turn off any gas-powered engine (car, truck, motorcycle, ATV, lawn mower, chain saw or generator) inside an attached garage or basement. Even if the garage door is open, you can still be affected or killed by CO. If you must test the engine, take it outdoors before starting it.
- Always refer to the owner's manual when performing minor adjustments or servicing fuel-burning appliances, and get help from a professional if you are unsure how to service such equipment.
- Do not use gas appliances such as ranges, ovens or clothes dryers for heating your home.
- If you use a fuel-burning appliance for approved indoor uses (such as a heater), make sure it is vented to the outdoors following manufacturer's instructions. Do not use an unvented fuel-burning appliance in any room with closed doors or windows or in any room where people are sleeping.
- Install and use an exhaust fan vented to outdoors over gas stoves.
- Open flues when fireplaces are in use.
- Choose properly sized wood-burning stoves that are certified to meet EPA emission standards. Make certain that doors on all wood-burning stoves fit tightly.
- Have a trained professional inspect, clean and tune-up central heating system (furnaces, flues and chimneys) annually. Repair any leaks promptly.

What Should You Do If You Experience Symptoms of CO Poisoning?

If you think you are experiencing any of the symptoms of CO poisoning, get fresh air immediately. Open windows and doors for more ventilation, turn off any combustion appliances, and leave your home. Then call your fire department and report your symptoms. You could lose consciousness and die if you do nothing. It is also important to contact a doctor immediately for a proper diagnosis. Tell your doctor that you suspect CO poisoning is causing

your problems. Prompt medical attention is important if you are experiencing any symptoms of CO poisoning when you are operating fuel-burning appliances. Before turning your fuel-burning appliances back on, make sure a qualified serviceperson checks them for malfunction.

What Should You Do When the CO Detector/Alarm Sounds?

Treat the alarm signal as a real emergency each time. If the detector/alarm sounds and you are not experiencing any symptoms described above, press the reset button. If the detector/alarm continues to sound, call the fire department. Immediately leave your home until a professional checks to find the reason why the detector/alarm sounded, and any problems are fixed.

How To Test a CO Detector/Alarm To Make Sure It Is Working

Follow the manufacturer's instructions. Using a test button, some detectors/alarms test whether the circuitry as well as the sensor which senses CO is working, while the test button on other detectors only tests whether the circuitry is working. For those units which test the circuitry only, some manufacturers sell separate test kits to help the consumer test the CO sensor inside the alarm.

13. TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND MEDICAL CONCERNS

Establish a Personal Support Network

A personal support network can consist of friends, roommates, family members, relatives, personal attendants, co-workers and neighbors who will check in with you in an emergency to ensure you are OK and provide assistance if needed. Do not depend on any one person. Identify a minimum of three people at each location where you regularly spend your time: job, home, school, volunteer site, etc.

Personal assistance services (attendants) may not be available after a major disaster. Therefore, it is vital that your support network consist of people other than your attendants. If you employ one or use the services of a home health agency or other type of in-home service, work with them to develop an emergency plan. How will you get along for as long as seven days?

In spite of your best planning, sometimes a personal support network must be created on the spot. For example, you may find yourself in a shelter and in need of immediate assistance. Think about what you require, how you want things done and what kind of person you would select.

Seven Important Items to Discuss, Exchange and Practice with Your Personal Support Network

- Make arrangements for your support network to immediately check on you after a disaster and, if needed, offer assistance.
- Exchange important keys.
- Show them where you keep emergency supplies.
- Share copies of your emergency documents, evacuation plans and emergency health information card.
- Agree upon and practice a communications system (how to contact each other in an emergency). Do not count on the telephones working.
- You and your personal support network should always notify each other when you are going out of town and when you will return.
- The relationship should be mutual. Learn about each other's needs and how to help each other in an emergency.

Traveling

When staying in hotels, motels, etc., identify yourself to registration desk staff as a person who will need assistance in an emergency and state the type of assistance you may need.

Health Card

- An emergency health information card communicates to rescuers what they need to know about you if they find you unconscious or incoherent, or if they need to quickly help evacuate you.
- An emergency health information card contains information about your medications, adaptive equipment, blood type, allergies and sensitivities, insurance numbers, social security number, immunization dates, communication difficulties and preferred treatment, as well as contact information for your health providers, personal support network and emergency contacts.
- Make multiple copies of this card to keep in emergency supply kits, car, work, wallet (behind your driver's license or primary identification card), wheelchair pack, etc.
- Update this information every six months.

Emergency Contact List

- It is often easier to place an out-of-state call from a disaster area than to call within it. Ask relatives or friends who live outside your immediate area (approximately 100 miles away) to act as a clearing house for information about you and your family after a disaster. All family members should know to call the contact person to report their location and condition. The contact person should then relay messages to your other friends and relatives outside the disaster area. This will help to reduce calling into and out of the affected area once the phones are working.
- Besides emergency out-of-town contacts, your list should include your personal support network, equipment vendors, doctors, utility companies, employers, schools and day care centers.

Emergency Documents

This includes important information typically needed after a disaster. Store emergency documents [such as your health card, family records (birth, marriage and death certificates), wills, deeds, family social security numbers, charge and bank accounts, insurance documentation, etc.] in sealed freezer bags in all of your emergency supply kits. If you feel comfortable doing so, give copies to your out-of-state contacts and the people in your personal support network. Remember to place a copy in a safe-deposit box. Be sure to update this information every six months as needed.

Conduct an Ability Self-Assessment

Evaluate your capabilities, limitations and needs, as well as your surroundings to determine what type of help you will need in an emergency.

1. Will you be able to independently shut off the necessary utilities (gas, water, electricity)?
 - Do you know where shut-off valves are? Can you get to them?
 - Can you find and use the right wrench to turn those handles?
2. Can you operate a fire extinguisher?
 - Have you practiced?
 - Will extended handles make these items usable for you?
3. Will you be able to carry your evacuation kit?
 - What do you need to do in order to carry it? How much can you carry? Do you have duplicates at other locations?
4. Have you moved or secured large objects that might block your escape path?

5. Write instructions for the following (keep a copy with you and share a copy with your personal support network):
- a. How to turn off utilities (color-code or label them for quick identification).
 - Main gas valve, located next to the meter - blue; Electrical power circuit breaker box - red; Main water valve - green.
 - If you have a reduced or limited sense of smell, alert your personal support network to check for gas leaks.
 - b. How to operate and safely move your essential equipment. Consider attaching simple instructions to your equipment.
 - c. How to safely transport you if you need to be carried, and include any areas of vulnerability.
 - d. How to provide personal assistance services.
 - Remind anyone who assists you to practice strict cleanliness. With limited water and increased health hazards, the possibility of infection increases. Keep a supply of latex gloves in your emergency supply kit and ask people assisting you with personal hygiene to use them.
 - List all personal care assistance needs (dressing, bathing, etc.) with instructions on how best to assist you.
 - Make a map of where to find medications, aids and supplies, and share it with your personal support network.
 - e. How to evacuate. As much as possible, clear obstacles from aisles and secure large, heavy items such as bookcases that may fall and block your path. Plan alternate exit paths.

Communication: Practice Assertiveness Skills

Take charge and practice how to quickly explain to people how to move your mobility aids or how to move you safely and rapidly. Be prepared to give clear, specific and concise instructions and directions to rescue personnel: "Take my oxygen tank," "Take my wheelchair," "Take my gamma globulin from the freezer," "Take my communication device from under the bed." Practice giving these instructions with the least amount of words in the least amount of time. For example, the traditional "fire fighter's carry" may be hazardous for some people with respiratory weakness. You need to be able to give brief instructions regarding how to move you. Be prepared to request an accommodation from disaster personnel. For example, if you are unable to wait in long lines for such items as water, food and disaster relief applications, practice clearly and concisely explaining why you cannot wait.

"Carry-With-You" Supplies to Keep with You at All Times

Packing/Container suggestions: a fanny pack, back pack or drawstring bag which can be hung from a wheelchair, scooter or other assistive device.

- Emergency Health Information Card.
- Instructions on personal assistance needs and how best to provide them.
- Copy of Emergency Documents.
- Essential medications/copies of prescriptions (at least a week's supply).
- Flashlight on key ring.
- Signaling device (whistle, beeper, bell, screecher).
- Small battery-operated radio and extra batteries

Disability-Related Supplies to Add to Regular Emergency Kits

Plan for enough disability-related supplies to last for up to two weeks (medication syringes, colostomy supplies, respiratory aids, catheters, padding, distilled water, etc.). If you have chemical sensitivities or a respiratory or cardiac condition, store towels, masks, industrial respirators or other supplies you can use to filter your air supply. Do not expect shelters or first aid stations to meet your supply needs. In an emergency, supplies will be limited.

Store supplies in areas you anticipate will be easy to reach after a disaster. If you are unable to afford extras, consider contacting disability-specific organizations, such as the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Arthritis Foundation, United Cerebral Palsy Association, etc. They may be able to assist you in gathering low-cost or no-cost emergency supplies and medications.

Medication

It is best to maintain at least a seven-to-14-day supply of essential medications (heart, blood pressure, birth control, diabetic, psychiatric orphan drugs, etc.) and keep it with you at all times. If this is not possible, even a three-day supply would be extremely helpful.

Work with your doctor(s) to obtain an extra supply of medications. Make several copies of your prescriptions and place one in each of your survival kits as well as your car kit and wallet.

Ask your provider or pharmacist how to store your medication.

Ask how often you should rotate stored supplies to ensure the effectiveness does not weaken.

If you are on medications that are administered by a clinic or hospital (such as methadone, chemo or radiation therapy) ask your provider how you should plan for a 3 to 14 day disruption.

If you are a smoker, be aware that smoking is not allowed in shelters. If getting to an outside smoking area may be difficult for you, consider stocking your evacuation kit with nicotine gum or patches.

Life in cramped, unheated shelters can increase the chances of pneumonia, influenza and colds. Stock your kits with vitamins or medications to guard against getting sick and to cope with being sick.

Equipment and Assistive Devices

Keep important equipment and assistive devices in a consistent, convenient and secured place, so you can quickly and easily locate them. Make sure such items as false teeth, hearing aids, prosthesis, mobility aids, canes, crutches, walkers, respirators, service animal harnesses, augmentative communication devices or electronic communicators, artificial larynx, wheelchair, sanitary aids, batteries, eye glasses, contacts and cleaning solutions, etc., are secured. For example, keep these items in a container attached to your night stand or bed post, secure your oxygen tank to the wall, keep your wheelchair locked and close to bed, etc. This helps prevent them from falling, flying or rolling away during a quake and makes them easily accessible in the event of an evacuation.

If you use a laptop computer as a means of communication, consider purchasing a power converter. A power converter allows most laptops to run from a cigarette lighter on the dashboard of a vehicle.

Checklist

Print out a copy of this list for your convenience and be sure to write down the completion date for each activity at it is accomplished.

_____ Establish a personal support network.

_____ Make an emergency health information card.

_____ Make an emergency contact list.

_____ Collect copies of your emergency documents.

_____ Store copies of your health card, contact list and emergency documents in your wallet, purse, supply kits and safe deposit box. Give copies to members of your personal support network as well as your out-of-area contact.

_____ Conduct an ability self-assessment.

_____ Collect "carry-with-you supplies" at all times.

_____ Compile disability-related supplies for emergency kits.

_____ Maintain a seven day supply of essential medications.

_____ Keep important equipment and assistive devices in consistent, convenient and secured places.

_____ Write out instructions for items you will need help with in an emergency.