

PREPARING FOR DISASTER FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS



For the millions of Americans who have physical, medical, sensory or cognitive disabilities, emergencies such as fires, floods and acts of terrorism present a real challenge. The same challenge also applies to the elderly and other special needs populations. Protecting yourself and your family when disaster strikes requires planning ahead. The following information will help you get started. Discuss these ideas with your family, friends and/or your personal care attendant, or anyone else in your support network and prepare an emergency plan. Post the plan where everyone will see it, keep a copy with you and make sure everyone in your plan has a copy.

CREATE A PERSONAL SUPPORT NETWORK

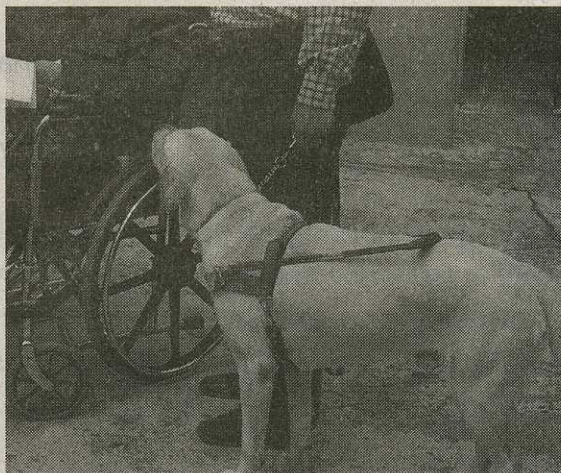
Organize a personal support network of relatives, co-workers, friends and neighbors who can help you prepare for a disaster and assist you after a disaster happens. They should know your capabilities and needs, and be able to provide help within minutes.

COMPLETE A PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

Decide what you will be able to do for yourself and what assistance you may need before, during and after a disaster. This will be based on the environment after the disaster, your capabilities and your limitations.

- ◆ **Personal Care** – Do you regularly need assistance with personal care, such as bathing and grooming? Do you need adaptive equipment to help you get dressed?
- ◆ **Water Service** – What will you do if water service is cut off for several days or you are unable to heat water?
- ◆ **Personal Care Equipment** – Do you use a shower chair, tub transfer bench or similar equipment?
- ◆ **Adaptive Feeding Devices** – Do you use special utensils that help you prepare or eat food independently?
- ◆ **Electricity-Dependent Equipment** – How will you continue to use equipment that runs on electricity, such as dialysis, electrical lifts, etc.? Do you have a safe back-up power supply and how long will it last?

- ◆ **Disaster Debris** – How will you cope with the debris in your home or along your planned exit route following the disaster?
- ◆ **Transportation** – Do you need a specially-equipped vehicle or accessible transportation?
- ◆ **Errands** – Do you need to get groceries, medications and medical supplies? What if your caregiver cannot reach you because roads are blocked or the disaster has affected him or her as well?
- ◆ **Building Evacuation** – Do you need help to leave your home or office? Can you reach and activate an alarm? Will you be able to evacuate independently without relying on auditory cues (such as noise from a machine near the stairs – these cues may be absent if the electricity is off or alarms are sounding)?
- ◆ **Building Exits** – Are there other exits (stairs, windows or ramps) if the elevator is not working or cannot be used? Can you read emergency signs in print or Braille? Do emergency alarms have audible and visible features (marking escape routes and exits) that will work even if electrical service is disrupted?
- ◆ **Getting Help** – How will you call or summon the help you will need to leave the building? Do you know the locations of text telephones and phones that have amplification? Will your hearing aids work if they get wet from emergency sprinklers? Have you determined how to communicate with emergency personnel if you don't have an interpreter, your hearing aids aren't working or you don't have a word board or other augmentative communication device?
- ◆ **Mobility Aids / Ramp Access** – What will you do if you cannot find your mobility aids? What will you do if your ramps are shaken loose or become separated from the building?
- ◆ **Service Animals/Pets** – Will you be able to care for your animal (provide food, shelter, veterinary attention, etc.) during and after a disaster? Do you have another caregiver for your animal if you are unable to meet its needs? Do you have the appropriate licenses for your service animal so you will be permitted to keep it with you should you need or choose to use an emergency public shelter?



Action Checklist – Items To Do Before a Disaster

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Those with disabilities or other special needs often have unique needs that require more detailed planning in the event of a disaster. Consider the following actions as you prepare:

- ◆ Learn what to do in case of power outages and personal injuries. Know how to connect and start a back-up power supply for essential medical equipment.
- ◆ Consider getting a medical alert system that will allow you to call for help if you are immobilized in an emergency. Most alert systems require a working phone line, so have a back-up plan, such as a cell phone or pager, if the regular landlines are disrupted.
- ◆ If you use an electric wheelchair or scooter, have a manual wheelchair for back-up. Teach those who may need to assist you in an emergency how to operate necessary equipment. Also, label equipment and attach laminated instructions for equipment use.
- ◆ Store back-up equipment (mobility, medical, etc.) at your neighbor's home, school or your workplace.
- ◆ Arrange for more than one person from your personal support network to check on you in an emergency, so there is at least one back-up if the primary person cannot.
- ◆ If you are vision impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, plan ahead for someone to convey essential emergency information to you if you are unable to use the TV or radio.
- ◆ If you use a personal care attendant obtained from an agency, check to see if the agency has special provisions for emergencies (e.g., providing services at another location should an evacuation be ordered).
- ◆ If you live in an apartment, ask the management to identify and mark accessible exits and access to all areas designated for emergency shelter or safe rooms. Ask about plans for alerting and evacuating those with sensory disabilities.
- ◆ Have a cell phone with an extra battery. If you are unable to get out of a building, you can let someone know where you are and guide them to you. Keep the numbers you may need to call with you if the 9-1-1 emergency number is overloaded. A whistle is another good way of alerting people that you need assistance if phones are not working.
- ◆ Learn about devices and other technology available (PDAs, text radio, pagers, etc.) to assist you in receiving emergency instructions and warnings from local officials.

GIVE BLOOD

The American Red Cross Pacific Northwest Regional Blood Services must collect at least 5,000 pints of blood each week to meet the needs of local patients. The organization is the sole supplier of blood and blood products to more than 80 hospitals in Oregon, Washington and southeast Alaska. To schedule a blood donation, call 1-800 GIVE LIFE. In the Portland metro area, call (503) 284-4040.



In addition to whole blood, the Red Cross collects platelets for patients undergoing special treatment. Platelets are one component of blood that aid in the clotting process.

Platelets prevent or stop bleeding and help treat patients with cancer, leukemia and other diseases. Since platelets can be stored for only five days, there is a constant need.

To schedule a platelet donation at the Portland Donor Center, please call (503) 280-1446.



Eligible donors can give every 56 days. Blood is a cornerstone of medicine and critical to public health, but whole blood has a limited shelf life. The need for blood is constant.

Through the power of the Red Cross national system, blood can quickly be shipped from one area of the country to another - wherever it is needed most.

The American Red Cross encourages eligible donors to give blood regularly.

Visit www.nwblood.redcross.org for more information.

UTILITIES



Natural Gas

The following information provided courtesy of NW Natural



Your gas company injects an odorant into your gas before it is distributed. The odorant is so highly concentrated that even the smallest amounts of natural gas can be detected. The odorant gives off a foul smell like rotten eggs.

Any odor of natural gas inside your home may indicate a leak. Follow these steps if you detect a leak:

- **Open windows and doors.**
- **Evacuate all persons from the building.**
- **Call NW Natural at (800) 882-3377 or your local gas company from a neighbor's phone or a phone far away from the building.**
- **Don't use the telephone in the building with the odor (including cell phones and other portable communication devices with a battery). These can spark and create an ignition source.**
- **Don't light matches or create any other source of ignition.**
- **Don't turn lights off or on, or operate any electrical switches (either off or on). This could create a source of ignition.**

UTILITIES

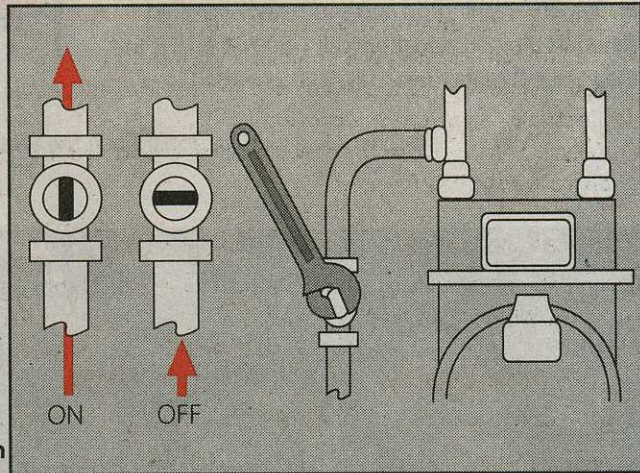
If there is a strong gas odor in your home, or you can see or hear a break, follow the instructions above. Meanwhile, turn off the gas valve located at the gas meter (see instructions and illustration below) with a wrench or other suitable tool. If the leaking gas ignites, do not attempt to put out the flames. Get to safety, call 9-1-1, and then call your local gas company.

NOTE: Turn off the gas valve only if you smell a strong gas odor or hear gas leaking.

Shutting Off Your Gas

If you need to have your gas shut off, call your gas company to do it, if possible. However, in an emergency, when you need the gas shut off immediately, take these steps:

- **Locate the shut-off valve on the riser pipe (the pipe running out of the ground to your meter). To turn the valve, you will need a crescent wrench, pipe wrench or a special wrench available from NW Natural or your local gas company.**
- **When the valve head is parallel to the riser pipe, it is in the "on" position. Turn the valve head crosswise to the pipe and it will be in the "off" position (see illustration above). There are also shut-off valves on the lines feeding individual gas appliances.**
- **Once the gas is off, leave it off. Call the nearest gas company office when you are ready for the gas to be turned back on. A qualified technician will check your system, turn on your service and re-light the pilot for you.**



Water

Earthquakes or severe freezing weather can interrupt water supplies. It's important to turn off the water quickly to avoid flooding or possible contamination of your water system. Locate the main water valve, often near the wall in a basement or garage. Label it for quick identification. If you need to turn the water off, turn the valve clockwise until it stops.

Electricity

The following information provided courtesy of Portland General Electric



Portland General Electric

IF THE POWER GOES OUT:

1. Check your fuse or breaker box for blown fuses or tripped circuits. If they're okay, check to see if your neighbors are without power.
2. Call your power company immediately (record utility outage contact numbers on back page) to report the outage. Please call only once so other customers can get through.
3. Turn off all electrical equipment including your water heater, electric furnace or heaters, stove, washer and dryer, stereo and TV to help prevent overloading the system when power is restored (major appliances can be turned off at the breaker box). Do, however, turn on a porch light and one inside light so you and repair crews will know when service is restored.
4. Listen to the radio (battery-powered) for updates on major storm outages. You can also call your power company for information on when power will be restored.
5. If your neighbor's power comes back on but yours does not, call your power company again.
6. If your lights are very dim or very bright once power is restored, turn off the power at the breaker or fuse box and call your power company.

UTILITIES

Downed Power Line Safety

Never touch a downed power line – electricity can travel through your body causing serious injury or death. If you see any line on the ground, assume that it might be live and stay away. Take the following precautions:

- ◆ Expect every line to be live. If you see a downed line, call the local power company immediately.
- ◆ If a line is touching someone, stay away; you could become a victim if you touch the person. Call 9-1-1 for emergency medical help.
- ◆ If a line falls across your vehicle, do not get out! Wait for emergency help to arrive. If you have to get out of your car, (example: it's on fire) don't touch the car and the ground at the same time. This would give the electricity a path to the ground.
- ◆ Keep on the lookout for crews repairing downed lines. Slow down when approaching work areas and always obey flaggers.

Special Instructions For Life Support Patients

If someone in your home is on life support, it is critical that you have a back-up generator. If the power goes out, the utility company will not be able to help and power will have to be found from another source.

Generator Safety

Owners of portable or auxiliary generators should note these precautions.

- ◆ Never plug your generator into a wall outlet. It can result in injury to you or others and damage to your electrical system.
- ◆ Portable generators are gasoline-powered and should always be placed in a well-ventilated area. Use an indoor/outdoor, grounded (three-prong) extension cord to connect your generator to an appliance.
- ◆ Permanently installed auxiliary generators must meet electrical codes and have a transfer switch to prevent dangerous back-feed of electricity into power lines. Contact a licensed electrician. Also, please notify your power company if you have a permanent generator.

WATER STORAGE AND FOOD SAFETY

You will need more water than you might think in an emergency. Store a minimum of three days worth of water per person: one gallon per person per day (and the same amount for each pet). **IF YOU ARE RUNNING LOW ON WATER IN AN EMERGENCY, DO NOT RATION. DRINK WHAT YOU NEED TODAY, TRY TO FIND MORE FOR TOMORROW. FILL UP THE TUB IF YOU HAVE TIME, BUT DO NOT USE FOR DRINKING.**



FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO ACCESS THE WATER IN YOUR HOT WATER TANK:

1. Find your incoming water valve. Shut it off to avoid possibly contaminated water coming into the tank.
2. Turn off the gas or electricity to the tank.
3. Turn on a hot water faucet in the house.
4. Collect water as needed from the tap at the bottom of the hot water heater.

Other Indoor Water Sources

- ◆ Toilet tank (not the bowl). Do not use if you have added chemical treatments to the tank
- ◆ Ice cubes — melt and use
- ◆ Liquids from canned goods such as fruit and vegetable juices

UNSAFE WATER SOURCES: radiators, waterbeds and swimming pools

Proper Water Storage

- ◆ Store bottled drinking water out of direct sunlight, away from chemicals which might permeate the container and in an area not likely to freeze.
- ◆ If bottling tap water, buy empty containers or use well-washed plastic soda bottles (do not use empty bleach, detergent or milk containers!). Every six months, empty tap water from containers, wash containers and refill.
- ◆ Pouring water back and forth between two containers will add oxygen and make the water taste better.

Treating Water

If you are uncertain about the purity of any water source, treat it before you use it for drinking, food preparation or hygiene. In addition to having a bad odor and taste, water from questionable sources may be contaminated by a variety of microorganisms that can cause dysentery, cholera, typhoid and hepatitis.

TO TREAT WATER, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1. Filter the water using a piece of cloth or coffee filter to remove solid particles.
2. Bring it to a rolling boil for about one full minute.
3. Let it cool at least 30 minutes. Water must be cool or the chlorine treatment described below will not work.
4. Add 16 drops of liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water, or 8 drops per 2-liter bottle of water. Stir to mix. Sodium hypochlorite (concentration 5.25% to 6%) should be the only active ingredient in the bleach. There should be no added soap or fragrance.
5. Let stand 30 minutes.
6. If the water smells of chlorine, you can use it. If it does not smell of chlorine, repeat steps 4 and 5 above. If after this second try the water smells of chlorine, you can use it. Otherwise, discard and find another source of water.

People with certain medical conditions may need distilled or sterile water. Your physician can tell you whether you fall in this category. If so, the Red Cross can provide you with instructions on how to distill water.

Food Safety In An Outage

While the power is out, your food supplies can be saved by following these simple steps:

If your freezer is full, food will stay frozen for about two days. If it is less than half full, food will stay frozen for about one day. Cover the freezer with blankets, quilts or sleeping bags to further insulate the freezer and help food stay frozen longer. After power is restored, check all frozen foods to determine the extent of thawing. Dispose of any food that is discolored or smells spoiled. If in doubt, throw it out.

To avoid losing the cold air in your refrigerator, don't unnecessarily open its doors. Meat and fish spoil quickly at temperatures above 40°F. Other quick-spoiling foods include milk, custard, creamed foods and any foods containing mayonnaise or eggs. Cooked and cured meat will keep for several days in a closed refrigerator. Hard cheeses keep well, even at room temperature. Again, if in doubt, throw it out. You might also try placing bags of ice in the refrigerator, or place food in a cooler or ice chest with ice.

Cooking During An Outage

Never use barbecues or liquid fuel stoves to cook/heat food indoors. Cooking with these types of appliances will produce carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless and deadly.

PLANNING FOR SPECIFIC DISASTERS

FIRES AT HOME

Be Aware

Fire is the fifth leading cause of unintentional injury and death in the United States. It also ranks as the first cause of death in the home for children under the age of 15.



Prepare

- ◆ Install working smoke alarms that have long-life lithium batteries and a hush button on each level of your home (on the ceiling, inside each bedroom, in the basement, near but not in the kitchen).
- ◆ Check smoke alarms once a month by pressing the test button. If alarm doesn't sound, replace battery immediately. Change batteries yearly unless using lithium batteries. Replace smoke alarms after ten years of use.
- ◆ Make an escape plan. Identify two exits from every room in your home.
- ◆ Agree on a reunion site immediately outside of the house where family members will meet.
- ◆ Remind everyone to exit quickly and call 9-1-1 from a safe location away from the home.
- ◆ Practice crawling out of the home with your eyes shut. Heavy smoke and poisonous gases make it hard to see and breathe. Staying low increases your chance of escape.

FIRE EXTINGUISHER: Purchase an A-B-C type fire extinguisher and teach all responsible family members how to use it. Fire extinguishers are for small fires only. When using one, stand back ten feet from the fire, keep your back to an exit and remember the **PASS** sequence:

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

Whether you are a renter or a homeowner, buy fire insurance!

Respond

ESCAPE: If you are in a building and smell smoke or see fire, get out quickly and call 9-1-1 from a safe place:

- ◆ Sleep with bedroom doors closed. If the smoke alarm sounds, crawl to the door; the freshest air will be closer to the floor.
- ◆ Before opening a door in a burning building, kneel down and check the air coming under the door and also feel the door handle and door with the back of your hand. If the air, handle and door are cool and you don't smell smoke, kneel behind the door while you open it just a little with your face turned away from the opening. Listen and smell for fire and smoke. If smoke is present, use another exit.
- ◆ Close doors behind you as you leave.
- ◆ Use a stairway, **NOT AN ELEVATOR**, to escape from a burning building.

IF YOU'RE TRAPPED BY FIRE AND HEAVY SMOKE:

- ◆ Stay low under the smoke and close the doors between you and the fire (see illustration at right).
- ◆ Open a window slightly and hang something out of it (like a shirt or towel) to attract attention. Stay low and leave the window slightly open for ventilation.
- ◆ If your clothes catch on fire, stop where you are, cover your face, drop to the ground and roll back and forth. **STOP, DROP AND ROLL!**



STAY LOW AND GO

Your local fire department can answer further questions about smoke alarms, fire extinguishers or fire safety.

WINTER WEATHER AND SEVERE STORMS



Be Aware

Heavy snowfall, ice storms or extreme cold can immobilize our entire region. Even with our mild Northwest winters, we can have paralyzing cold. Results can range from isolation to major traffic hazards on icy highways.

Prepare

Understanding weather warnings on the radio or TV:

TRAVELERS ADVISORY is issued when ice and snow are expected to hinder travel.

WINTER STORM WATCH means severe weather conditions – such as freezing rain, sleet or heavy snow – could affect your area. Avoid unnecessary travel before or during the storm.

WINTER STORM WARNING means severe weather is occurring or about to occur. Stay indoors during the storm and avoid travel.

You should be ready for winter weather by November 1

- ◆ Check home and car disaster supplies kits (see pages 5 and 6).
- ◆ Review family back-up plans for cooking, heating and lighting. Choose safe alternate sources (flashlights or electrically-powered lanterns, NOT candles or gas lanterns!).
- ◆ If you have a fireplace or wood stove, stock up on seasoned wood and have your chimney or stovepipe checked and cleaned by a professional.
- ◆ Insulate water pipes with fiberglass or foam insulation.
- ◆ Winterize your cars — check and adjust or replace antifreeze before November 1.
- ◆ Keep your car's gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing.

Respond

Outages can occur at any time of the year, but during cold weather the temperature inside your home can drop rapidly. Take these simple precautions to safely stay warm if you do lose power.

SAVE BODY HEAT - Wear a hat, even while sleeping. Wear loose layers of clothing to trap body heat. Keep moving; exercise generates body heat. Use plenty of blankets and a hot-water bottle if you're able to heat water.

BE ALERT - Watch for signs of hypothermia (a drop in core body temperature) especially in infants and the elderly. Even air temperatures of 65°F can trigger hypothermia, and some medical conditions can make people more susceptible. If someone has a body temperature below 95°, call for medical help. Check on elderly neighbors, too.

SIGNS OF HYPOTHERMIA:

Be aware of shivering, slow and irregular pulse, numbness, glassy stare, apathy or impaired judgement, loss of muscle control, no shivering or loss of consciousness (late stages).

LOCK IN HOME HEAT - Pick one room on the sunny side of the house and close it off to keep the heat in. Use blankets to insulate windows and doors.

USE HEAT SOURCES SAFELY - Keep fire-fighting materials handy: baking soda and a fire extinguisher. Local laws prohibit the use of kerosene heaters indoors.

HAVE A BACK-UP PLAN - If your neighborhood experiences an extended outage, can you stay with friends or relatives in another area of town?

Before and During a Severe Storm:

The Northwest has experienced several devastating windstorms in the past four decades. If high winds are forecast for your area, you should:

- ◆ Identify a shelter or safe place within your home, away from windows, that will provide you with maximum protection.
 - ◆ Identify items that must be secured or brought inside during high winds (such as toys, lawn furniture or tarps). Bring these objects inside or anchor them.
 - ◆ Know what to do if the power goes out (see page 14).
 - ◆ Stay indoors and away from windows.
 - ◆ Do not drive.
- 18 ◆ Stay tuned to a local TV or radio station for weather and emergency information.