

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AS WE AGE

By Susan Evans, Mason County Senior Services

Emergencies can happen when we least expect them. Severe winter storms, power outages, flooding, tornadoes, wildfires, and other disasters can affect anyone, but older adults may face additional challenges during an emergency due to age-related and health-related needs.

Having a plan in place before an emergency occurs can help protect health, safety, and peace of mind. It may also reduce the risk of avoidable loss of life or property. In rural areas it may take longer for emergency services and utility workers to reach residents during or after severe weather. Prepare ahead of time to stay safe and comfortable until help arrives.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS TIPS

- Create a list of emergency contacts and keep copies in your wallet, near your phone, and with family members.
- Discuss your emergency plan with family, friends, neighbors, or caregivers.
- Keep an emergency kit ready with at least a three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day); nonperishable food; prescription medications; antidiarrheal, pain-relief, and antihistamine medications; and a first-aid kit.
- Keep copies of important documents, such as identification, insurance information, medication lists, powers of attorney, and advanced directives, in a fireproof/waterproof container.
- Prepare a battery-powered or hand-crank radio.
- Keep flashlights and extra batteries readily available.
- Charge cell phones, portable chargers, and battery packs regularly.
- Ensure smoke detectors and carbon-monoxide detectors are working properly.
- Get a generator if you rely on electricity for medical equipment, heat, or other important needs.

Remember that fuel-burning heaters and generators should not be used indoors.

- Keep your vehicle fueled up when severe weather is possible.
- Prepare emergency supplies for pets.

DURING AN EMERGENCY

- Stay informed through local news, weather alerts, or emergency notifications.
- Follow instructions from emergency-management officials and first responders.
- Contact a family member or friend to let them know your status.
- Use flashlights instead of candles during power outages to reduce fire risk.
- Conserve phone-battery power for essential communications.
- Avoid driving unless absolutely necessary.
- Contain and control your dogs or other animals that may pose (or appear to pose) a threat to first responders.
- If advised to evacuate, leave promptly and bring medications, important documents, and emergency supplies.
- Check on neighbors when it is safe to do so, especially those who may need additional assistance.

Preparing for emergencies does not have to be complicated or expensive. Taking a few simple steps today can help ensure that you and your loved ones are better able to handle what may come your way.

Seniors who need help finding programs and services can contact AAWM at 888-456-5664 Mon–Fri 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Another helpful resource is the *Active for Life* publication found throughout the community and at www.scottvilleareaseniorcenter.com. Contact Susan Evans by email at sevens@masoncountymi.gov or call 231-316-6523. For more info, visit www.masoncountymi.gov.

