

The Elderly Need Help Also in Emergencies

By Joseph Parish



During emergency situations it is vital that the elderly members of our neighborhood and community are adequately considered. Far too often they are overlooked and ultimately end up on the losing end of the events. It is not unusual that during periods of crisis these people's lives are completely disrupted and, in some cases, they even lose their lives.

It doesn't matter if the threat is a natural disaster such as an area fire, a potential flooding situation, earthquakes in some sections of the country, hurricanes in the south, tornadoes or possibly nuclear power plant emergencies, they all effect not only the young and middle-aged people but the elderly as well. Not to overlook the manmade dangers such as bombs, chemical issues and terrorist attacks which can strike at any time?

All these potential dangers bring to mind the thought of how can I protect myself and my family from such events. The question also hinges upon how to protect your elderly neighbors and friend as well. With that thought n mind let's review a few safety precautions that we can take.

First and foremost, in mind we should always know what the threats are. FEMA suggests that you sit down and write on a piece of paper all possible dangers which could befall your area of the country. These types of events might include those that can affect your family and especially the elderly members such as a home fire or medical emergencies. Next, think in terms of your community. What issues could develop for them, since these will also affect your family. Naturally, these particulars will apply to your specific geographical area.

Next complete some research into the disasters which you have identified for your area. How will you be notified of a potential emergency condition? Will it be from the TV, the radio or perhaps a police officer on a loudspeaker traveling through your neighborhood? Next, consider if you and your family will be directed to a shelter to wait out the emergency.

If the emergency involves your home know what procedures you will take to ensure your family is safe especially the elderly. If it is a fire in the home make certain that every member knows their responsibilities and how to conduct themselves. Lay out any escape routes and practice them often with your family. Have escape ladders readily available for homes with second floor rooms. Determine a central location for your family to reassemble after they escape the crisis. Perhaps instead of a home problem you are being directed to a shelter to wait until the emergency is over. You should have plans enforce to ensure that all members have the essentials that they need when entering the shelter. This would include extra medications for the elderly members.

Make up some emergency contact cards for every member to carry with them. You never know if someone will be unconscious and unable to tell anyone who they are or to contact another member of the family. This is especially important for the elderly people in your group as they are prone to possible interruptions in consciousness. These could be kept in a wallet or even a purse. Younger members could keep one in their backpacks. Include at a minimum name, address, medications and allergies as well as contact information.

Lastly, extra precautions should be taken concerning the elderly. Maybe they have a need for a wheelchair. Always have a manual chair as a backup for the motorized one. Make provisions to take the manual one with you if you must depart your home. The blind members will need extra watching and perhaps an additional cane for walking while those with impaired vision will need an extra pair of glasses in the event their first ones are damaged. Keep additional batteries for those elder folks who use hearing aids.