
Preparing an Alzheimer's Patient for an Emergency

A natural disaster, such as a hurricane, tornado or a forest fire, can significantly add to the stress and confusion of someone with Alzheimer's disease, possibly leading to unsafe and distressing behaviors such as wandering or agitation.

Plan ahead to ensure that emergency action plans are well established for those caring for a loved one with dementia.

Disaster Preparedness Tips

- Make sure to have an evacuation plan that includes specific needs of the person with the disease.
- Prepare an emergency kit that includes medication, medical papers, bottled water, an extra change of clothes, etc.
- Identify those who will help you in case you are unable to supervise and care for the person during the emergency. Organize medical records in an easily accessible place like an online file. This way, you or your helper can access records whenever and where ever you might need to. Keep physical copies at hand and with the alternative caretaker in case you are unable to access the internet.
- If the need to evacuate is likely, do not delay. Leave as early as possible to minimize long delays in heavy traffic.
- Do not leave the person with the disease alone. It only takes an instant for an individual to wander away and get lost.
- Enroll the person with Alzheimer's disease in MedicAlert® + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return®, the 24-hour nationwide emergency response service for individuals with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia that wander or who have a medical emergency.

Resources

- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://emergency.cdc.gov>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): www.fema.gov
- Mental Health America: www.mentalhealthamerica.net
- The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml

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