

Ready Virginia is a statewide public education effort to prepare Virginians for all hazards through educational materials and an interactive Web site.

For more information about the Ready Virginia campaign, call (866) 782-3470 or e-mail pio@vdem.virginia.gov.



Your local emergency manager can answer your questions about disaster preparedness in your area. You can find your local emergency manager at www.ReadyVirginia.gov.

Disaster Preparedness for Seniors

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- Get a kit
- Make a plan
- Stay informed

Local contact information:

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Disaster Preparedness for Seniors



Emergencies and disasters can strike anyone, anytime and anywhere. They can happen quickly and without warning and can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home.

Disasters and emergencies can create special challenges for seniors. You might not be quite as agile as you used to be; you might use a cane, walker or wheelchair; or you might have vision or hearing difficulties. **Whatever your limitations, or even if you are in good health, you need to be prepared to handle an emergency.**

**Take control –
before disaster strikes.**

Local officials and relief workers will respond quickly after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away. **Knowing what to do until help arrives is your best protection.**

It is important to remember that local, state and federal government will do all it can to help disaster victims, but it cannot meet every need. Your emergency supply kit, emergency plan, and your family and friends are your most valuable resources in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.



Every Virginian can get ready for disasters by following three simple steps:

Get a kit, Make a plan and Stay informed.

Make a plan

Worksheets and emergency contact wallet cards are available at www.ReadyVirginia.gov.

Talk With Others

Discuss with your family, friends and neighbors the types of disasters and emergencies that are most likely to happen in your area and what to do in each case. Take a first aid, CPR, Community Emergency Response Team or other class so that you have the knowledge to help yourself and others if needed.

Have an Out-Of-Town Contact

Often it's easier to call long distance after a disaster, so ask an out-of-town friend or relative to be your contact in case of an emergency. All family members should call this person in an emergency to check in.

Determine Where to Meet

If you need to leave your home in an emergency, decide now where you and your family will meet in case you can't return home. Keep a record of the location, phone number and the phone numbers of your family with you at all times.

Photo: FEMA



If children visit, explain potential hazards to them and ask them to share responsibilities. Teach those who might need to assist you in an emergency how to operate necessary equipment. Know your neighbors and consider how they can assist you if needed. If you have in-home care services, discuss emergency procedures with that provider.

Insurance Coverage

Homeowners' insurance typically does not cover flood damage. If you live in an area that's prone to flooding, talk to your insurance agent about purchasing flood insurance.

Make a visual or written record of your home and possessions to help you claim losses in the event of damage. Keep these and other vital records in one location in a waterproof container.

Plan for Your Pets

Some emergency shelters will not accept pets other than service animals. Talk to your veterinarian or local humane society in advance about an emergency plan for your pets, or plan to stay with family or friends or in a motel. Develop a list of pet-friendly hotels and have copies of your pets' immunization records ready to go.



Utilities

Know how, where and when to turn off water, gas and electricity in your home. Only turn off utilities if authorities instruct you to do so or if you suspect damaged lines. If you do turn off your utilities, do not turn them on again by yourself. You will need a professional to turn them back on.

If you feel you might not be able to turn off utilities yourself, arrange for someone, such as a neighbor, to help you. Post emergency numbers by your phone for water, sewer, electricity and gas companies.

When Disaster Strikes

What to Expect

- There can be significant damage and loss of life.
- Health and mental health resources can be overwhelmed.
- Media coverage and public fear can continue for a prolonged period.
- Public facilities, workplaces and schools might close. Officials might restrict travel.
- You might have to evacuate to a designated location or remain where you are for an extended period of time.
- Cleanup might take months.
- Water, food or medicine might be contaminated.

What to Do

- Follow your plan.
- Call your family contact to check in.
- Listen to local radio or television for information about what you should do.
- Be prepared to evacuate your home if authorities instruct you to do so.
- Check for fires, electrical or other household hazards.
- Check on your neighbors.
- Avoid driving except to evacuate. Be alert for road hazards, such as flooding. Never drive through floodwaters; they might be deep enough to carry your vehicle away.



Stay informed

Listen for local, up-to-date emergency information on radio and TV stations. Learn about hazards in your area at www.ReadyVirginia.gov.



Learn What to Do

Virginians experience hurricanes, winter storms, thunderstorms, toxic spills, earthquakes, tornadoes, flooding, fires and terrorist acts. Look around where you live. Do you live near a highway where a hazardous material spill could occur? Are you in a flood-prone area? Ask yourself what emergencies or disasters could occur in your area and learn about your community's disaster plans.

Does your apartment complex, assisted living facility or nursing home have emergency plans? Be sure you know where to find the emergency exits, especially if you live in a high-rise building.

If someone in your household is hearing-impaired, they might have difficulty hearing sirens or other types of alerts. In such cases, consider purchasing an alert system that features a visual signal, and make special arrangements ahead of time

Community Warning Signals

If your community has warning systems, know what they sound like and what to do when you hear them. When signals sound, find a local radio or TV station that is broadcasting emergency information. Keep a battery-powered radio and extra batteries handy so you can get much-needed information in an emergency, even if the power is out.

Some communities use “Reverse 911” systems that automatically dial telephones in the affected area and play a recorded message that tells you what to do. NOAA Weather Radios are also a valuable source of information; they broadcast weather, environmental and public safety alerts.

through local emergency management officials. People who need special help or transportation during an evacuation should register with local government officials, who can offer advice about what to do during an evacuation.

If You Lose Electricity

- Notify the power company immediately if you and your neighbors have lost power.
- Use a flashlight, not candles or kerosene lanterns, which are fire hazards.
- Keep a traditional, non-cordless telephone available; it doesn't require household electricity to operate.
- Turn off all major appliances.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- If you have a portable generator, only use it outside in a well-ventilated area, away from doors and windows.
- In cold weather, be prepared to drain water lines, pumps, supply lines and boilers because they can freeze and burst when power is lost.

Provide your power company and local emergency manager with a list of all life-support equipment required by you or members of your household. Obtain an alternate power source for the equipment. Life support equipment can include items such as a kidney dialysis machine, oxygen concentrator, respirator or ventilator.



When the disaster is over

Steps Toward Recovery

If you evacuated, be careful when you return home. Structural damage and mold can cause health risks. Be alert for wild animals that may have taken refuge in your home.

Contact your insurance company if your home is damaged.

If your area is declared a federal disaster area, you may be eligible for assistance. Listen to local news for instructions about how to apply.

Be alert for people trying to scam those affected by disaster through price gouging and other illegal activity. These people often target seniors. Report scams to:

- The Virginia Office of Consumer Affairs: (800) 552-9963
- The Virginia Office of the Attorney General: (804) 786-9516 or seniors@oag.state.va.us
- The Federal Trade Commission: (877) 382-4357
- Your local chapter of the Better Business Bureau

Your Emergency Plan

Ask an out-of-town friend or relative to be your contact in case of an emergency.

Out-of-town contact:

Telephone: _____

Cell phone: _____

Decide on a meeting place in case you cannot return to your home, and know where you would go if you had to evacuate your area.

Neighborhood meeting place:

Telephone: _____

Out-of-town meeting place:

Telephone: _____

Collect information about the locations where your family members spend the most time.

Workplace: _____

Telephone: _____

School: _____

Telephone: _____

Use this space to write down important information you will need in an emergency.

Record medications your family members take regularly or equipment they may use.

Medicine: _____

Dosage: _____

Medicine: _____

Dosage: _____

Medicine: _____

Dosage: _____

Life-support equipment: _____

Collect information for others you might need to contact in an emergency.

Doctor: _____

Telephone: _____

Pharmacist: _____

Telephone: _____

Insurance co.: _____

Telephone: _____

In-home care services:

Telephone: _____