

Powerful Patient 2009 week 11

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Emergency Preparedness

Joyce speaks with Elaine Lasoff about how you can prepare yourself, your family, and your community for emergencies – both the big ones like Hurricane Katrina, and the more common ones like fires and medical emergencies. With planning and teamwork, you will be more calm and things will likely go more smoothly.



Elaine Lasoff, RN

1) About Our Guest

Elaine Lasoff, RN, is Director of Education for the Needham (Massachusetts) Emergency Management Agency. She has extensive training in emergency nursing, with a specialty in treatment of burns, and special training in bioterrorism. She was involved in emergency management following the terrorist attack in New York on September 11, 2001, and was also part of the nation-wide team that responded to Hurricane Katrina.

She trains volunteers who supplement the police and fire personnel in Needham, Massachusetts, and supervises the readiness of Needham's emergency shelter.

2) Gathering Essential Information

Everyone should have an emergency "kit" of essentials readily available for emergency responders to your home, and to grab quickly to take with you in case you have to leave your home quickly.

The two most important bits to assemble are a complete list of your medications, and the addresses and telephone numbers for the most important people to contact.

Needham and many other towns recommend the File of Life, a paper form which is best filled out in pencil so that it can be updated as necessary, which is kept in a magnetic plastic holder on the refrigerator. First responders (police, fire, and ambulance personnel) are trained to look first on the refrigerator for this information. See <http://www.folife.org/> or contact your local police or fire department to see if they have a supply and can give you one.

If you have more extensive medical information that you want to convey to emergency room personnel, you might also wish to prepare something like an EmergenTag, which would be helpful once you get to the hospital. See <http://powerfulpatient.org/archive/2009/emergentag.php>

3) Registering with the Fire Department

If you have a disability and would need assistance in case of fire, be sure to register with the Fire Department. They maintain a list of people who might not be able to hear the fire alarm, or who might need assistance in getting out of the building in an emergency.

4) How You Can Help

In the case of a large emergency, the police and fire departments may be overwhelmed. Most communities have groups of trained volunteers they can call upon in an emergency. What might you be willing to do to help out? If you are willing to explore this, contact your police department and ask if they are accepting applications to be volunteers for their community emergency response team.

5) Elaine advises...

Elaine provided the following information to include in this handout.

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PREPARING MAKES SENSE GET READY NOW

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The chance that you and your family will recover from an emergency tomorrow, often depends on the planning and preparation done today.

While each person's abilities and needs are unique, steps can be taken to prepare for all types of emergencies, such as floods and fires, to possible terrorist attacks. If you evaluate your needs and make a plan that fits those needs, you and your family will be better prepared. There are 3 steps that need to be taken.

1. Make a plan for what you will do in an emergency
2. Prepare a kit of emergency supplies
3. Be informed about what might happen

Customize your disaster kit based on your own personal needs, and the environment that you live in.

MAKING A PLAN

In making a plan for what you will do in an emergency, consider the following:

- A. Consider a personal support network.
- B. Develop a family communication plan - how will family members who are not with you, contact you? Have a meeting place if possible to make sure that everyone is accounted for, and have drills with all family members.
- C. Decide whether to stay or go. This will mainly depend on the nature of the emergency. Watch television to find out what is happening. If the power is out, listen to the radio (Battery operated). If told to evacuate, do so.
- D. Consider your service animals and pets. Service animals can go to a shelter, while regular pets cannot. This is now a federal law. Arrange for someone in a safe area, to take care of your pets.
- E. Staying where you are. Sometimes you will be safer just staying wherever you are, until authorities tell you that it is safe to leave. This is called "shelter-in-place." Another term used is "lockdown" An example of this is: A homicide near a school has just taken place. The person who

committed the crime has not been found, and could be anywhere in the area near where the homicide took place. Schools in the area are in lockdown, meaning that nobody can enter or leave the school, including parents. Another term used in situations where there may be contaminants in the air is called “sealing the room.”

F. Evacuation - Depending on what the emergency is, will be the basis for deciding whether people should stay or leave their homes. If the authorities feel that you should leave, you are safer to do so. Find out if there is a shelter and where it is. Listen to authorities, and use common sense.

G. Fire safety - Plan ways of getting out of your house or business, and make sure everyone knows the plan. Have a meeting place, and have drills. Do not obstruct doors or hallways.

DISASTER SUPPLY KIT

The kit is the basis for some of the supplies that may be needed when an emergency or disaster happens. Remember to customize it to your personal needs, and the environment.

- ◆ Water - one gallon of water per person per day, for at least 3 days. One half should be for drinking, and one half for food preparation and sanitation. Hot environments will increase the need. Infants and the elderly are prone to severe dehydration, possibly leading to death.
- ◆ Food - At least a three day supply of non-perishable food, with a hand held can opener for ready to eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables. Canned juices, high energy foods such as peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars.
- ◆ Battery operated radio with extra batteries.
- ◆ Flashlight with extra batteries
- ◆ First aid kit
- ◆ Whistle to signal for help
- ◆ Dust mask for airborne contaminants
- ◆ Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place and seal the room
- ◆ Moist towelettes, toilet paper, soap, feminine supplies, disinfectant, plastic bags with ties, hand sanitizer
- ◆ Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- ◆ Local maps
- ◆ Pet food and supplies
- ◆ At least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person, sturdy boots, rain gear, blankets or sleeping bags, hats, gloves, and thermal underwear

- ◆ Cash, travelers checks, paper and pencils

SPECIAL ITEMS

- ◆ Medications (prescription and non-prescriptions)
- ◆ Eyeglasses
- ◆ Family documents in a waterproof container such as a Will, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, stocks and bonds
- ◆ Passport, Social Security card, immunization records
- ◆ Bank Account numbers
- ◆ Credit Card numbers
- ◆ Inventory of valuable household goods
- ◆ Important telephone numbers
- ◆ Family records (Birth, marriage, death certificates)
- ◆ Entertainment, especially for children
- ◆ Supplies for persons with special needs
- ◆ Copy of family or workplace disaster plan

BE INFORMED

- ◆ Be Informed about what is happening
- ◆ Follow directions from authorities
- ◆ Try to be calm and patient