

## **Safety in the Home**

### **Creating an Emergency Contact List**

#### **Presented by**

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Hi, I'm Ed Haines with Hadley. Do you or your family members know who to call when disaster strikes?

In this session, we're going to address an important part of emergency response, an emergency contact list with what we'll learn in less time that it takes to watch a TV show, we'll be able to organize our contacts in a way that will change how we respond to an emergency.

Anyone who's been through a power outage knows how frustrating it is to search for a utility companies phone number. Coping with emergencies effectively means knowing how to quickly contact the people and systems we need for help.

Now, we know what essential information we need but we often haven't put that knowledge into practice. In other words, our important emergency contact information is all over the place and not collected into one easy to access list. Now, most of us don't have an organized system. We have some phone numbers in our address book, some are on the refrigerator. Sometimes we have to find numbers

on the internet. That's not always an option during a power outage when your router is down. And this type of disorder, it's not helpful.

It's important to have all our information immediately ready and accessible to everyone in the household. Let's talk about some of the obvious emergency contact information we need and don't worry, we'll have templates available as a resource for you to easily create your own list.

First, you need your medical information, your phone numbers of your doctors, dentists, local hospital, pharmacists, and specialists like optometrists. You'll also need the phone numbers for your community resources like the police, fire departments, poison control center, Red Cross, utility companies, et cetera. It's also helpful to have the phone numbers of relatives and friends you can count on for assistance. And if there are children or grandchildren in your household, you need the pediatricians and school numbers too.

Some less obvious numbers we could include on our list would be an attorney, insurance agent, plumber, electrician, heating and air technician, and an internet provider. And if you live in an apartment, you need the number for your building supervisor. If you have pets or a service animal, include information for the veterinarian and the local animal shelter. And finally, it's important to have

the number of a relative or friend some distance from us where we might stay if we have to evacuate.

There are probably many, many other numbers you can think of. But for now, the important thing to remember is that we need to include crucial contact information having to do with all aspects of our life. And everyone in the family should have access to this list and be able to read it.

So if the list is brailled, keep a print copy as well if there are sighted family members in the home. If there are children and they're old enough, the children should know which numbers to call and when to call them. Now, you might be thinking I already have all these numbers in one place. They're on my mobile phone contact list. But here's a problem. Most of us lock our phones for security. Our contact list is not accessible on a locked phone. So if someone other than ourselves needs to access the list, they can't.

Now, there are ways to make sure your emergency contacts show up on your locked screen of your mobile device. So if that's where you want to keep them, a bit of homework is needed. Each device has different settings for making that possible. But again, if the phone is away from home with the owner, so is the emergency contact list.

There's one more piece of information we need to organize and include in our contact list and that is an evacuation destination. If we have to evacuate, where would we go and how would we get there. If possible, have at least two destinations. Places like shelters or relatives or friends homes.

Also, if possible, everyone in the household should know how to get to these destinations. That means knowing the streets, the turns, the cardinal directions, the landmarks, distances et cetera.

We should be able to direct a complete stranger to our place of safety without relying on anyone for directions. Some of us who are non-drivers sometimes rely on others to get us from point A to point B. That's fine, but we often don't pay much attention to routes and directions. That's a luxury we can't afford in an evacuation.

Remember, you are better off if you are responsible as much as possible for your own orientation. So get busy. Remember how I said in less time that it takes to watch a TV show, you can make a useful impact on you and your families safety. Putting together an emergency contact list won't take much time but having one handy when you need it will make all the difference in an emergency.