

ALZHEIMER'S CAREGIVING

# Disaster Preparedness for Alzheimer's Caregivers

People with [Alzheimer's disease](#) can be especially vulnerable during disasters such as severe weather, fires, floods, earthquakes, and other emergency situations. It is important for caregivers to have a disaster plan that includes the special needs of people with Alzheimer's, whose impairments in memory and reasoning severely limit their ability to act appropriately in crises.

In general, you should prepare to meet the needs of your family for 3 to 7 days, including having supplies and backup options if you lose basic services such as water or electricity. Organizations such as the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) (FEMA) and the [American Red Cross](#) provide information about making a general disaster preparedness plan.

## Gather Supplies

As you assemble supplies for your family's disaster kit, consider the needs of the person with Alzheimer's. Be sure to store all supplies in a watertight container. The kit might contain:

- [Incontinence](#) undergarments, wipes, and lotions
- Pillow, toy, or something the person can hold onto
- Favorite snacks and high-nutrient drinks
- Physician's name, address, and phone number
- [Copies of legal, medical, insurance, and Social Security information](#)
- Ziplock® bags to hold medications and documents
- Recent photos of the person

Other supplies you may need are:

- Warm clothing and sturdy shoes
- Spare eyeglasses and hearing-aid batteries
- [Medications](#)



- Flashlights and extra batteries

## If You Must Leave Home

In some situations, you may decide to “ride out” a natural disaster at home. In others, you may need to move to a safer place, like a community shelter or someone’s home. Relocation may make the person with Alzheimer’s very anxious. Be sensitive to his or her emotions. Stay close, offer your hand, or give the person reassuring hugs.

To plan for an evacuation:

- Know how to get to the nearest emergency shelters.
- If you don’t drive or driving is dangerous, arrange for someone to transport your group.
- Make sure the person with Alzheimer’s wears an [ID bracelet](#).
- Take both general supplies and your Alzheimer’s emergency kit.
- Pack familiar, comforting items. If possible, plan to take along the household pet.
- Save emergency numbers in your cell phone, and keep it charged.
- Plan to keep neighbors, friends, and family informed about your location.
- If conditions are noisy or chaotic, try to find a quieter place.

## If You Are Separated

It’s very important to stay with a person with Alzheimer’s in a disaster. Do not count on the person to stay in one place while you go to get help. However, the unexpected can happen, so it is a good idea to plan for possible separation:

- Enroll the person in the [MedicAlert® + Alzheimer’s Association Safe Return® Program](#)—an identification and support service for people who may become lost.
- Prepare for [wandering](#). Place labels in garments to aid in identification. Keep an article of the person’s clothing in a plastic bag to help dogs find him or her.
- Identify specific neighbors or nearby family and friends who would be willing to help in a crisis. Make a plan of action with them should the person with Alzheimer’s be unattended during a crisis. Tell neighbors about the person’s specific disabilities, including inability to follow complex instructions, memory loss, impaired judgment, disorientation, and confusion. Give examples of simple one-step instructions that the person may be able to follow.
- Give someone you trust a house key and list of emergency phone numbers.
- Provide local police and emergency services with photos of the person with Alzheimer’s and copies of his or her medical documents, so they are aware of the person’s needs.

## For More Information About Disaster Preparedness and Alzheimer's

### **NIA Alzheimer’s and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center**

1-800-438-4380 (toll-free)

[adear@nia.nih.gov](mailto:adear@nia.nih.gov)

[www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers](http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers)

The National Institute on Aging’s ADEAR Center offers information and free print publications about Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias for families, caregivers, and health professionals. ADEAR Center staff answer telephone, email, and written requests and make referrals to local and national resources.

### **Alzheimer's Association**

1-800-272-3900 (toll-free, 24/7)

1-866-403-3073 (TTY/toll-free)

[info@alz.org](mailto:info@alz.org)

[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

### **Alzheimer's Foundation of America**

1-866-232-8484 (toll-free)