

Emergency Preparedness Guide

Practical steps to prepare a household with care needs for the unexpected

Emergencies are easier to manage when the plan is made ahead of time, not during the event itself. This guide covers the essentials every household with an older adult or family member with care needs should have in place — including plans for the severe weather common to central North Carolina.

1. Build an Emergency Kit

- At least a 7-day supply of medications, clearly labeled
- Water (one gallon per person per day) and non-perishable food for 3+ days
- Flashlight, batteries, and a battery- or hand-crank radio
- First aid kit and any specific medical supplies (glucose monitor, oxygen, catheter supplies, etc.)
- Copies of insurance cards, ID, and a small amount of cash
- Phone charger and a backup battery pack
- Comfort items: blanket, change of clothes, hygiene supplies

2. Create a Medical Information Card

- Full name, date of birth, and emergency contacts
- Current medications, dosages, and administration times
- Allergies and medical conditions
- Primary physician and specialists, with phone numbers
- Preferred hospital and insurance information
- Advance directive or healthcare power of attorney contact

Keep one copy of the medical information card in the emergency kit, one on the refrigerator, and one in a wallet or bag that leaves the house with the person.

3. Build an Emergency Contact List

- Immediate family members and their phone numbers
- Primary care physician and key specialists
- Home care agency and caregiver scheduling line
- Neighbor or nearby friend who can check in quickly
- Utility companies (electric, water, gas)
- Local non-emergency police and fire department numbers



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4. Plan for Severe Weather

- Know the home's evacuation zone and nearest shelter, in case of hurricane evacuation
- Identify a safe interior room for tornado or severe storm warnings
- Plan for ice storms: know how heat and medical equipment will run without power
- Keep extra blankets and warm clothing on hand for winter power outages
- Sign up for county emergency alerts (text or app-based)
- Trim trees or limbs near the home that could fall in high wind

5. Plan for Power Outages

- Identify any medical equipment that requires electricity (oxygen concentrator, CPAP, etc.)
- Know the backup plan for that equipment: battery backup, generator, or relocation
- Keep a list of what needs to stay refrigerated and a plan for a cooler with ice
- Notify the electric utility if someone in the home is on life-sustaining equipment

6. Plan for Evacuation

- Identify two ways out of the home and a meeting point outside
- Plan how someone with mobility limitations will exit if elevators are unavailable
- Know where pet carriers and pet supplies are kept, if applicable
- Keep the emergency kit and medical information card near the main exit
- Identify where you would go if you had to leave the area (family, hotel, shelter)

7. Coordinate with Caregivers

- Confirm how the home care agency reaches caregivers and clients during emergencies
- Ask what the agency's plan is for continuing care during severe weather
- Make sure caregivers have access to the medical information card and emergency contacts
- Discuss who checks in on the client if a scheduled caregiver cannot reach the home

The Direct Link® voice-activated system, part of the Cared-4SM program from Home Helpers® Home Care, gives clients a way to reach help at the press of a button or by voice, day or night — a valuable layer of protection during any emergency.

