



Do you have a plan ready in case of weather-related emergencies?

People with Alzheimer’s disease can be especially **vulnerable** in disaster situations. Their impaired memory and reasoning may severely limit their ability to cope. For caregivers, it is important to **have a disaster plan** that incorporates the special needs of the person with Alzheimer’s. **VA Butler Healthcare is here to help you prepare.**

Advance Preparations

- ★ If your loved one lives in a residential facility, find out about its disaster and evacuation plans. Ask if you will be responsible for evacuating your loved one.
- ★ Whether your loved one lives with you, or you are a long-distance caregiver, be sure evacuation plans include his or her specific needs.
- ★ Prepare an emergency kit.
- ★ Enroll in MedicAlert® + Alzheimer’s Association Safe Return®, a 24-hour nationwide emergency response service for individuals with Alzheimer’s or related dementia that wander or who have a medical emergency. Call toll-free at 888.572.8566 or visit www.alz.org.

To learn more about disaster preparedness, talk to your health care team at VA Butler Healthcare. You can also visit www.caregiver.va.gov.

VA Butler Healthcare

...providing quality health care to our nation’s Veterans

ARMSTRONG COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

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Ford City, PA 16226
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CLARION COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

AC Valley Medical Center
855 Route 58, Suite One
Parker, PA 16049
724.659.5601

CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Freedom Square
1183 Freedom Road, Suite A101
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
724.741.3131

LAWRENCE COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Ridgewood Professional Centre
1750 New Butler Road
New Castle, PA 16101
724.598.6080

MICHAEL A. MARZANO VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

295 North Kerrwood Drive, Suite 110
Hermitage, PA 16148
724.346.1569



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Disaster Preparedness



Keeping your loved one with dementia safe during disaster situations

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Consider preparing an **emergency kit in advance**. Keep it in a watertight container and store it in an easily accessible location. Your emergency kit might include:

- ★ Easy on/off clothes (a couple of sets)
- ★ Supplies of medication (or minimally, a list of medications with dosages)
- ★ Velcro shoes/sneakers
- ★ A pair of eyeglasses
- ★ Incontinence products
- ★ Extra identification items, such as an ID bracelet and clothing tags
- ★ Copies of legal documents, such as power of attorney
- ★ Copies of medical documents that indicate the individual's condition and current medications
- ★ Waterproof bags to hold medications and documents
- ★ List of physicians' names, addresses and phone numbers (including cell phones)
- ★ Hand lotion or other items to promote comfort
- ★ Bottled water
- ★ Favorite items or foods, liquid meals
- ★ Pillow, toy or something to hug or hold

What should I do if I know a pending disaster is about to occur?

- Get yourself and the person with Alzheimer's to a safe place
- Try to leave as early as possible to minimize long delays in heavy traffic
- Alert others (family, friends, medical personnel) that you are changing locations, give them your contact information, and contact them regularly as you move
- Be sure someone other than the caregiver has copies of their medical history, medications, physician information and family contacts
- Purchase extra medications
- Be sure to obtain portable tanks if your loved one uses oxygen

Stay safe during a disaster

During an evacuation people with dementia are **especially vulnerable** to chaos and emotional trauma. They have limited ability to understand what is happening, and they may forget what they have been told about the disaster. **Be alert to potential reactions** that may result from changes in routine, traveling, or new environments. Changes can cause agitation, wandering, and a possible increase in behavioral symptoms including hallucinations, delusions, and sleep disturbance.

1. Inform others (hotel or shelter staff, family members, airline attendants) that your loved one has dementia and may not understand what is happening when appropriate.
2. Stay with your loved one. It only takes a few minutes to wander away and get lost.
3. Remain calm; the person with dementia will respond to the emotional tone you set.



Tips for preventing agitation

- ★ Reassure the person. Hold hands or put your arm on his or her shoulder. Say things are going to be fine.
- ★ Redirect the person's attention if he or she becomes upset
- ★ Move the person to a safer or quieter place and limit stimulation if possible
- ★ Make sure the person takes medications as scheduled
- ★ Try to schedule regular meals and maintain a regular sleep schedule
- ★ Avoid elaborate or detailed explanations. Provide information using concrete terms. Follow brief explanations with reassurance
- ★ Be prepared to provide additional assistance with all activities of daily living
- ★ Pay attention to cues that the person may be overwhelmed (fidgeting, pacing)
- ★ Remind the person that he or she is in the right place

Helpful hints during an episode of agitation

- ★ Approach the person from the front and use his or her name
- ★ Use calm, reassuring, and positive statements and a patient, low pitched voice
- ★ Respond to the emotions being expressed rather than the content of the words. For example, say, "You're frightened and want to go home. It's ok. I'm right here with you."
- ★ Reassure your loved one, affirm his or her experience, and try to divert the person's attention

Take care of yourself

- ★ Take care of yourself by finding a good listener to hear your thoughts and feelings about the event
- ★ Find moments to breathe, meditate, reflect

