

In Case of Evacuation: What You Need to Know TRANSCRIPT

Training Topics

This training is an introduction to evacuation considerations for those with medical needs and vulnerabilities in Georgia. Topics covered include:

1. How to prepare for an evacuation
2. What to bring during an evacuation
3. How the evacuation process works
4. What to expect at the shelter
5. Returning home
6. Helpful resources

How to Prepare for an Evacuation

Staying in your own home or going to a relative's or friend's home away from the danger is the best option when it's possible, but safety is always the first and most important thing to consider.

A shelter provided by local authorities will be safe and secure. You'll have food, a cot to sleep on and a bathroom, but it's not as comfortable – or as private – as being in your own home.

Preparing for an Evacuation

Local authorities will decide if an evacuation is necessary – and sometimes it's not a choice of whether to evacuate or not. It will be mandatory to do so.

Your county Emergency Management Agency will provide guidance on who needs to evacuate and the process that will be followed.

Be sure to pay close attention to your local news for information about the county – every event and every county is different.

A good idea is to find out now – ahead of time – how your county will let people know what they should do during an emergency.

Then, please, make a plan.

Discuss with your family what you will do if you have to leave your home due to a disaster or an emergency.

If You Have a Caregiver

If you have a caregiver, they should go with you during an evacuation, if possible, to make sure you get the best possible care while you're in the shelter.

It is especially important to talk to your caregiver about what they will do during an evacuation so you have a plan. Make sure you discuss their plans for evacuation BEFORE an evacuation is ordered.

As part of your evacuation plan, be sure to check with local authorities about non-caregiver family members, including children, and where they will go during an emergency.

What to Bring During an Evacuation

There are things you will need to bring with you during an evacuation:

- Bring all medications you are currently taking. It's best to bring them in the pill bottles they come in, if possible.

- Also bring a list of your medications and the name of the doctors who prescribe them.
- In addition, bring along supplies and equipment you use to manage your medical condition. This includes things like tracheotomy supplies, ventilator supplies, CPAP machine and supplies, catheter supplies, diabetes test strips and reader.
- If you have a walker or a wheelchair, bring it with you.
- Anything you use to help manage your medical condition should go with you to the shelter.

In addition,

- Bring enough clothing for at least a week of living in the shelter.
- And you'll need your toothbrush, toothpaste, hair brush, deodorant, and feminine hygiene products, too.
- Also, be sure to take your cellphone and a charger with you.

What NOT to Bring to the Shelter

There are also things you SHOULD NOT bring to the shelter:

- Don't bring any valuables such as jewelry or expensive electronics – except for the ones you need for your medical condition.
- No weapons of any kind – guns, knives, pepper spray.
- No alcohol or illegal drugs or substances.
- Check with local authorities ahead of an emergency when you're making your evacuation plan for guidance on what to do with your pets. Depending on the shelter, you may or may not be able to bring them with you. If you are allowed to bring your pet, don't forget food and medications for them, along with a leash, a pet carrier if you have one, and a record of the shots they've had.
- Designated service animals, of course, are always allowed and you can and should bring them with you.

How the Evacuation Process Works

Evacuating people to safe locations and making sure their medical needs are met is very complicated.

Moving large numbers of people takes many resources and can sometimes take a long time.

This is why preparing for an emergency and having a plan ahead of time are so important to helping you understand the process of evacuating.

It is very important that you are patient while authorities work with you to identify the best way to get you to the safest available shelter.

Transportation Arrangements

Be sure authorities have a way to call you or your caregiver to verify you are at your home and that you need transportation to the shelter.

If transportation is needed, the vehicle that will take you to a shelter will only have room for you and your caregiver. Additional people will not be allowed.

There will be limited supplies available during transportation. Do not forget to bring with you all of the things that you need while you're at the shelter.

What to Expect at the Shelter

Staying at a shelter is for your safety, and to make sure your health needs continue to be met during an emergency.

A shelter will not be like being at home, especially during stays that last for days or weeks.

Shelters have just enough space to accommodate the needs of your medical condition, and for the staff that will help you while you're there.

The shelter will provide little privacy – typically you will be in a large, open space like a gymnasium with dozens of other people who also need assistance.

You will have food, a cot to sleep on and access to a bathroom. Do not expect four-star hotel accommodations.

While every attempt will be made to make you as comfortable as possible, shelter staff must focus on making sure you and others at the shelter are safe and that your medical needs are being taken care of.

Returning Home

The shelter will remain open as long as evacuation is necessary.

Authorities will decide when it is safe for people to return to their homes. Your home or residence may need to be checked to be sure it is safe for you to live there before you go home.

Depending on the event and needs of shelter residents, some shelters may close and you may be moved to another location.

The process of returning home will be done the same way the evacuation process was done.

Transportation will be arranged to take you and your caregiver back home as soon as authorities say it is safe for you to return.

Helpful Resources

In addition to this training, the Georgia Department of Public Health and your local community have resources available to assist you in the case of an emergency. You may find other resources at Ready.Georgia (ready.ga.gov).

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