

April Showers bring more than May Flowers

The signs of spring in Ohio include blossoming trees, maple syrup production and severe weather advisories. You are probably familiar with the common elements of Ohio's springtime; thunderstorms, tornados, high winds, flooding, and the possibility of snow in May. For Caregivers planning is critical - someone is depending on you.

Each of us needs to think of our household's individual considerations. When hearing the tornado sirens, we are taught to head for the basement. In many situations getting a loved one to the basement is not a viable option. Know where to go in your home, usually an inside room away from windows. Young children now learn a program called DUCK at school for tornados and high wind warnings. "D" for down, the lowest level in your home you can get to. "U" to get under something like a sturdy table; "C" for cover your head and "K" to keep in shelter until the storm has passed.

Think of common emergency situations and make a written plan. Putting things in writing reinforces your plan and reminds you of gaps. Our area's early summer is likely to include thunderstorms and the associated high winds and power outages. A simple item to start with is to make a plan for

The Family Caregiver's Corner

The Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) is a program of the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging funded by the Older Americans Act and the state of Ohio. The FCSP offers several services including information, assistance with temporary respite care to give you time off, support groups and training for unpaid, family Caregivers.

Sincerely,

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an electric outage. The loss of electricity creates its own set of problems. The cordless phone will not work, darkness can lead to trips and falls or equipment, such as an oxygen concentrator or a lift chair, run on electricity. Your list should include flashlights, plan for heating or cooling (you never know which you will need in Ohio) or you may need to switch from a concentrator to an oxygen tank. Make a plan as if the outage is 24 hours although many times an electrical outage is resolved quickly in our area.

For years I followed the recommended preparedness information; I had an emergency kit, a list of Gram's medications, copies of important papers. The trouble was I planned assuming I will be at home with Gram. Look at your list

of what to do in an electrical outage make a second, write a column imagining you are not home with your loved one. Ohio's major storms are usually between 2 and 10 p.m. What if you are still at work? Can your loved one get up without the lift mechanism? Could he or she get the portable oxygen or reach the flashlight? If you are delayed in getting home who can you count on? Caregivers need multiple plans to cover multiple situations: When you are home or at work, what type of weather is coming, how long will the emergency last - hours or days?

As Caregivers we so often feel we are doing it all and we are on our own. This feeling may intensify during times when everyone seems to be hurrying to take care of their own family and prop-

erty. A part of your planning should be to create a Disaster Team. Ask your neighbors *today* if they would be available to check in with your loved one. People are usually more than glad to help, but they need to know exactly what you need and when you need it. Give at least one other person a key to your home. You may want to share information on your loved one's medical needs, when to call safety forces, or how he or she deals with trauma or stress. Who is your loved one most comfortable with if you are unavailable and how can they be contacted?

There are several sources for emergency planning information. An **emergency checklist is available on-line at the American Red Cross** (www.redcross.org) in a section titled "Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and other Special Needs." If you do not have internet access the Lorain County Libraries or Red Cross Chapter office will help you. When you review the planning information I recommend being prepared from at least two points of view - when you are home with your loved one and when you are not. And be sure you take into account your own needs.

It is easier to relax and enjoy the May flowers when we feel prepared for an emergency.

Are You Prepared For a Sudden Illness or Even Death?

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The majority of senior adults do not have a will, a living will or a power of attorney in the event they should become gravely ill or die unexpectedly. Most seniors think they do not have assets and refuse to think about death as a result they fail to prepare these much needed documents. Often seniors are

not aware of the burden they place on their children and other loved ones when they fail to prepare for the inevitable, we all know we are going to face death someday. Why not prepare and save our families the extra grief that comes with long illness and the death of a loved one. So are you prepared for a sudden illness or even death? Remember that in preparing a living will and accompanying power of attorney

for health care, you are clearly stating desires. And with minimal preparation and costs, you can spare your loved ones the difficulties that come with making decisions during such an emotional time.

What exactly is a will? A will is an expressed intention of what should or should not be done with one's property after death, it is usually the first document considered in a person's estate plan.

Without a will it is up to the state to decide how property and those cherished possessions will be distributed, you do not need to have a lot of assets to have a will, you may want to give your children your china, jewelry, pictures albums (a life time of memories) or your books, it will avoid the need for your children and family to fight over who should or should not get what.

What is a Living Will? A living will

is also known as a medical directive and dictates individual's directions for receiving life-sustaining medical intervention in the event of grave illness or injury.

What is a Power of Attorney for Healthcare? A power of attorney for healthcare legally gives the authority to another person to make medical decisions on your behalf, if you should become incapacitated.

This gives you the power to decide ahead of time what you want the person you will designate to do for you if you are not able or should you become unable to decide for yourself after a serious injury or a grave illness.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, Lorain County office, 538 W. Broad St., Suite 300, Elyria, Ohio 44035, 440-323-8240.

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