

# Disasters Strike Are You Ready?

Developing a Disaster Preparedness Plan  
if you have Chronic Lung Disease





The COPD Foundation's mission is to prevent and cure Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and to improve the lives of all people affected by COPD.

*Developing a Disaster Preparedness Plan*  
was created by the COPD Foundation.

*Take Action Today. Breathe Better Tomorrow.*

Questions about COPD can be directed to the C.O.P.D.  
Information Line at 866-316-COPD (2673).

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

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## Introduction

Thinking about a disaster can be frightening and overwhelming for anyone, especially for someone who has trouble breathing due to COPD, asthma, pulmonary fibrosis or some other chronic lung disease.

This **Disaster Preparedness Plan** will guide you, step-by-step, to put a plan in place. Following this process will help you think through what you need. It will give you information on where and how to get help. The plan will provide tips for you to breathe as well as possible during, and after, the storm has passed.

Section 1 - Plan: Starting to plan - Finding out what you need

Section 2 - Communicate: Putting together your emergency contact list and Personal Support Network

Section 3 - Prepare: Gathering items for supply kits

Section 4 - Decide: A guide to deciding if you should Stay in your home or Go to another place

Section 5 - Other Considerations: Things you should know to prepare for a disaster

Section 6 - Resources

Show this booklet to your family, friends, caregivers, neighbors and anyone else in your Personal Support Network. They may have suggestions and ways to help you. They may also have access to technology and other resources. Helping you may prompt them to work on their own disaster plan.

Along with this Disaster Preparedness Plan booklet you received a COPD Foundation Disaster Plan folder. Put forms, lists and other disaster-related information in this folder. Keeping everything together will make it easy to find what you need, when you need it.

Take the time now to do what you can to plan ahead. If you do, you will be more likely to maintain your health and safety during a disaster. You'll have confidence in knowing you're prepared, just in case of an emergency.



## Section 1 – Plan

### Starting to Plan – Finding out what you need

The most important step in being prepared for a disaster, or any emergency, is planning. Have a good solid plan ahead of time, before something happens.

#### ***What types of disasters are likely to happen where you live?***

Disasters can happen anywhere, but some areas are more likely to have certain types of events. Do you live near a creek or river? You may be prone to flooding. Folks who live in Northern areas of the U.S. get snow, ice and freezing temperatures. People in the Southwest deal more often with heat and extreme dust conditions. In the Midwest, tornadoes and severe storms are a concern. Tropical storms and hurricanes affect people in the Southeast and along the Atlantic coast. Wildfires can be a hazard throughout the West.

Some areas are more likely to have frequent power outages. Others may be prone to water rationing or major service interruptions. Living near heavily traveled highways, railroads, waterways and industrial plants may pose a threat for chemical fires or other hazards. Make yourself aware of what's in your local area and the unlikely, but possible, dangers in your area.

#### ***City or Country?***

Are you in the city where there are a lot of people around, or in a rural area where help might be farther away?

#### ***Do you have specific medical needs?***

Do you require equipment that would be affected by a power interruption? Are you unable to walk or have limited mobility?

*What kind of home do you live in?*

*Single family home? Mobile home? Are you on the first floor or upstairs? Apartment building or condo? Does your home or building have an elevator?*

*Take a tour of your building. Know the location of emergency exits.*

**Chart your plan**

This chart is the first step in putting together your personal disaster plan. Write down potential disasters and hazards and how they might affect you. Think about how to plan for each of them now. Know what to do if something happens. For example, a fallen tree can interrupt electrical power. It may also block your street. To prepare for this, take a tour of your neighborhood. Learn different ways to get around if your street is blocked. Make a note of how you normally leave your home, and how you would leave if you had to go in another direction. You may need to list more than one effect or action step for each hazard.

We will call this the *If...Then... Disaster Plan*. Begin by writing in this booklet. Add more pages if needed. Keep them in your COPD Foundation Disaster Plan folder.



***If...Then...Disaster Plan***

<b>Disaster / Hazard</b>	<b>Effect on me</b>	<b>What can I do now?</b>	<b>What should I do if it happens?</b>
Mohawk River ¼ mile away - floods every spring.	If it floods, my house might flood.	Buy a weather radio. Arrange for a wheelchair and help in case I need to evacuate.	Evacuate if a flood may affect your living space.
I live in an area where tornados are common.	A tornado could damage or destroy my home.	Locate the nearest underground tornado shelter-arrange for help to get there. Store spare oxygen or medications in the shelter if possible.	Get to the nearest shelter underground.
We get blizzards every year.	I can't get out to shop for groceries and medications.	Stock up on non- perishable foods and have a 1-week stock of meds in the winter.	Stay indoors and keep in touch with support network.

*If...Then...Disaster Plan*

<b>Disaster / Hazard</b>	<b>Effect on me</b>	<b>What can I do now?</b>	<b>What should I do if it happens?</b>

### Your Personal Support Network

Now is the time to put together your Personal Support Network. Think of people who could help you in a disaster. Talk with your family, friends, caregivers and neighbors about their own disaster preparedness plans. Work with them to develop your plan. For example, you might have a neighbor with a tornado shelter who is willing to shelter you and help you get there. If you don't have access to a variety of information on your phone, someone you know probably does. Important information and help may be available through Twitter™, Facebook™ or other such program during a disaster. Share your phone number(s) with neighbors you trust. Take down their information as well. We'll talk more about communication in Section 2.

*Even if you don't know how to use new technology, someone you know probably does. Ask that person if they will help keep you informed in a disaster or teach you how to do it on your own.*

### Weather Radios

A weather alert radio can give you the weather forecast and alert you if threatening weather is coming. Most areas of the country are within range of a national weather service radio station which provides these emergency alerts. Weather alert radios can also warn you of other types of events such as a chemical spill, civil disturbance and amber alert. These radios are available at department stores, electronics or sporting goods stores. They are a great investment in safety and preparedness. Cell phone applications (apps) are available for weather radio stations as well. Most of them are free to download and provide a great deal of information about activity in your area.

### Helpful Services

Contact your local government to find out the types of disasters and/or hazards most likely in your area. The people there can tell you about services that can help. Ask about shelter locations. Find out if there are "special needs" shelters in your area to help people with medical needs and/or pets. Ask about warning systems, transportation services, evacuation routes and medical facilities. See if there are social services that can help you. Start to gather phone numbers for these services. We'll talk more about this in section 2.

**Utilities**

Check with your electric, natural gas, telephone and water utilities for their policies on customers with special needs. Most utilities have plans to help those with medical needs during a power outage or disaster. Ask about forms that you and your health care provider can fill out, so you can get the help you need if there is an interruption in power. (Your health care provider is your doctor, physician’s assistant or nurse practitioner.)

You will find a form, “Physician Certification of Serious Illness or Life Support,” in your COPD Foundation Disaster Plan folder that came with this booklet. Have your health care provider complete this form. When you call your utility company, tell them you have this form.

*Special equipment for life support, like generators, may be tax deductible.*

**Generators**

In a power outage, generators can make their own electrical power. They can be a great help but **must be used safely and correctly**. Generators must be used outdoors and away from doors and windows. They should NEVER be used indoors or inside of a garage. Have a licensed electrician check your wiring before you attempt to power your home through your home’s power distribution panel.



Two main types of generators are “small portable” and “whole house” generators. A small portable generator can power one or two circuits. A 2000 watt generator can be purchased for under \$200. It can run for up to 4 hours on one gallon of gasoline. This type of generator can power an oxygen concentrator, a small electric heater, refrigerator or a light (not all at the same time). Larger portable generators can power more devices and offer an electric start. This larger portable generator uses more gasoline.

*Generators should NEVER be used indoors or inside a garage!*

A “whole house” generator has even more power, but costs more. It can power most or all essential electrical needs. If using a small portable unit, be sure to store 5 gallons of gasoline or more for an emergency or disaster. Be careful when refueling generators because there are fire hazards when working with gasoline. Make sure you read and follow all instructions that come with a generator.

**Alternate Heat Source**

An alternate heat source such as a gas log fireplace or a natural gas wall heater can keep one room warm if you close the doors to other areas of your home. Call a local heating/cooling company that you trust. Tell them about your medical needs and ask how to use these heaters safely. Avoid using a kerosene heater if possible. These heaters can produce fumes which may cause trouble for people with chronic lung disease.



**Medications**

Work with your health care provider and pharmacist to make sure you have at least a 1-week supply of medications at home. If you get your medication from a local pharmacy, ask if they offer home delivery.

You're off to a good start by finding out what types of disasters and hazards are likely in your area and how they might affect you. You have written steps on what to do, now and later. You may have begun to put together your Personal Support Network and contact information for community agencies, power utilities and emergency services. Put these in your COPD Foundation Disaster Plan folder and we'll work on them some more in section 2.

Keep going and you'll be well on your way to having a safe and effective way to respond in case of a disaster.



*You may be eligible for a medical alert service that will contact emergency help for you if you aren't able to do it yourself.*

## Section 2 – Communicate

### Putting together your emergency contact list and Personal Support Network

Reliable communication is important any time, but especially in an emergency or disaster. It's important to know how to contact emergency services, family, friends, neighbors, health care providers and others. Equally important is letting people know how to reach you. Let's start by putting together a list of emergency phone numbers, non-emergency numbers and names.

#### “First line” emergency phone numbers

The emergency number you're most likely to use is 911, but it may be another number in your area. In addition, have the phone numbers (emergency and non-emergency) for each of the following:

- Fire department
- Emergency medical service (ambulance)
- Police department
- Red Cross



**Some services are able to help their customers who have medical needs. Make them aware that you have special medical needs with these three steps: 1.) Call 2.) Tell 3.) Ask.**

Put these services on your contact list. This step is important to do ahead of time.

- 1.) **Call** these services. Ask to be connected with the department that works with customers who have special medical needs.
  - Electric utility
  - Natural Gas utility, propane or other heating fuel provider
  - Water and sewer service provider(s)
  - Local government for your city, town, borough, village, county, etc.
  - Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) if there is one in your area
  - Oxygen Supplier
  - Home Care/Medical Equipment Company

- Visiting Nurse
  - Public Health Department
  - Medical Alert Services
- 2.) **Tell** them about your special needs. Some examples are:
- Home medical equipment, such as an oxygen concentrator, CPAP, Bi-PAP or ventilator that require electricity
  - Daily or timed medications that must be refrigerated
  - If you are unable to move around your home without a motorized chair or scooter
  - Need for extra oxygen supply in case of emergency (be sure to tell them your liter flow)
  - Electric bed with or without a special air mattress
  - IV pump
  - Require daily help with suction or mobilizing mucus
  - Other medical devices that require electricity
  - Pets or service animals
- 3.) **Ask** questions about services that might help you with your medical needs.
1. What help is available for me in case of a disaster?
  2. Are there forms for me and my health care provider to send in?
  3. What's the best way for me to contact you in an emergency?
  4. Are there special needs shelters available in this area?
  5. What oxygen systems are available for back up if my electricity goes out? How long do they last?
  6. Is there a battery back-up available for my nebulizer, CPAP/Bi-PAP, ventilator or scooter?

*Remember the utility companies and other services that can help. Add them on your contact list.*

### Methods of Communication

It seems that every day we rely more on a smart-phone, tablet, computer or some other electronic gadget for communication. In a disaster some of this technology might not work. Electricity and internet services may be unavailable or unreliable. In this case you will need a reliable backup for communication.

### What are the different types of communication?

**Landline phone:** The old-fashioned landline telephone is a time-tested tool. Even when the power goes out, landline phones are often still working. There is often no substitute for landline phones during an emergency or disaster.

**Cordless system:** There is a big difference between a regular landline phone and a cordless telephone system. A cordless telephone that runs off one base station in your home uses electricity as well as the traditional phone line. If you lose power, that phone will not work when the battery runs out.

**Cellular or Internet phone:** Many people give up their standard telephone service in favor of cell phones or Internet phones. These are lightweight, portable and easy to use. Cell phones can be used to send text messages. Often a text message will get through even if you can't place a voice call. However, cell phones have some drawbacks.

They are battery operated and need to be kept charged. Cell phones rely on digital towers to work and some areas do not have reliable cell phone service. If a digital tower is damaged or loses power, or too many people are trying to make calls at the same time, the cell phone may not work.



On the other hand, important information and quick help may be available through a cell phone by social media such as Twitter™ and Facebook.™ If you do not have access to these, talk with your Personal Support Network – your family, friends, neighbors and caregivers – to find someone who does.

One of the best ways to stay informed about a disaster near you is to listen to your local radio or TV stations. Radio stations will broadcast news and official information during a disaster. You can use an inexpensive battery-operated AM/FM radio for updates, even if the power is out. Weather radios, also battery-operated, will help alert you to threatening conditions. Look into buying a weather alert radio so you know what's going on around you. A small radio and/or TV that runs on batteries is another option.



*The old-fashioned landline telephone is a method of communication that has been around for a long time and is very dependable.*

*Check on a back-up power unit for your computer. This can also charge a cell phone or power a small radio. You can find these units at most department stores.*

### Your Personal Support Network

We've talked about different forms of communication, but communicating is more than technology. It's about creating relationships with others and having a network you can rely upon if a disaster occurs. If you haven't done so already, now is the time to build your Personal Support Network.

In addition to family, friends and caregivers, your Personal Support Network includes your neighbors. Your neighbors are close by when disaster strikes. Get to know your neighbors. Ask for the first and last name and phone number of those you trust. Add them to your list. Tell them about your special needs and your limitations. Ask them if they are able to check in on you regularly. Offer to do the same for them, if you can. If you don't have family in your town, make sure a trusted neighbor has the name and number of your nearest family member. In a disaster it is often easier to get a message to someone in another town or state than to contact someone locally.

In the COPD Foundation Disaster Plan folder that came with this booklet, you'll find a Disaster Plan contact list. Make two additional copies of this list. Keep one in your folder, one by your phone and the other in your Go kit (section 3).

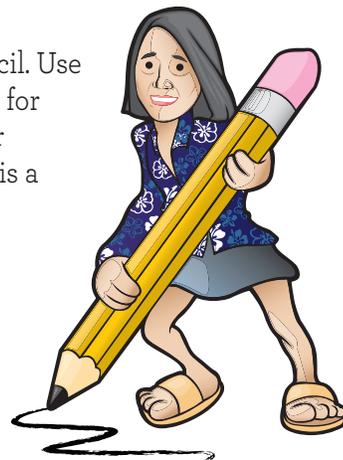
### Paper, pen and pencil

Don't underestimate the power of paper, pen and pencil. Use them to write instructions, draw a map or leave a note for your neighbors if you have to evacuate. A sign in your window or on your door can alert someone that there is a person with medical needs inside.

Contacting help in the course of a disaster can be a challenge. Plan ahead with alternatives, options and a Personal Support Network to give you a good chance of you getting the help you need during an emergency or disaster.

*Talk with the people you live with and decide where to meet if you become separated.*

*Who would you call to get help if you needed it? Are they nearby? Would they be able to overcome barriers or road blocks to get to you? Who would you contact to tell them that **you are okay**? Would your loved ones be in touch with you to let you know that **they are okay**?*



## Section 3 - Prepare

### Gathering items for supply kits

You're now on your way to developing a network of services, personal support and methods of communication you can rely on in an emergency.

Another important part of preparing for a disaster is putting together an emergency supply kit. This kit should include enough supplies to last at least three days, one week is best. Of course, some of the emergency supplies you use at home would be different than those you'd use if you were evacuated. We'll talk about how to decide to stay or go in Section 4. Right now let's discuss building an emergency kit for both situations, if you stay and if you go.

In the lists below, place a check mark in the space provided when the item is packed. Record the date of the medication or food item with the soonest expiration date. More lists may be downloaded from the COPD Foundation website. A completed list should be stored inside or taped to the kit container.

*Inspect your kits every 6 months and replace any expired items at that time. Use a new checklist each time.*

#### The "Go" Kit

Your home may be the safest place for you during or after a disaster. However, it might be necessary to leave your home due to damage, flooding or something else that might make it unsafe. This Go Kit should hold your basic needs for at least three days, a week is best. Since the Go Kit will be traveling with you, it must be smaller than your Stay Kit. Choose items that are lightweight and small. Save larger, heavier items for your Stay Kit. Avoid putting canned food in your Go Kit. Your Go Kit will be a part of your Stay Kit. If you

*Choose items that are lightweight and small. Save larger, heavier items for your Stay Kit. Avoid putting canned food in your Go Kit.*



have to leave, you just pick up the Go Kit and go. Be certain to write your first and last name on the Go Kit container. If you are going to a shelter, there may be limits on space for personal supplies, so keep this in mind. Remember your own physical limitations when it comes to carrying your Go Kit.

### Food and Water

Packed	Exp. Date	
_____	_____	Water is necessary but is heavy. If you are moving to a shelter, there should be water available there. If not, bring what you can carry.
_____	_____	Food should be lightweight and easy to carry. Protein bars or other small, lightweight foods are good. Foil or paper packets weigh less than cans. Remember your usual dietary restrictions when putting these items in your kit.
_____	_____	If you have pets, pack enough food and water for them. Single serving packets are best. Travel bowls work well.

### Medical Items

Packed	Exp. Date	
_____	_____	Medications, at least a 3-day supply
_____	_____	List of your medications, allergies and other notes
_____	_____	Paper prescriptions
_____	_____	Medical records
_____	_____	Lightweight backup oxygen system
_____	_____	Cannula, tubing and gasket for the oxygen regulator
_____	_____	Pulse oximeter
_____	_____	Chargers and batteries for a Portable Oxygen Concentrator (POC)
_____	_____	Portable nebulizer with extra batteries and supplies
_____	_____	Walking assistance devices
_____	_____	Extra pair of eye glasses
_____	_____	Batteries for hearing aids or other small medical devices and equipment
_____	_____	Ventilator and/or CPAP supplies

*Use inhalers (with spacer) in place of nebulizer medications when possible. Keep medications with you in a purse, small tote or backpack. **Never pack your medications in a suitcase or other container that you cannot get to quickly!***

*If you get your medications from a store that is part of a national chain, you may get your prescriptions filled easily from anywhere in the country, thanks to electronic records. You may not need paper prescriptions.*

*If you will be driving to your Go place and have time, get help putting backup oxygen in your car ahead of time. Make sure your car has a full tank of gas.*

*Know how to run your nebulizer from an oxygen source, just in case.*

**Other Items**

Packed	Exp. Date	
_____	_____	COPD Foundation Disaster Plan folder with emergency contact list
_____	_____	Portable AM/FM radio
_____	_____	Small flashlight with batteries
_____	_____	Cell phone (fully charged) with extra battery and charger
_____	_____	Small multi-purpose tool
_____	_____	Books, playing cards, word/number puzzles, crosswords, etc.
_____	_____	Pencil and paper
_____	_____	Cash
_____	_____	Spare set of keys
_____	_____	Assortment of sealable baggies
_____	_____	Fanny pack or clothing with inside pockets to keep valuables
_____	_____	3-days of clothing
_____	_____	Rain poncho
_____	_____	Scarf or mask to protect you from airborne irritants
_____	_____	Personal care items, toothbrush, comb, etc.
_____	_____	Hand sanitizer
_____	_____	Small pillow
_____	_____	Pet collar with ID tag

*What you can bring often depends upon how quickly you need to leave and where you will be going. Remember to pack light and small.*

*Each pet should have a leash (muzzle, if necessary). Have a pet carrier for each small pet and if possible a collapsible pen for larger animals.*

### The “Stay” Kit

Your Stay Kit will include your Go Kit plus some additional items. This kit should have enough supplies to last one week or more. Items should be kept in plastic containers or totes and stored where you can get to them easily. You don't have to buy all the items at once. Get them as you can until your kits are complete. In addition to the items suggested here, there may be other things you want to have in your Stay Kit. Talk it over with your family, friends and neighbors. Remember, items in your Stay Kit are in addition to your Go Kit. You may want extra supplies or larger, more durable items in the Stay Kit.

### Food and Water

Packed	Exp. Date	
_____	_____	Bottled water for drinking and taking medications. One gallon of water per person per day is recommended.
_____	_____	Ready-to-eat, non-perishable foods (foods that don't need refrigeration), snacks, juices, canned food - food that can be eaten without cooking. Some canned fruits come with a pop-top pull ring. Include a non-electric can opener in your kit.
_____	_____	A week's supply of food and water for pets. Single serving packets are best.

*Remember any dietary restrictions you have, especially if you have diabetes or congestive heart failure. Consider low salt (sodium) food to avoid excess thirst unless advised by your health care provider to eat foods higher in sodium.*

*If your power is out, open your refrigerator only if you have to. Keeping it closed will keep food colder, longer. Try to stay in one room with the door closed to maintain heat or cooler air.*

### Medical Items

Packed	Exp. Date	
_____	_____	Medications, at least a 1-week supply
_____	_____	Small cooler with ice packs if you require a medication that has to be refrigerated
_____	_____	Basic First Aid Kit, bandages, medical tape, antibiotic cream, etc.
_____	_____	Backup oxygen system, extra tanks and supplies

*Remember that liquid oxygen cannot be stored in your portable device because of evaporation. If you have oxygen tanks, store them flat on the ground and secure them to prevent rolling in case of a storm or disaster.*

### Other Items

Packed	Exp. Date	
_____	_____	Heavy-duty flashlight
_____	_____	Batteries in a variety of sizes
_____	_____	Battery-powered lantern with adjustable brightness
_____	_____	Battery-powered or crank type portable radio
_____	_____	Long-life battery or power pack to charge cell phone without electricity
_____	_____	Wind-up or battery-operated clock
_____	_____	Small battery-operated table or handheld fan
_____	_____	Whistle to signal for help
_____	_____	Blanket and/or sleeping bag
_____	_____	“Space blanket” or similar
_____	_____	Long pants, long sleeve shirt, warm socks
_____	_____	Sturdy boots or shoes
_____	_____	Hat that covers your ears
_____	_____	Gloves
_____	_____	Moist towelettes, garbage bags, plastic ties and toiletries
_____	_____	Extra Batteries and charger for motorized wheelchair
_____	_____	Large, strong tote bag or backpack in case you leave
_____	_____	Non-electric can opener
_____	_____	Paper/plastic plates, cups, towels, eating utensils, etc.
_____	_____	Fire extinguisher
_____	_____	Duct tape
_____	_____	Tarp or plastic sheeting
_____	_____	Scissors



*If you are on oxygen, don't depend on candles! Keep an inexpensive flashlight in each room, if possible.*

Just as important as putting your supplies together is taking care of them so they are safe to use when needed. Here are some tips to keep your supplies in good condition and ready to use:

- Keep all emergency supplies – especially non-perishable food – in a cool, dry place.
- Store boxed food in tightly closed, plastic or metal containers to protect from pests and extend shelf life.
- Inspect and change stored food, water and medication supplies every 6 months as needed. Use a new packing list each time. Keep your packing lists inside the container or taped to the lid.
- Store medications in waterproof bags or containers. Label medication containers with expiration dates.
- Throw out canned goods that are swollen, dented or corroded.
- Update your kit as needs change.

There may be more items you wish to include in your kit. See “Resources” at the end of this booklet. The more information you have, the better prepared you will be.



## Section 4 – Decide

### A guide to deciding if you should Stay in your home or Go to another place

The decision to Stay or Go (evacuate) is one of the most difficult decisions to make in a disaster. Nobody wants to leave their home, especially with little warning. Remember, safety first. Your response to the question “Should I stay or should I go?” should be based on this question: Am I safer at home or somewhere else?



All disasters are different. The best choice depends on several factors that affect your safety: the nature of the event, how much warning time you have, how large an area is affected and how long the disaster might last.

In Section 1 we talked about knowing which types of disasters are likely in your area. In the ***If...Then... Disaster Plan*** you filled in what your actions would be if certain events occurred. You may have determined that you are near a river that could flood. One response to that flood might be to move to the upstairs level of your home. Another option might be to go to the home of family or friends. They could take you and your pets in and help you be as comfortable as possible. Yet another choice might be to go to a pre-arranged shelter outside the flood zone. This is an example of how your pre-disaster planning can help you make the stay or go decision.

*Don't wait until it's too late and not safe to travel.*

#### Disasters with warning

If your decision is to go, the best time to do it is before the disaster strikes. The roads will be safe. The weather will be relatively calm. Usually, shelters are set up ahead of the storm's arrival. Relocating then might be a good option. If you require the help of a personal caregiver, bring that person with you. However, if you don't have a caregiver, you may need assistance provided by a medical shelter. Is the nearest medical shelter location part of your plan? (See Section 2 for finding out about shelter options.)

*If you have a well-stocked Stay kit, plenty of water, food and medications, you may be able to safely stay where you are and weather the storm.*

#### Disasters with no warning

Some events occur with little to no warning. While weather forecasting has improved greatly over the past several years, tornados are still unpredictable and can occur with only a few minutes warning. Earthquakes can cause massive destruction with no

warning at all. Flash floods can occur quickly, miles away from the nearest rainstorm, especially in the Western part of the country. An industrial explosion or fire can happen in an instant. In these “no notice” events you might have to leave quickly in order to save your own life. It is likely in this type of disaster that your local police or fire department would order an evacuation of homes or neighborhoods. Hopefully you would have help moving. However, it is equally likely that due to unsafe conditions outside, the safest action might be to stay where you are.

### Stay or Go? More to Consider

No matter what, be sure to listen to your local emergency authorities. A situation can change rapidly and the plan may change as the event unfolds. Your decision may have been to stay, but the storm was worse than expected. In this case ask, is your home damaged or likely to become damaged? If so, you may have to leave. Do you have a car or other transportation? Do you have enough fuel? Are the roads passable? Do you have a pet or service animal? A service animal would most likely stay with you, but a pet might have to go to an animal shelter. If you must walk, can you carry your oxygen or other equipment?

Hurricanes and blizzards are examples of natural disasters that can be predicted. It is rare nowadays to be surprised by large storms such as these. Heat waves and periods of extreme cold are the same. There is usually advanced notice, giving you time to review your disaster plan and decide your safest option.

So how do you know what’s best? How do you decide to Stay or Go? Much depends upon you, your specific needs, your ability to travel, medications, equipment and your need for oxygen or electricity. No doubt, it’s difficult to leave your home, but look at your situation and needs. Leaving may be the best choice for you and your family’s safety and wellbeing.

*If you have to leave your home in a disaster:*

- *Shut off water, gas and electricity if you have enough time.*
- *Take your Go kit.*
- *Lock your home.*
- *Use travel routes suggested by experts. Don’t use shortcuts.*
- *When you get to a shelter, make sure it can meet your medical needs.*
- *Inform those in your Personal Support Network where you are.*

*If you don’t have a safe way to get somewhere else, staying put and waiting for assistance may be your best choice.*

## Section 5 - Other Considerations

### Things you should know to prepare for a disaster

#### Mobility



Many people with advanced lung disease have difficulty moving about. Some may be able to walk a short distance, others not at all.

If you walk with the help of a walker or cane, remember to keep it nearby throughout the emergency. If your home becomes damaged or hard to get through, you may be unable to reach your walker or cane.

If you have a motorized wheelchair or scooter, make sure it is fully charged when not in use. This will keep it ready in case of storm or other emergency.

Do you have spare batteries or a backup method to charge your batteries? Batteries can be heavy. A non-motorized wheelchair is a good backup. Often when disaster strikes, roads and sidewalks are covered in debris and become impassable. A standard wheelchair may be able to go over obstacles more easily than a motorized device.

If you have caregivers in your home, make sure they know about this disaster plan, and where you would relocate if needed. Be sure they know how to charge or change batteries needed for motorized chairs, scooters or other medical equipment.

For more information on preparing for a disaster with limited mobility, see the Resources page.

*Tell your local emergency services about your limited mobility ahead of time. You may have to go to a shelter or safe area earlier than your neighbors, but you will get the help you need sooner. If you wait too long, relocation or evacuation may be delayed until help can reach you.*

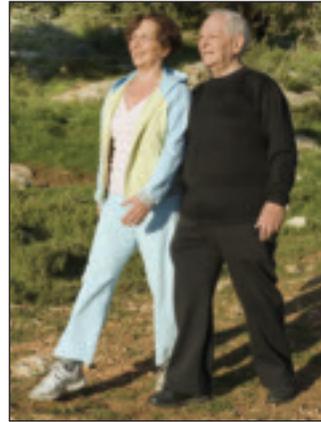
## Staying Healthy – Physically and Emotionally

### Your Physical Health

As a person with COPD or another chronic lung disease you know there is a lot to remember when it comes to managing your health. Here are two simple things you can do to stay healthy every day. These are especially important in a disaster: Exercise and Hydration.

#### Exercise

Keep moving, even if it's just to get up and stretch your legs or take a short walk around the room. Sitting still can lead to blood clots in the legs which can be especially dangerous. Even if you can't get up out of your chair, march in place or pump your ankles. Rock your feet from heel to toe, heel to toe.



#### Hydrate

Unless your health care provider has advised you to limit your water intake, drink plenty of water. Even if you are less active than usual, your body always needs water. Avoid caffeinated drinks, sports drinks or soda. Stick with water.

### Co-morbid Conditions

Most people with COPD or other chronic lung disease have other medical disorders. These are often called co-morbid conditions. It's important to manage these other medical conditions along with your lung disease. Here is a list of some common co-morbid conditions for people with chronic lung disease along with tips on managing them every day and during a disaster.

*It's important to manage other medical conditions along with your lung disease.*

If you have chest pain, more shortness of breath than usual, or other warning signs, call 911. Until help arrives, follow these suggestions.

**Angina** - Take your usual medications, stay as calm as possible.

**Congestive heart failure** - If you have edema (swelling due to excess fluid) in your legs or feet, put your feet up when sitting or lying down. Take your usual prescription medications. Limit salty foods, drinks and snacks.

**Depression / Anxiety** - Take your usual medications. Follow your disaster preparedness plan. Stay in touch with your Personal Support Network if possible. Keep busy by reading, doing word puzzles, crafts, etc.

**Diabetes** – Take your usual prescription medications. Keep a protein snack (such as peanut butter) on hand. Follow usual diet recommendations. Watch sugar intake.

**Heartburn (GERD)** – Take your usual medications. Follow usual diet recommendations. Sleep in a propped up or sitting position if you get heartburn.

**High blood pressure (hypertension)** – Take your usual medications. Avoid salty foods and stay calm. Do usual exercise (see above) if possible.

**Sleep apnea** – Take your usual medications. Use CPAP or Bi-PAP as prescribed if possible. Sleep in a propped up or sitting position.

**Stroke** – Take your usual medications. Stand up and walk every hour if possible. If not possible, march in place while sitting. Lift legs and point and flex toes for 5 minutes every hour.

### **Report Warning Signs of Exacerbations**

*Notify your health care provider of these early warning signs:*

- 1. Low grade fever that doesn't go away*
- 2. Increased use of rescue medications*
- 3. Change in color, thickness, odor or amount of mucus*
- 4. Tiredness that lasts more than one day*
- 5. New or increased ankle swelling*

*Call 911 for dangerous warning signs:*

- 1. Disorientation, confusion or slurring of speech*
- 2. Severe shortness of breath or chest pain*
- 3. Blue color in lips or fingers*

### **Your Emotional Health**

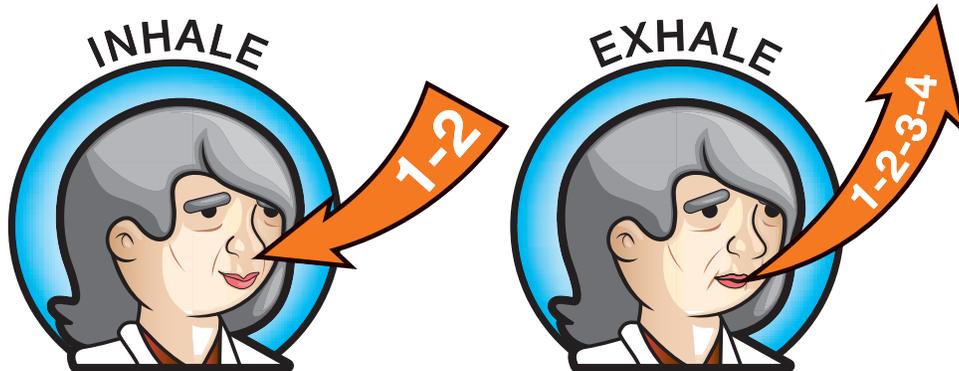
Living with chronic lung disease can be stressful on the best of days. A disaster, even just thinking about it, can be frightening and overwhelming. Combine the two, and it may seem too much to bear. If you panic, rapid, shallow breathing can make you lose control of your breathing and send you into trouble. Here are some tips to help you cope. Practice them now, before disaster strikes.

#### **Plan ahead**

Follow the steps in this booklet. Knowing that you have a plan is a great stress relief. Simple coping techniques can help. Stay calm and breathe. You can make it through!

### Pursed Lips Breathing

This breathing technique helps you focus, slow your breathing down and stay calm. Learn this technique if you don't already know it. Use it when you are active and when you feel stressed. It even works for people without COPD! Fast, shallow breathing can make you lose control of your breathing.



### Visualization

Picture yourself in your favorite place, feeling happy and relaxed. Do your best to keep this image in your mind and push stressful thoughts away. Focus on pursed lips breathing, taking in clean, filtered air and fully exhaling any trapped air.

### Faith

No matter what your beliefs, the power of positive, peaceful thoughts, reflection or prayer can be comforting and calming. Combined with pursed lips breathing, you can help maintain inner strength and focus.

### Self talk

Is there a phrase or mantra that calms you, encourages you or inspires you? It may be a verse based on faith, or something you were taught by a wise person. Repeat it slowly and out loud.

As a person with COPD or another chronic lung disease, you have a lot to think about when facing the possibility of a disaster. This Disaster Preparedness Plan has helped you begin that process. It has given you the tools to consider what might happen, and ideas on how you can work through it. You have learned who to call and what to ask for, so help is there when you need it. You have a list of suggested items for your Go and Stay kits.

Work with your family, neighbors and local agencies to make your own disaster plan as good as it can be. Doing this will give you the confidence and peace of mind that you can weather the storm.

## Resources

This resource page provides access to contact information for both telephone and computer. Ask for “disaster preparedness” information for people with medical needs.

### **COPD (Call Our Patients Direct) Foundation Information Line – 1-866-316- COPD (2673)**

***This is not an emergency or crisis hotline.*** C.O.P.D. Information Line associates can assist you with questions about the Disaster Preparedness Plan from 9:00am-9:00pm EST, Monday-Friday.



### **FEMA - Federal Emergency Management Agency**

Phone: 800-621-3362

Online: [www.ready.gov/](http://www.ready.gov/)

### **Local Red Cross**

Phone: Check your local phone book to contact the Red Cross office nearest you.

Online: Check the internet to find how to contact the Red Cross office nearest you.

### **Disaster preparedness information for your State**

Phone: See the first few pages of your local phonebook for your local, state and federal government agencies.

Online: Search your state and “disaster preparedness plan.” For example, if you live in Ohio, type: “Ohio disaster preparedness plan” into your search function. This will give you information on preparing for a disaster in your own state.

### **American Red Cross. *Tips for Seniors and People with Disabilities.***

Phone: (1-800-733-2767) 1-800-RED CROSS

Online: <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/mobileprogs.html>

### **American Association of Persons with Disabilities. *Emergency Preparedness and People with Disabilities: Guidelines, Plans, and Bibliography Resources.***

Phone: 800-840-8844

Online: <http://www.aapd.com/docs/sites.php>

**Additional checklists, plans and emergency contact forms may be printed from the COPD Foundation website at: [www.copdfoundation.org](http://www.copdfoundation.org)**









