

# FEBRUARY Seniors & Special Needs Awareness

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As February brings on the harsh winter storms and temperatures plummet, we all need to take a minute to think about the seniors and community members with special needs in our lives. Whether it be a family member, neighbor, or member of your community, awareness is the key to help keep them safe and warm.

**WHO DO YOU KNOW?** The following is a list of people to consider who may need your help this winter season:

- Senior citizens.
- Mobility impaired.
- Isolated people
- Mentally impaired.
- People with special dietary needs.
- Hearing impaired.
- People with special medical needs
- Non-English speaking residents.
- People without transportation.

## HELP DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY PLAN

The snow, cold temperatures, and icy roads that winter brings can cause frustrations for most people. But for people with special needs, these hazards are more than merely frustrating; they carry significant health and safety risks. Elderly people, or those with disabilities, require a special emergency plan to ensure they have everything they need in the event of a winter storm or other emergency during cold weather. Many residents with special needs – particularly those who live alone – need to prepare in advance so that meals, medicine, oxygen, and transportation are available to them in an emergency situation.

**A strong emergency plan can minimize many of the risks associated with the Northeast's harsh winter conditions. Your strategy should consist of three parts:**

**An emergency kit, a list of emergency contacts, and an emergency action plan.**

### An EMERGENCY KIT:

- Emergency blankets/Gloves/Heat packs
- Flashlight with extra batteries and bulbs
- Food (2 week supply)
- Food that doesn't require cooking/can opener
- Water (2 week supply)
- Medication (1 week supply)
- First aid kit
- Extra Hygiene supplies
- Copies of personal documents (insurance cards, medication information, identification, etc.)
- Cell phone with extra battery and charger
- Battery-operated radio
- Manual can opener
- Supplies, Food, and Water for pets and service animals
- Rock salt for sidewalks
- Extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters
- List of styles and serial numbers of medical devices (such as a pacemaker)

### An EMERGENCY PLAN:

*Communication is the key to ensuring safety for seniors and special needs individuals. Family & Community members should discuss who will check in with an elderly or special needs person during a winter storm or blackout, and seniors or those with special needs, should know exactly what steps to take if something happens. Include these items in your emergency plan:*

- Designated contact person
- Escape routes if damage to the house occurs or sidewalks are not navigable
- Transportation plans
- An alternative heat source (paying special caution to portable heaters, providing explicit instructions on proper use)
- A backup plan for medical devices that require electricity
- Seniors should also know how to **stay safe at home** during a winter storm, especially if the power goes out. This plan should include wearing layers of warm clothes, listening to a weather radio for updates, eating regularly to maintain body heat, staying hydrated, and communicating with care providers about their circumstances during the storm

***In the event of a burst pipe, fire, or other property damage due to a storm or falling trees/debris, contact a trained and licensed Restoration and Emergency Response team, like SERVPRO®, who's Rapid Response can save time and money restoring the property.***



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