

PRESS RELEASE: National Emergency Preparedness – Senior Awareness

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“Seniors at Risk in a Disaster”

Seniors living alone are at a high risk during a natural disaster. Proactive steps by families and local senior service agencies could save lives.

WALNUT CREEK, CA - Fall is hurricane season on the East Coast and Gulf States. Tornados seem more frequent. Earthquakes can strike at any time. With the extremely dry season on the West Coast fire is a real and consistent threat. In other regions of the country, flooding has been an issue. With all these threats, are the frailest of our population safe?

September is National Emergency Preparedness Month. Now is the time to plan for the safety of our elders. However, many fragile seniors, struggling for their autonomy, lack the ability to access information, gather survival essentials and organize a support system for themselves.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC, Founder and Director of Eldercare Services (www.EldercareAnswers.com) in the San Francisco Bay Area, highly recommends that families separated by many miles locate a Geriatric Care Manager to proactively set up a plan before a disaster. Since seniors could have sensory deficits that would delay their awareness to sound or smell, it is important that a first responder be appointed to contact the elder when a threat approaches or occurs.

Ms. Fodrini-Johnson recommends that every family and geriatric agency serving seniors has a “check in” system whereby the senior

would be contacted by someone close to them or a professional hired to oversee and monitor their well-being, such as a Professional Geriatric Care Manager.

There are two proactive steps seniors or their families can take. First, be sure that the senior has a simple cell phone and a landline phone that is not a cordless phone. If the power fails and there is a medical emergency, one might summon help only with a corded phone that doesn't require electricity.

The second step that Linda advises is to make sure your street number is visible in case you need help in an emergency. Your address should be in large numbers illuminated by a battery-powered light so that the emergency responders can locate you. Every minute counts with medical emergencies – be sure confusion about location doesn't become the cause of death.

All senior centers and senior advocacy programs should be promoting September as the National Emergency Preparedness Month as an annual reminder. The [American Red Cross](#) and [Prepare.org](#) provide lists of recommended senior specific supplies.

However, nothing will help as much as a personal “first responder”; a neighbor, friend, family member or professional hired to oversee the elder's well being.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC is the Founder and Executive Director of Eldercare Services and is a Fellow in the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers.

Eldercare Services has been assisting families in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1989. The professional staff helps empower elders and their families to make hard decisions. Eldercare is a pioneer in a unique delivery of senior services, providing counseling, Geriatric Care Management, family support groups, classes and direct caregiving. They have offices in San Francisco, Walnut Creek and Marin, California. Contact information: (415) 469-8300 and (925) 937-2018, www.EldercareAnswers.com

