



The Doctor Will See You Now Don't Delay – Prepare for Emergencies Before Disaster Strikes



By Dr. Jaren Trost
Senior Medical Director and
Rheumatologist, Optum
New Mexico

New Mexico residents and visitors to the state this summer should be on guard for extreme weather conditions and flood warnings from the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Drought-stricken forests can fuel record-breaking fires, as we saw last year with the largest fire in state history, the Hermits Peak/Calf Creek Fire that devastated more than 341,000 acres, destroyed homes, and made national news.

Fires of this size contribute to heavy particulate build-up, leading to poor air quality. They

also contribute to storm build-up, which leads to rapid firestorms, lightning, and downpours – so much concentrated rain that the rush of water won't soak in, but will stay on top of the land, causing flash flooding. More forest destruction leaves the exposed topsoil vulnerable to washouts and landslides, especially with the advent of monsoon season starting in June. As a result, people are killed every year in city arroyos, foothills, mountain roads and trails. Last summer saw too many tragedies, and we should prepare for more of the same this year.

Emergency situations and evacuations are often challenging for Americans 65 and older, especially for those with chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. In addition, limited mobility, impaired hearing or vision, and age-related cognitive decline can make it more difficult for seniors to deal with potentially

deadly emergencies. Having a plan, and expecting the unexpected, are vital to the health and safety of older New Mexicans and their families.

Unfortunately, the majority of people do not have an emergency plan.

Are You Ready?

The No. 1 thing that everyone should know about disaster preparedness is: *Don't wait* for the disaster to happen before you prepare – make a plan! Work together with family, neighbors and friends to decide where to meet and how to contact each other in an emergency. Review escape routes from your home, school and business, away from your neighborhood to safe locations in your region.

Strengthen families and help build community by sharing and practicing your plans – and don't forget pets! Always include primary contacts and always ask: "How do

we stay connected, calm and safe during a crisis?"

Most emergencies come with little warning. Access to resources is likely to be limited or completely unavailable, so now is the time to prepare your emergency kit, or "go bag," and have it close at hand. It should be portable and waterproof. In addition to personal items, prescription medications, important documents (insurance cards, medication list and care plans, list of allergies, etc.), phone numbers, device plugs, and back-up power sources, make sure you include the following in your kit for adults and children:

- Enough water and medical supplies to last at least three days (at least one gallon per person and per pet).
- Though water is more critical to survival than food, try to stock up on

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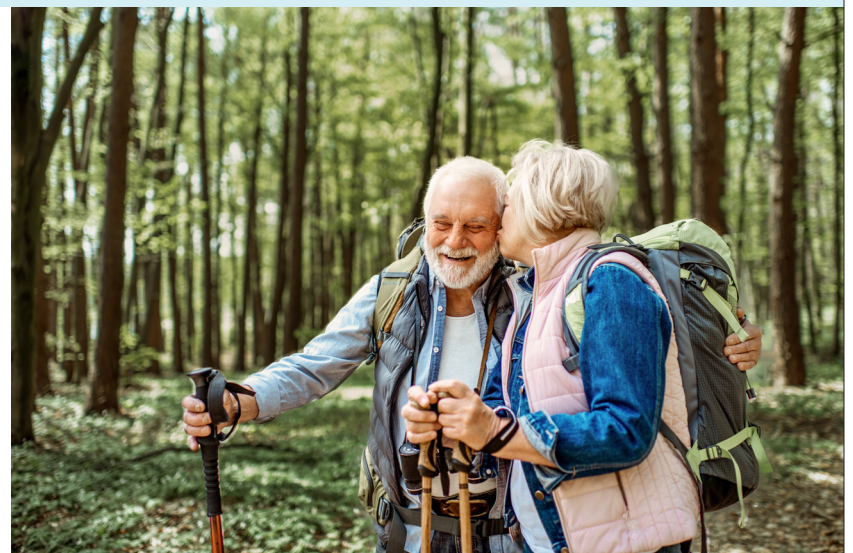
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