

Powerful Patient, 2009 week 24

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Is Your Home Ready for Emergencies?

Officer Casey Hatchett, Brookline Police Department and Dawn Sibor, Brookline Health Department will discuss the importance of preparing for emergencies at home. Casey and Dawn will provide listeners with information and resources that will assist people to prepare for all types of emergencies. They will also talk about the volunteer opportunities available for people who are interested in helping their communities in time of emergency and throughout the year.

1) **Dawn Sibor and the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)**

Dawn Sibor is the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the Health Department of the Town of Brookline, Massachusetts. Her office is part of the national civilian volunteers program: Medical Reserve Corps program,

<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov>

The mission of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is to improve the health and safety of communities across the country by organizing and utilizing public health, medical and other volunteers. Health professionals, chaplains, as well as caring neighbors volunteer their time to assist in an emergency.

2) **About Casey Hatchett and the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)**

Officer Casey Hatchett of the Brookline Police Force coordinates the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) of the Town of Brookline. This program too is a part of a national program of preparedness, part of the Homeland Security program.

<http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/>

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT members also are encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community.

3) About Resources in your own community

Whether you become a volunteer with one of these programs or not, they are valuable resources that you should explore to determine what is available in your community to help you and others.

If you are concerned that you might have special needs in an emergency, you should explore what is available in your own community and sign up to receive necessary services.

Some ideas:

The Fire department has a computerized list of people who may need help evacuating a building in case of fire. Anyone with a mobility issue should be on their list. In case of fire, they will know that there is someone inside who may not be able to get out by themselves, or who may not be able to hear a fire alarm.

Ask how your town communicates with people in an emergency. Is there a “reverse 911” implementation in your community, where the community will telephone everyone? What if you can’t hear the phone or respond to the call? Your community organizers have likely thought of this and have a plan that you should know about.

Think what you might need if the power were out for several days (as it was in Central Massachusetts in the winter of 2008-09), or if the gas service were out for several days, or if you did not have water or some other essential service. What if you had to live elsewhere for a week, what would you need to take with you? Where is all that stuff located? Perhaps you need to keep it handier, so you could grab things as you go out the door.

4) The “Go” Kit

Just as expectant mothers prepare a bag to grab on the way to the hospital, pre-packed with essentials, so too you might consider having a “Go Kit” of essentials that you could grab on the way out the door. The first thing people usually need are their medications. Do you have a supply already packed into a daily organizer that you could grab quickly? Do you have a list of the medications you take? Is it up to date?

5) Medical Data and Essential Contacts

All first responders (police, fire, ambulance crews) are trained to look on the refrigerator. An inexpensive magnet pouch you can get to assemble the essential medical and contact information and put it on the refrigerator door. These are often free from your own police or fire department, or from <http://www.folife.org/>

If you have more extensive medical information that you want to convey to emergency room personnel, you might also wish to prepare something like an EmergenTag, which would be helpful once you get to the hospital. See <http://powerfulpatient.org/archive/2009/emergentag.php>