



Preparing for a Natural Disaster



The Guide to Using RediPlan for Carers of People with Dementia

Acknowledgments

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How to use the Carer Ready Guide

- Everyone in Australia should prepare for natural disasters. If you are a carer of someone with dementia, you need to think carefully about how best to help them and protect both of you from harm.
- The **Carer Ready Guide** can help you think about these issues. You should read the **Carer Ready Guide** when completing your **Red Cross** RediPlan.
- The **Carer Ready Guide** has three colour-coded sections with relevant dementia specific advice:

Section 1: Preparing for a Natural Disaster

Section 2: During a Natural Disaster

Section 3: After a Natural Disaster

1.0 Preparing for a Natural Disaster

1.1

Plan Ahead

Advice and tips for being prepared for an emergency.

► [Please see the RediPlan Guide Page 8](#)

1.2

Get Connected

Advice for getting connected to your community to protect yourself and the person you are caring for.

► [Please see the RediPlan Guide Page 16](#)

1.3

Get Organised

Advice and tips for organising the things that will help you gain a sense of control during and after an emergency.

► [Please see the RediPlan Guide Page 18](#)

1.4

Get Packing

Advice and tips for preparing practically for an emergency.

► [Please see the RediPlan Guide Page 20](#)

1.1 Plan ahead **Tick the box when you have completed these steps**

- Be aware of the best escape and evacuation routes. Keep escape routes clear at all times. Check if emergency exits are wheelchair accessible. Practice evacuating.

- Find out if there is a disaster plan or evacuation centre specifically for people with dementia.

- If you do not own a car or drive, find out what plans there are for evacuating people without private transport.

- If the person you care for attends a day care facility or respite care, find out what their emergency and evacuation plans are. Talk to them about what they - and you - are expected to do in case of an emergency.

- Plan for how you and the person with dementia might cope during / after a natural disaster. This can help you feel more in control and better able to follow emergency plans when a disaster does happen.

1.2 Get Connected **Tick the box when you have completed these steps**

- Identify a support network to help you in emergency situations. Ask family, friends, neighbours, community and carer groups, professionals or volunteers.

Include several people for each place the person with dementia regularly spends time. Talk to them about the type of help you may need. Make sure everyone has a copy of your emergency plan.

- Include people who:
- you know and trust
 - know and are known by the person you care for
 - are able to understand and communicate with the person with dementia
 - are physically and emotionally able to provide care and follow your emergency plan.

- Sign up to the **Safely Home Program** in case the person with dementia goes missing. Ask them to wear an identity bracelet with their name, address and telephone number.

Call the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500

- Sign up to **MedicAlert** so healthcare professionals can access the person's electronic health record. Keep a copy of the person's health needs and medications handy.

Call the MedicAlert Foundation Helpline on 1300 301 47

1.3 Get Organised **Tick the box when you have completed these steps**

In your RediPlan write down the person's specific needs such as:

- likes and dislikes e.g. what name they like to be called, things that calm them, things that may upset them
- day to day routines e.g. mealtimes, activities, sleeping
- day to day care needs e.g. help with going to the toilet
- hearing and communication needs e.g. maintaining eye contact or speaking slowly and clearly
- language spoken at home
- mobility needs e.g. walker or help getting up and down stairs
- psychological and behavioural needs e.g. strategies to manage anxiety, depressive symptoms, agitation, confusion, or wandering
- other special needs e.g. diet, vision, continence aids, medical conditions, medication and medical aids, cultural or LGBT¹ personalised support needs
- important contact details e.g. emergency contacts, out-of-town contacts, doctor, pharmacist, out-of-hours services
- current photo of the person in case he/she gets lost
- Keep this document up-to-date and revise it whenever the person's needs change. Discuss it with your GP and pharmacist. Share it with your support network.

1. LGBTI stands for: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or intersex.

1.4 Get Packing **Tick the box when you have completed these steps**

- Put together an emergency kit. Follow the advice in your RediPlan.
 - Include specific information about the person with dementia to go with them if they are evacuated.
 - Include contact information about yourself in case you are separated.

- The emergency kit should be ready to go with everything you need.
 - Keep this kit handy and updated so it meets the person's current needs.
 - Include a list of medicines, perishable or limited items that you can quickly add to the kit before evacuating.

- Include simple activities or comfort items to help keep the person calm (e.g. books, magazines, puzzles, games, music, photos).
 - Pack a battery operated radio or portable CD player and their favourite music.



2.0 During a Natural Disaster

2.1 If You Stay at Home During a Natural Disaster

Advice that may help you prepare yourself, the person you are caring for and your home in case you have to stay at home during a disaster or are unable to leave.

2.2 If You Need to Evacuate

Advice and tips that may help if you and the person you are caring for have to evacuate.

2.3 If the Person You Care for Becomes Lost

Advice in case the person you are caring for becomes separated from you or lost during an emergency.

2.4 If the Person With Dementia Becomes Agitated

Advice if the person you are caring for becomes distressed, anxious, agitated and confused during a disaster.

2.1 If You Stay at Home During a Natural Disaster

- Be psychologically prepared. Prepare yourself, the person you care for and your home in advance of the disaster. Keep your emergency kit and supplies to hand.
- Ask your support network to help you prepare your home e.g. with supplies, sandbags, storm shutters, yard clearing, moving furniture.
- You may have to move to a safer area within your home e.g. to a basement or higher floor. If the person resists moving, try distracting them with a favourite activity or item. Try not to be forceful or overbearing.
- Make the home as safe and comfortable as possible. Try to keep to usual mealtimes, medication and sleeping routines. The person with dementia may need extra help and reassurance.
- Music from a battery-operated radio or portable CD player may help calm and distract them. Or use familiar and favourite activities and comfort items.



2.2. If You Need to Evacuate

- Stay calm. Leave as early as possible. Take your emergency kit.
- Give the person with dementia brief explanations and lots of reassurance.
- Use distraction strategies. Think about who to contact if the person refuses to evacuate.
- Prioritise evacuation preferences. Staying with family and friends can be better than a crowded and noisy evacuation centre.
- People with dementia often find it hard to cope with changes in routine, travelling and unfamiliar places. They may become distressed, anxious, agitated and confused. They may not remember or understand why they had to leave home.
- If you are struggling to cope, ask someone from your support network to meet you at the evacuation centre. Talk to staff or volunteers if you need extra help.
 - Let others know the person has dementia and needs additional support.
 - Stay together at all times to avoid getting separated or lost. If you have a mobile phone, take a photo of yourselves for identification.
 - If the person you care for becomes upset, distract them with a favourite comfort item or activity. Move to a quieter place and limit stimulation.
 - Try to maintain regular routines for mealtimes and sleeping. Make sure they take regular medications as directed.
 - Watch out for any signs that they are becoming overwhelmed.

2.3 If the Person You Care for Becomes Lost

- Stay calm. Thoroughly search the house, building and outbuildings. If it's safe to go outside search any places they may visit.
- Notify the police, your support network, neighbours, evacuation centre or hotel staff, and emergency services workers. Provide a current photo. Note what the person was wearing when they went missing.
- If possible, have someone stay back in case the person returns. If found, notify the police and emergency services immediately.
- Once found, provide lots of reassurance. Return to their regular routine.

Call the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500 for information about identification products and Safely Home services



2.4 If the Person With Dementia Becomes Agitated

- Stay calm to help the person with dementia remain calm too.
- Be sensitive and supportive of their feelings - they may be feeling scared or anxious. Assure them of your continued presence and support.
- Be aware that a disaster may trigger past experiences or traumas for the person with dementia. If they have experienced displacement, war or deprivation in the past, this may trigger feelings of fear related to people in uniforms, being watched, queuing, hunger, being cold, identity tags, corridors and shared spaces for sleeping or eating.
- Try to recognise any verbal and non-verbal 'cues' that indicate the person is becoming increasingly upset.
- De-escalate or change the situation where possible. Use distraction to divert their attention.

For further support, contact the - Dementia Support Australia (DSA) Helpline on 1800 699 799



3.0 After a Natural Disaster

3.1 Returning Home

Advice for returning home after a disaster.

3.2 Psychological Support

Advice for getting psychological support for both the person with dementia and you as a carer.

► [Please see the RediPlan Guide page 24-25](#)



3.1 Returning home

- Return home only when advised to do so by emergency services.
- Leave the person with dementia with a friend or relative while you check for any damage. You may need to make alternative plans, such as respite care, if your home is unsafe.
- There may be lots of work and cleaning up to do. Ask your support network to help. Contact your insurance company for help in assessing damage.
- It may be very difficult for the person with dementia if familiar cues in the home and community are damaged or destroyed. They may start to wander or become lost in a previously familiar place. Provide constant supervision, keep handy a current photo of the person you care for, know what they are wearing and make sure they wear or carry identification e.g. Safely Home bracelet.
- Try to keep to normal routines as much as possible.

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3.2 Psychological Support

- After a disaster, both you and the person with dementia may feel a mixture of emotions such as anger, anxiety, sadness or distress. For the person with dementia, this could be expressed in non-verbal ways such as withdrawal, apathy or agitation. Whilst this is a normal reaction, you may both benefit from professional help or counselling. Talk to your GP and ask for a referral to a qualified counsellor or psychologist.

- Alzheimer’s Australia also provides a free counselling service

Call the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500

- The person you care for may need additional help from the - Dementia Support Australia (DSA). This is a free national service, which provides support for people with dementia with behavioural and psychological needs.

Call the DSA Helpline on 1800 699 799

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