

Check on older neighbors during severe weather

Severe weather in Ohio can come in any season and bring with it many hazardous situations, from extreme heat or cold, winds with property damage or power outages, slippery conditions and more. When severe weather hits your community, please check on your older neighbors, friends and relatives to make sure they have the resources they need to stay safe and healthy until conditions return to normal.

Communicate Effectively

- **Always treat adults as adults.** If someone isn't making sense, don't assume it's dementia. Dehydration, stress, and fatigue have similar symptoms.
- **Use a natural tone of voice and conversational style of communication.** Be calm and reassuring, speak slowly and distinctly, and make eye contact. Use positive language: Instead of "Don't ..." suggest what they should do.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Instead of "Are you staying warm/cool?" ask "What are you doing to stay warm/cool today?" "Where will you go if the power does not come back on tomorrow?"
- **Don't ask "testing" or "challenging" questions.** Instead of "Do you know your name?" ask "What would you like me to call you?" Instead of "Do you know where you are?" say "I'm glad that I came to visit you at your home today."
- **Don't correct an adult who appears to be confused.** For example, if the person calls you by someone else's name, say "I haven't seen 'Joe' lately but my name is ... and I'll stay with you until your family comes by" or "I'll call someone so 'Joe' will know where you are." Avoid arguing, but validate feelings.



Do a Risk Assessment

While visiting, observe his or her surroundings and ask questions that will help you determine if this person is healthy and safe, or if he or she may need some assistance.

- **Does the person depend on oxygen?**
- **Does he or she need help walking?**
- **Does he or she need help getting to the bathroom?**
- **Does he or she have skin that is grey-ish? (If so, he or she may require medical attention.)**

Also check if individuals have what they will need for the next several days, including water, non-perishable food, temperature control and medications. Refrigerated food should be thrown out after 2 hours without electricity. Also, some medications may need to be refrigerated or stored on ice to remain safe and effective.

Make Sure They Can Get Help

Make sure the person is able to call for help if he or she needs it. Don't assume the person's phone is working: check the connection and battery charge. Some may not realize that cordless phones need electricity to work and/or charge. Instead of asking, "Do you have someone to call if you need help?" saying, "Show me how you would call your daughter if you need her to come help," will be more effective.

