ENIOR LIFESTYLES

Planning can help one 'weather' emergencies

By Lee Strong Associate editor

During the snowstorms that virtually paralyzed Western and parts of Central New York March 4-7, Sandy Schencke observed a man whose car got stuck in the snow.

The man struggled for an hour to get his car free. Meanwhile, two men were nearby shoveling snow. The man never sought the shovelers' help — but when she approached them and asked if they would help the man, they readily did so.

You just have to ask - take the initiative," Schencke said.

Asking for help is one of the key bits of advice Schencke recommends for seniors during such emergencies. The recent snowstorms essentially trapped many people – and not just seniors – in their homes for several days. The Rochester area received 43 inches of snow in three days, the city's greatest three-day amount by some accounts. A state disaster emergency was declared in 17 counties.

"People have to take the initiative to call a neighbor, not expect the neighbor to call them," observed Schencke, elder care specialist at Rochester's Eldersource. "That's why it's important to have a neighbor's telephone number. Always have a neighbor you can call or talk with."

Those neighbors may help not only by shoveling the senior's walk and driveway, but by picking up food or prescriptions for them. Seniors should also check to find out if their pharmacy will deliver needed medications.

Seniors should make sure they have emergency supplies on hand, Schencke added. Those supplies should include extra medication, and staple foods that can be prepared even if power goes out – such as milk (which, in the winter, can be kept

(Just South of Keeler Expressway)



cool outside), cereal, bread, peanut butter and jelly. But she offered a caution.

"One of the downfalls is those people who store a lot of food, and it's expired," she said. "You should rotate the food that you've saved. The last thing you want is to eat something and end up going to the hospital because of food poisoning."

She also urged seniors who have electrically powered medical equipment at home to make sure that their local utility is aware so that in the event power goes out they will be made a priority.

Linda Tetor, director of the Steuben County Office for the Aging, noted that programs such as hers that home deliver meals for seniors generally at the beginning of winter provide emergency kits. The kits contain a couple of days' worth of food for situations such as the snow-

Tetor also advised seniors to keep on hand such items as candles, extra blankets, emergency light and heating sources.

"One of the biggest (problems) is hypothermia," Tetor observed. Thus seniors need "to be careful of that by not turning your heat down too far."

If seniors are able to get out and drive their cars, she continued, they should make sure they have in their cars such items as tools, a flashlight, blankets, salt and a shovel in case they get stuck.

"One caution is not to go out in a storm with a nearly empty tank of gas, because if you get stuck, you're going to run out," Tetor said.

Schencke also warned about people who come to the door to offer help.

"(Seniors) should really be cautious about people who say they will shovel (the seniors) out and do other things for them, and they ask for a lot of money" promising they will come back, she said. In too many cases, she noted, they do not return, and the senior is out that money - and still stuck.

Ultimately, Schencke said, in situations such as the recent snowstorms, life will eventually return to normal and services will be restored. If they are not in any danger, seniors should simply keep up with the news on television or radio, keep in contact with neighbors and just wait it

"A lot of it is you have to be a little patient," she said.





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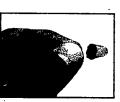
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