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A nursing home, assisted living, or other long-term care facility should have a comprehensive emergency plan in place just like a family should, so that people can be protected and supported in times of crisis. A nursing home, by federal law, is required to have evacuation plans in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. The facility is required to “tailor its disaster plan to its geographic location and the types of residents it serves.” It must also review the evacuation plan, train new employees in emergency procedures and hold drills and periodic reviews with staff. Other types of facilities may or may not be required by state law to have a comprehensive plan in place. Consumers – including residents and their families - should inquire about the facility’s emergency preparedness and evacuation plans. Here are some questions to ask or to discuss at the next resident or family council meeting.

☐The Plan:

What is the facility’s emergency plan for evacuation and for “sheltering in place”? Plans will be different for hurricanes, tornados, and terrorist attacks.

☐Staffing Concerns:

Are there enough staff to carry out the evacuation plan during all shifts? What are the training procedures for staff related to emergency evacuations? Are evacuation drills practiced during all shifts?

☐Coordination With Other Resources:

Are there contracts in place with transportation and other facilities to provide housing for displaced residents? Are many facilities in the area contracted with the same transportation company and if so does that company have enough vehicles to handle them all? How is the plan coordinated with community resources, the city, county, and state emergency management?

☐Staffing Concerns:

Are there enough staff to carry out the evacuation plan during all shifts? What are the training procedures for staff related to emergency evacuations? Are evacuation drills practiced during all shifts?

☐Resident Information:

How does the facility discuss the plan with the residents? How will residents be identified in an evacuation? How will information about the resident and supplies such as medications be transported? Will these go with the resident or separately?

☐Role of the Family:

How and when will family members be notified about evacuation plans? How can family members be helpful in an emergency situation? Can family members meet the residents at a designated location and/or should they come to the facility to assist? If family members live out of town, what is the phone number to call off-site to get information? Family members have the right to evacuate their loved-one on their own and move them to a special needs shelter if they choose.



NCCNHR (formerly the National Citizens’ Coalition for Nursing Home Reform) is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma L. Holder to protect the rights, safety and dignity of America’s long-term care residents.

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