

PACIFIC NORTHWEST MM FIGHTERS



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Taking Control: Emergency Planning for Peace of Mind

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For PNW MM Fighters members use only.

Audience questions and answers

Q. I live in a rural area where rescue would likely be slow and roads out could be cut off. My spouse depends on a medication that cannot run out; how do we prepare?

A. I hear the concern. The county's website says that in a major disaster they wouldn't be able to respond immediately to requests for assistance, and it could take hours or days if there's extensive damage. If we're able to stay aware of current news and announcements of what's coming, I think that can help. Having at least a two-week emergency kit is a preventative measure, so think more than a few days. Making emergency services aware of your personal situation and the type of care needed can help elevate it for them, so they know it's a high priority. Staying in contact with people outside the community or the support group can also be a lifeline, and they might help connect you to resources faster. For medication, I think it starts with discussing it with your care team. Let them know you live in an area that won't always have immediate access to resources and you want at least a couple of weeks of preparation in place. They can help you build that backup supply for situations where you may need to shelter in place or evacuate, and you'd want to be able to take it with you because pharmacies may close. Your local pharmacists can also help with getting emergency supplies during declared public health emergencies.

Q. What can I do when I depend on a medication I cannot go without, my insurer won't allow early refills, and a shortage has cut my supply from 90 days to 30?

A. From my public health lens, it's really challenging with our health care system, especially with insurers. I think it starts with a conversation with them, but also very intentional conversations with your provider, and your doctors advocating for you directly with the insurance company. It's an uphill battle sometimes, but denials can be appealed. It's not

These questions came out of a private meeting.

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guaranteed, but oftentimes trying, appealing, and following up can open some doors. If you run into challenges, reach out to the IMF info line and we'll see whether there are other avenues we can point you to.

Preparedness Tips from the Room

Panic. Preparedness takes the sting out of panic. A written checklist works the way a pilot's does: what to do next, and next. Under panic, people pack the wrong things, so decide now.

The list. Type an emergency sheet and tape it to the wall. Put the most important items at the top and the nice-to-have items at the bottom, so with 30 minutes you take the top and with more time you take more. Put "get the pets in carriers" first, because you'll never find them once you start scurrying around.

The folder. Keep one grab-and-go folder with originals or copies of important papers, passport, insurance information, health information, and contacts. Keep cash in small bills, because ATMs may not work. Keep a labeled box of water and a labeled go kit with dried food and a list of last-minute items.

With days of warning. Work in stages. Gather important documents first. Then decide what to keep and pack for a two-week evacuation, including pet food. Then gather what is irreplaceable, and move it somewhere safe ahead of time if you can. Photograph every room and every drawer, including the junk drawer, because it makes the conversation with your insurance company easier.

With little warning. Take your car keys. Stock the car for everyone in the household, including children, pets, and grandchildren.

The car. Keep heavy shoes, socks, a hat, gloves, and several bottles of water in the trunk, because you may not be dressed for an emergency when it finds you.

The hospital go bag. Pack a toothbrush and clothes you want to wear, and pack a set for your caregiver, who is often stuck there too.

Medication. Keep at least a week or two of each essential medication on hand at all times, in a box you can grab quickly. Some specialty medications can't be refilled early, so ask your care team what is possible. When you aren't using insurance, discount programs such as GoodRx and Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drugs can sometimes offer steep discounts.