



# AGE FRIENDLY Manitoba

Communities committed to  
healthy, active aging

**Mission:** To facilitate healthy aging by providing leadership and encouraging collaboration in creating age-friendly places (communities) that optimize the ability of all older Manitobans to do the things they feel are important.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT ONE OF THE PILLARS OF AN AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY IS COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES.

Within that pillar, one needs to think about emergency preparedness for all ages.

Does your community have a plan? Does the plan recognize the needs of all ages in a crisis?

Across Canada, Emergency Preparedness Week (May 1-7, 2022) asked Canadians to "Be Ready for Anything!" and take action to prepare for unexpected emergencies. Extreme weather, flooding and wildfire are prime examples of hazards becoming more common which can severely impact communities.

Natural disasters may be beyond our control, but there are ways to reduce the risk and the impact of whatever emergency we might face - whether natural or human-induced.

Emergencies can happen anywhere, anytime and during these events, response agencies such as Police, Fire and EMS will focus their efforts first where the need is greatest which is why individual emergency preparedness is so important. The first 72 hours of an emergency are critical and every family should be prepared to be as self-sufficient as possible.

By taking a few simple steps, you can become better prepared to face a range of emergencies – anywhere, anytime.

**Know the risks** – Although the consequences of disasters can be similar, knowing the risks specific to your community and your region can help you better prepare. Risks such as severe storms causing major power outages, flooding and wildfire are examples.

**Make a plan** – In an emergency, your family may not be together when disaster occurs or you may be asked to evacuate your home. Have a plan including how to communicate and where to meet.



## DO INDIVIDUALS IN YOUR COMMUNITY KNOW ABOUT THE NEED FOR AN EMERGENCY KIT?



During an emergency you will need basic supplies. Be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours. You may have to 'grab and go' your emergency kit with little warning if evacuation is required, or shelter in place. Keep in mind, that power and tap water may not be available and don't forget supplies for your pets.

**Stay informed** – Listen to local channels for updates. Have a portable radio with extra batteries or a crank radio in your 72 hour emergency kit.

The 72 Hour Emergency Kit Checklist below outlines the basic items every individual should have:

- Non-perishable food (ready-to-eat items that do not require refrigeration)
- Manual can opener
- Bottled water (4 litres per person per day)
- Flashlight and batteries
- Radio and batteries or crank radio
- Spare batteries (for radio and flashlight)
- First-aid kit
- Candles and matches/lighter
- Extra car keys and cash
- Important papers (identification)
- Clothing and footwear
- Blankets or sleeping bag
- Toilet paper and other personal items
- Medication
- Backpack/duffle bag
- Pet supplies including collar with identification
- Whistle (to attract attention, if needed)
- Playing cards/travel games

## WHO IS VULNERABLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

*In 2007, John Lindsay from Brandon University for Public Health Agency of Canada wrote ...*

### **“What is disaster vulnerability?”**

In the end it is a way of describing how and why it matters who we are, where we are, when we're there and what we're doing in times of emergencies. Vulnerability is not a permanent label: we are all vulnerable in various ways and at different times in our lives. What understanding individual vulnerability can do is help us recognize and help those in our community who are more vulnerable and more often at risk. This is not to say the needs of the few outweigh the needs of the many but rather to acknowledge that when a disaster occurs any of us could be among 'the few' and that we will always rely on 'the many'. Unfortunately we must

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

also acknowledge that vulnerability is a greater part of life for some and they do deserve greater support.

Furthermore, understanding collective vulnerability is not a way of separating some of the population from the rest. Instead it helps us see how the decisions we make as individuals, and more so as a community, affects the well being of our neighbours and ourselves. It is these decisions and actions that we take daily in regards to our social and built environments that determine how vulnerability will be distributed. Solving disaster vulnerability is therefore not just about ensuring appropriate response and recovery measures are in place, as critical as those measures are, but about addressing the determinants in a sustainable way before disasters occur.

“The common determinants of vulnerability highlight the social, economic and physical characteristics of individuals and groups within communities that serve to increase the likelihood that they will suffer disproportionately more harm in a disaster than the general population.” Think about individuals with special needs and your older adults living in your area.

“There are also different types of harm an individual may experience that vary with their unique situation and the nature of the hazard. Smoke from a wildfire may pose health risks to an asthmatic, financial risks to a tourism entrepreneur, and safety risks to an aircraft pilot. Each individual may be vulnerable to the smoke but the means of addressing their risk is as distinct as the factors that determined their vulnerability. Maybe the

asthmatic is vacationing at the fishing lodge and needs to be evacuated by plane. Suddenly understanding the interactions of the different vulnerability becomes almost overwhelming but the underlying issue remains clear – we must try to identify the factors that make some people more at risk than others.”

The World Health Organization and the Public Health Agency of Canada have collaborated on projects that recognize seniors have different combinations of determinants that generally increase the vulnerability of the older population.

One way to do this is to see that a disaster occurs to whole community but the harm is inflicted on individuals whose vulnerability to that harm varies but collectively contributes to the community's experience. It is this relationship between individual and community experience, that of the collective vulnerability or resiliency of the individuals that comprise the community, which is central to how we address vulnerability. The vulnerability of each individual contributes to the community's vulnerability and therefore vulnerability truly is a community issue that must very often be met at an individual scale.

### **This leads to the final question of how emergency management can address vulnerability?**

Just as Canada's public health community has recognized that better population health will be achieved by more than just better healthcare services. Emergency managers must accept that decreasing community vulnerability will require more than just better response

plans. Dealing with vulnerability requires emergency management to become integrated in community decision-making.

The other challenge is to know when to consider vulnerable groups and when to think about vulnerable individuals. It is certainly a step forward to see our communities as heterogeneous and to identify portions of our communities, both geographically and socially, which are at greater risk. We must take the next step to then understand the dynamics and interactions that further differentiate the risk within those populations. We must identify the functional factors that increase vulnerability and the demographic groups where these factors are concentrated.

There is an unlimited supply of preparedness; one individual's preparedness does not come at the expense of another's.

**Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization**

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**[www.manitobaemo.ca](http://www.manitobaemo.ca)**

**May 1–7, 2022**

# Emergency Preparedness Week

**[GetPrepared.ca](http://GetPrepared.ca)**



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