

Emergency Preparedness Planning: **The Buddy System**

In case of an emergency, it is important to have a plan which includes how you might manage if you cannot leave your home for a few days. You may find it useful to have a self-help network in place to assist you. A **buddy system** can be set up with neighbors, friends or family. Your buddy system can be with one or more people who will check in with you to ensure that you (and your pet) are okay. Plan ahead how you will help each other – sharing resources such as food, batteries or other materials – in an emergency. You will want to give your buddy (or buddies) a key to your apartment or house as well as a list of emergency contact information including family, doctors, and pharmacy names and phone numbers. You might consider giving your buddy a copy of your Health Care Proxy. If you have special needs or equipment, make sure that your buddy is familiar with this equipment and understands your plan in case there are electrical outages or other problems which might interfere with the equipment's functioning. Make sure you tell your buddy where you keep assistive devices (canes, walkers, hearing aids, etc.) and then always keep them in the same spot. You may also want to keep your "emergency kit" in the same location and don't forget to stock extra hearing aid batteries or eye glasses. It is also a good idea to give your buddy a list of your medications. And always keep a week's supply of medications on hand. [Remember to keep your "File of Life" updated and current!]

Some neighborhood buddy networks may agree to hang a white "flag" outside to indicate that the resident is safe in case the telephones and e-mail are not working.

Last but not least, rehearse your plan with your buddy. Familiarity can help overcome the added stress of a real emergency and allow for increased safety for all.