



Environmental Safety

CMHA-CEI
TRAINING UNIT

Reviewed 9/2025



Community

MENTAL HEALTH

CLINTON • EATON • INGHAM

DESCRIPTION

- Emergency preparedness means planning so that you and the people receiving services from CMH will understand how to prevent crisis situations when possible and manage those you can't prevent.
- This training focuses on environmental hazards you must be prepared for and your responsibilities in maintaining a safe environment for the people you serve. Your role in teaching people how to be prepared in emergencies is explored.
- It will not cover emergencies related to personal injury covered in Standard First Aid. There may be times when the skills covered in first aid would be required in responding to an environmental emergency.

PLANNING FOR AN EMERGENCY INCLUDES

- Knowing the kinds of emergencies and disasters to be prepared for;
- Doing what you can to help stop these emergencies from happening;
- Knowing the procedures and policies to be followed for each situation BEFORE it occurs;
- Knowing your responsibilities DURING an emergency situation;
- Keeping an UPDATED list of phone numbers and other information by each phone;
- Being sure you know who is “on call” at all times;
- Being sure you are aware of any unusual physical problems people might have and knowing what to do for them;
- Teaching people what to do for each situation BEFORE it occurs.

BE PREPARED FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF EMERGENCIES

- Winter Storms
- Heating Failure
- Thunderstorm
- Tornadoes
- Lightning
- Power Outages
- Water Shortages
- Floods
- Fire
- Poison



SEVERE WEATHER MAY CAUSE AN EMERGENCY.

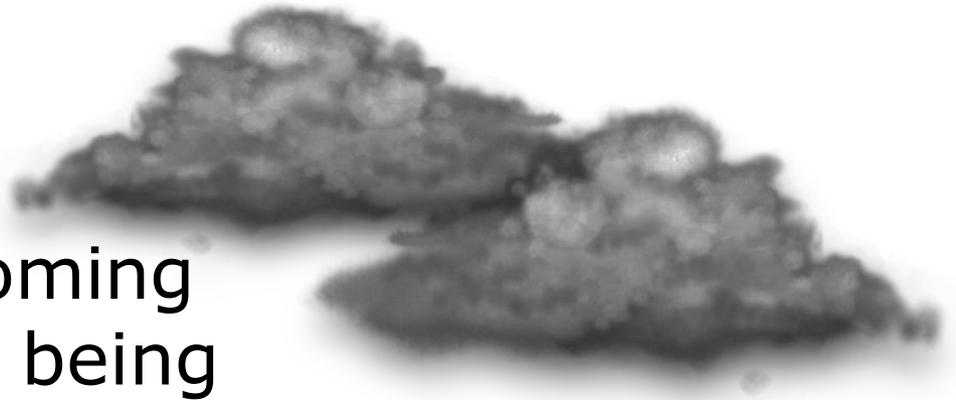
- Strong winds can knock down lines creating a power outage; heavy rains may cause flooding resulting in power outages, lack of drinking water, and isolation.
- There is little you can do to prevent a weather-related emergency, but you can be ready for them.
- The simplest way to prepare is to listen to the radio or watch television and remember two terms: Watch and Warning.

- **WATCH** means that there *COULD* be severe weather because the conditions are right.
 - Stay tuned to your TV or radio weather reports!
- **WARNING** means that a severe weather condition *has been spotted* in your area.

***FIND SHELTER
IMMEDIATELY!***

THUNDERSTORMS

- A few hours advance warning of a storm coming can be the key to not being caught in it, and being better prepared to handle it.
- When planning outdoor activities, check the latest weather forecast and keep an eye on the sky. If you see darkening clouds, graying skies, increasing winds, tune in your car or portable radio for weather information.
- When a thunderstorm threatens, get inside a home, large building, or an automobile. Do not use a telephone except for emergencies.



LIGHTNING

- To lessen the chance of being struck by lightning take these steps.
 - Do not stand underneath a tall isolated tree or telephone pole or on a hilltop or other high places. They act as natural lightning rods.
 - In a forest, seek shelter under a thick growth of **small** trees.
 - In open areas, go to a low place such as a ravine or valley.

LIGHTNING

- Seek shelter during a storm: get inside a home, building or automobile. If outdoors, avoid tall structures, open water, metal equipment or wires.
- Get away from open water, tractors, and metal equipment or small metal vehicles such as bicycles, motorcycles, or golf carts.
- Stay away from wire fences, clotheslines, metal pipes and rails. Put down golf clubs.

LIGHTNING

- If you are with a group of people, keep several yards apart.
- If you are caught on a level field and feel your hair stand on end, or a “tingling” sensation, lightning may be about to strike. Drop to your knees and bend forward, put your hands on your knees.
- Do not lie flat on the ground.

TORNADOES

- Tornadoes are the most violent offspring of a severe thunderstorm.
- They are often seen as a funnel-shaped arm or leg to a thunderstorm.
- When a tornado warning is given, your immediate actions can save your life and lives of those with you!



TORNADOES

- Take cover **immediately!** Follow the worksite's Tornado Evacuation Procedures.
- Stay away from doors, windows, and outside walls.
- Know where the shelter location in a public building is and be ready to use it.
- Get out of a car or mobile home and seek shelter in a large building. If there is none, lie down in a ditch or ravine. **DO NOT** try to outrun a tornado!
- Protect your head.
- Keep tuned to weather information.

FLOODS

- Severe thunderstorms may cause flash floods. To lessen their dangers:
 - Avoid low places.
 - Seek shelter in a large, sturdy building. **Don't** stay outdoors!
 - If your worksite is flooded, have faucet water checked before drinking. Use canned or bottled liquids until the faucet water's safety can be assured.





WINTER WEATHER HAZARDS

WINTER STORMS AND HEATING FAILURES

- Winter storms: blizzards, heavy snows, ice storms, freezing rain or sleet can be a serious danger.
- **Keep posted on weather conditions** in your area through television and radio.
- **Be prepared for isolation at the worksite.** If you work in a rural area, make sure you could survive for a week or two in case a storm made it impossible for you to leave.

WINTER STORMS AND HEATING FAILURES

- Stock an emergency supply of food and water, and cooking equipment such as a camp stove. Some food should be of the type that does not require refrigeration or cooking.
- Make sure you have a battery-powered radio, flashlights or lanterns, and extra batteries.



WINTER STORMS AND HEATING FAILURES

- If your furnace is controlled by a thermostat and your electricity is cut off by a storm, the furnace probably would not operate and you would need emergency heat.
- This is a problem since portable heaters are not permitted for use in CMH worksites.
- Know how to use your emergency heating and lightning equipment safely.
- Use only safety listed equipment. Proper ventilation is essential.
- **Never** use charcoal fires indoors for cooking, burning charcoal gives off deadly amounts of carbon monoxide.

WINTER STORMS AND HEATING FAILURES

- Winter standby gear should include extra bedding and plenty of warm clothing. You may want to substitute sleeping bags for added warmth.
- Dress in layers adding sweaters and warm outer clothes as needed.
- The more you move, the warmer you'll be.



SAFE DRIVING TECHNIQUES

This section helps us match our driving habits with the conditions we drive in.

SAFE DRIVING TECHNIQUES

- Driving a passenger van can be very different from driving smaller vehicles because vans are so much longer and need a larger turning radius, making maneuvering more difficult.
- Sound, sensible driving habits are important to anyone transporting people.
- Many suggested techniques for staying alive on roads and highways result from the experiences of experts: traffic engineers, police officers, and safety researchers who have witnessed mistakes.

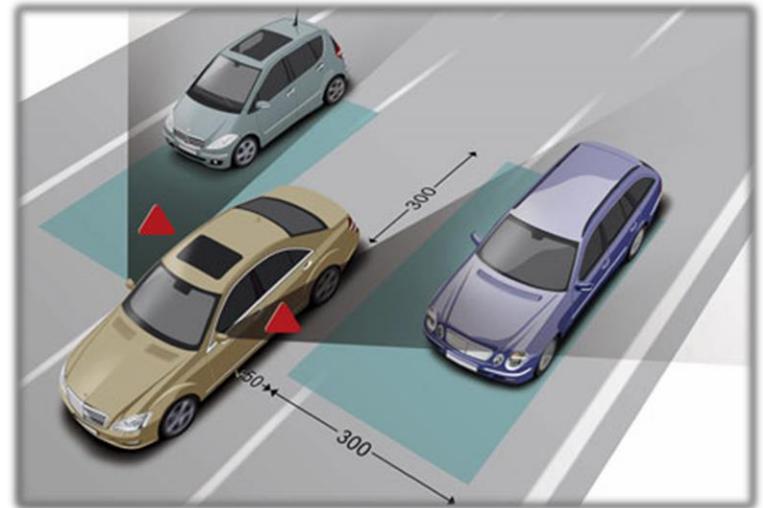
BEFORE DRIVING



- Fasten your seat belt.
- Make sure all passengers buckle up.
- Check and reset (if necessary) the seat and mirror. Check the “feel” of the brakes and steering.

WHILE DRIVING

- Look for an “out”, a place to steer if you get in a jam.
- Before changing lanes, glance back over your shoulder to check the blind spot that your mirror doesn't show.



BLIND SPOTS

- You are also checking in your mirrors every 3-5 seconds to check your blind spots. To reduce blind spots:
 - When scanning in your mirrors *lean in your seat* to change your sight angle
 - Turn your head when glancing to either side of your vehicle

Remember:
*you are responsible for the
safety of your passengers*



NEVER
TEXT WHILE
YOU ARE DRIVING!





EMERGENCIES AT WORK

POWER OUTAGES

- **Communications**

- Power outages make people feel alone and helpless. Televisions, clocks and radios and most furnaces with electric thermostat won't work without power. Telephone service can also be interrupted. Prolonged power outages usually occur with or as a result of some other emergency, such as a thunderstorm, tornado, etc. In those cases multiple problems often exist.



POWER OUTAGES



- A battery-powered radio or television for emergency use keeps you in touch with your community.
- Store extra batteries in the same place you store the radio.
- For two-way communication, walkie talkies or battery powered citizen band (CB) radios work well.
- ***Keep your Cell Phone charged***

POWER OUTAGES

FOODS THAT SPOIL

- If the power failure lasts a long time, foods may begin to spoil.
- Foods will remain frozen between 36 and 48 hours in a loaded freezer when the door is **kept shut**.
 - If the freezer is half full, food should be fine for about 24 hours. Frozen meat keeps longer than packaged foods.
 - Frequent openings speed up thawing.
 - To avoid opening refrigerator and freezer doors more than necessary, transfer the food you will use soonest into a good chest-type cooler. If you are unable to obtain ice nearby, transport as much as possible in coolers.

Transfer foods that will be used quickly to a cooler to avoid opening refrigerator and freezer doors.



POWER OUTAGES

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT



- **“Don’t Panic!”**.
- Darkness is inconvenient and scary, but most worksites have a light source.
- The two safest sources of alternate light are flashlights and battery-powered lanterns.

POWER OUTAGES

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT

- Keep **flashlights** and spare batteries handy for emergency use. They provide a convenient and portable light source inside and outside your worksite.
- When storing flashlights for long periods, remove the batteries and keep them easily accessible with other emergency supplies.
- Keep spare batteries for any pocket flashlights as well.
- Periodically recharge rechargeable models according to directions, to be sure your light works when you need it.

POWER OUTAGES

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT

- Some worksites have **fixed emergency lighting** in halls and stairs that comes on automatically during power failures.
- Follow directions carefully that call for testing the lights and fully discharging their batteries. If the battery “exercise program” is not followed, lights may not work as long as they should.

POISONING

- Watching carefully, being safe and knowing what is or what is not a poison stops people from getting poisoned. Being ready means that you know what to do in case a person is poisoned.



**If you think a person has swallowed
a poison of any type.
CALL POISON CONTROL
immediately!**

The number will put you in touch with trained personnel who can help you in the steps to take in case of poisoning. This will save you precious time.

POISONING

- Remember
- **The wrong treatment is often more dangerous than no treatment.**
- **NEVER** make the victim vomit unless directed to by Poison Control
- When taking a poisoned victim to the hospital, take a second person to attend to the victim. Take the poison container, and any spilled substance with you.



Individuals who are dependent on you to provide a safe environment should never be left alone, nor should they be left with staff who are not trained to implement evacuation procedures and protection plans.

PREPARING THE PROTECTION PLAN

- In the event of a fire, the personal safety of the individuals receiving services and the staff come first.
- Knowing what to do and where to go can save precious seconds.
- Being awakened from a sound sleep can cause confusion which may be more so for persons with developmental disabilities or mental illness.
- Couple this with fire and total panic can result.
- If both the individuals and the staff don't know the plan on how to get out and where to meet, the result could be tragic.



PREPARING THE PROTECTION PLAN

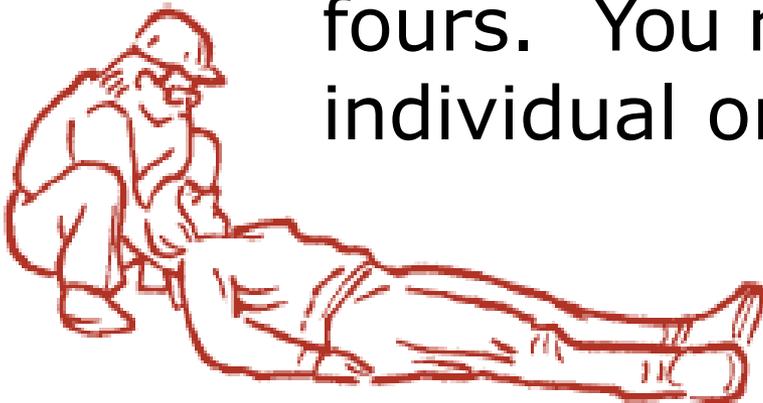
CHECK THE DOOR!

- Before opening any doors, feel the door with the palm of your hand.
- If after a few seconds you feel no heat from the door, chances are escape can be made through a hall or front door.
- Be sure you close any windows before opening the door and close all doors behind you to slow the spread of the fire.

PREPARING THE PROTECTION PLAN

CHECK THE DOOR!

- Heat and gases can't always be seen or smelled but they're present.
- Because they rise, stay low to the ground (between 1 to 2 feet) when making your escape. For some people this means getting down on all fours. You may have to "drag" an individual on a blanket or escape pad.



PREPARING THE PROTECTION PLAN

CHECK THE DOOR!

- Using the window as an escape will depend on how close the fire is.
- If the door feels warm or hot to the touch, don't open it. The smoke and fire may be right outside the door.
- If you open the door in this case the fire will explode into the room (possibly knocking you down), filling the room immediately with smoke, heat and toxic gases.

PREPARING THE PROTECTION PLAN

CHECK THE DOOR!

- If the door is not hot to the touch, open it only a crack at first.
- If the fire in the hall or stairway is too severe, you may also have to leave by a window.
- In that case, get back behind a closed door.
- **Block the door with blankets or clothing to reduce smoke entering the room under the door.**



PREPARING THE PROTECTION PLAN

CHECK THE DOOR!

- A window escape from the second story is less risky if you hang from the window sill by your finger tips before you drop to the ground. Falling in this manner will reduce impact.
- A rope escape ladder is also a consideration but should be used only as a last resort.
 - It is not recommended that individuals practice escaping on a ladder due to the risk of injury.
- You may assist an individual over the window ledge and ease them as close to the ground as possible before dropping them.

PREPARING THE PROTECTION PLAN



- Once the staff have assured that all individuals are out of the building, go to the prearranged meeting place and stay there.
- Don't allow anyone to go back into the building to recover a pet toy or valuables.
- Use the Emergency Kit supplies to help calm the group and meet needs.

FIRE DRILLS

- To test the effectiveness of the protection plan, you will have opportunities to implement the plan during fire drills conducted at least monthly.
- Regulations require that one drill per shift each quarter be conducted when the individuals receiving services at the worksite are present.
- Fire drills may be scheduled more frequently. It is recommended that one drill per shift be conducted each month.

FIRE DRILLS

- During a fire drill you must be able to:
 - Show the primary and alternate route.
 - Locate and know how to operate the Fire Extinguisher, Telephone (neighbor's or a cordless), Alarm Pull stations, Emergency Kit Bag.



FIRE DRILL PROCEDURE:

5. Staff must assure that the Emergency Kit is taken to, or immediately accessible at the destination.
6. Account for everyone at the destination. All occupants must have exited.
(Record the Evacuation Time)



FIRE DRILL PROCEDURE:

7. One staff returns, shuts off and resets the alarm, checks to see if everything is alright, and returns to the Destination to give the "ALL CLEAR" signal. This should be done in a discrete manner to avoid giving the individuals the impression that it is okay to re-enter the house while the alarm is still ringing.
8. Return to the worksite and complete Fire Drill Log documentation.

FIRE DRILL PROCEDURE:

- For the drill to be acceptable to the fire safety coordinator and the Fire Marshall, **EVERYONE** must exit or be evacuated during the drill.
- If everyone is not evacuated from the worksite it does not count as a fire drill.

FIRE DRILL PROCEDURE:

- It is not necessary to “create” a behavioral outburst or put somebody at risk of injury by insisting that everyone leave.
- If the drill is aborted simply plan on repeating it after the staff have developed or improved the plan to handle this situation.

FIRE DRILL PROCEDURE:



- Individuals do not have the “right to refuse” to participate in a fire drill.
- Frequently the person who “refuses” to participate in the drill is expressing that participation in the activity is not sufficiently reinforced or that the drills have become aversive.

FIRE DRILL PROCEDURE:

- Individuals who have a pattern of refusal or severe behavioral outbursts associated with fire drills will require additional training and attention by the TEAM.
- The TEAM may need to involve the Fire Safety Coordinator, the Recipient Rights Advisor, and the Fire Marshall to help satisfactorily address these issues.

Physical intervention should be used only in the event of imminent danger, such as a real fire.



THE NEED FOR AND PROPER USE OF FIRE EXTINGUISHER

- The PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DIRECT CARE STAFF IS TO GET EVERYONE OUT OF THE WORKSITE ALIVE.
- The contents of a fire extinguisher last only a few seconds.
- Use them only to fight your way out of a fire or to rescue someone.



OPERATION OF FIRE EXTINGUISHER

- Contents empty fast. Therefore, proper use is essential.
- Aim at the base of the fire and sweep from side to side.
- Stand six to eight feet from the fire.



OPERATION OF FIRE EXTINGUISHER

Learn How to P.A.S.S.:

- **Pull**: Pull the pin. Some units require the releasing of a lock latch, pressing a puncture lever, or other motion.
- **Aim**: Aim the extinguisher nozzle (horn or hose) at the base of the fire from 6 to 8 feet away.
- **Squeeze**: Squeeze or press the handle.
- **Sweep**: Sweep from side to side at the base of the fire until it goes out. Shut off the extinguisher. Watch for reflash and reactivate the extinguisher if necessary. Foam and water extinguishers require slightly different action. Read the instructions.

SUMMARY

- There are many sources of environmental emergencies. Some, such as fires and poisonings, you can prevent through planning, and precaution.
- Other areas beyond your control, such as those caused by severe weather, but you can be prepared for them.
- Knowing what to do and staying calm are critical. This means you and the people you serve must rehearse what to do.

SUMMARY

- You will need to know what each person can already do for himself/herself in the event of an emergency and what you can expect to teach him/her.
- It may be necessary to consult with the case manager or psychologist to develop a plan for teaching the people emergency preparedness.

THANK YOU!

for completing
“Environmental Safety”

You must complete the test to receive credit
for this course.