

## From the Committee Chair

*Maggie Carey, Chair, Consumer Committee*

This issue of Common Concerns focuses on Emergency Preparedness. Emergencies come in all shapes and sizes – and come in all four seasons of the year. Winter brings those lovely blizzards that we all enjoy so much – NOT. Spring and summer seem to provide ample tornadoes, severe storms, and flooding. Autumn can give you anything and everything.

So, what determines if it is an emergency? I think the answer is simple. If you are prepared, it is an inconvenience. If you are NOT prepared, it is an emergency!

In this issue, we are not focusing on your dialysis unit's emergency plan. They all have one and you should be very familiar with it. If you don't know what your unit's emergency plan is, then ask. Your safety may depend on your being able to follow their plan. It will be much easier if you understand your dialysis facility's plan BEFORE you are in an intense situation.

Our focus in this issue is what YOU have done to prepare for an emergency. Your life will be much smoother if you take time now to go over these simple suggestions and prepare for the unexpected.

I think one of the biggest obstacles to being prepared is that "it won't happen to me" feeling. But the truth of the matter is that it WILL happen to someone and that someone may very well be YOU.

Switching topics, have you ever wondered how your dialysis facility ranks compared to other facilities? Or, how does it rank compared with government standards? Well, those answers are right in front of you. Be sure to read the article on page 4 about the Dialysis Facility Performance Score Certificate.

## Emergency Preparedness

*Chris Singer, RN, BSN, MAN, CNN  
ESRD Network 11, St. Paul, MN*

Dialysis patients and chronic dialysis facilities must plan for their own survival in the event of a disaster or emergency. Dialysis patients receive life-sustaining treatment. It is vital that you are prepared for different types of emergencies.

In the midwest, there are many types of disasters and emergencies that occur.

Some examples of actual disasters include:

- Flooding of the Red River in 2007 and 2009 in ND and MN.
- Flooding of the Souris River in 2011 in ND.
- Temporary dialysis facility closures due to water contamination or power outages.
- Destruction of the dialysis facility by fire.
- Dialysis facility service interruption due to severe weather.

Emergencies and disasters do occur, but steps can be taken to ensure you are prepared. Review your emergency plan with your nephrologist and dialysis facility to see that the steps being taken are appropriate for you. If you need immediate medical attention at any time, contact your doctor, or dial 911.

## Before an Emergency:

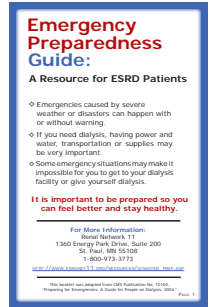
1. Gather and carry important medical information. This should include the following.
  - Current list of your medications
  - Dialysis treatment information
  - Medical insurance information
  - Your emergency contacts (family, friends, etc.)
  - Emergency contact information, for your pharmacy, electric company, and water company.
2. Ask your dialysis provider about making alternative arrangements for treatment if you cannot reach your dialysis facility.
3. Prepare an emergency stock of supplies, food, and medicines.
4. Know what diet to follow if your dialysis must be delayed. Ask your doctor or dietitian which diet is best for you.
5. Participate in emergency planning exercises in your dialysis facility.
6. Learn how to disconnect yourself from the dialysis machine if an emergency occurs while you are in the dialysis facility. Dialysis facility staff can educate you on how to do this safely.

## During an Emergency:

1. Make sure your environment is safe.
2. Stay home unless you are injured.
3. Notify your dialysis facility that you are not able to come to the facility for treatment and await further instruction. If you cannot reach your dialysis facility, contact your alternate facility (see step 2 of Before an Emergency).
4. Start to follow your emergency diet.
5. Contact your water and/or electric utility companies if you are without power and water. Notify them of your special needs.

*If you have to go to a shelter, tell the person in charge about your special needs as a kidney patient. They should have protocols in place to help you.*

Renal Network 11 has developed the *Emergency Preparedness Guide: A Resource for ESRD Patients*. This booklet covers the steps you should take to prepare for emergencies. It also provides a place where you can record important medical information and keep with you.



Please ask your unit for a copy of this booklet or call us at 1-800-973-3773. For more emergency preparedness resources, visit our website at [www.esrdnet11.org](http://www.esrdnet11.org).

*If you are on Peritoneal Dialysis, know how to do a manual exchange and have extra supplies on hand.*

## Lesson in Emergency Planning

Wanda Borchert, RN, CNN  
Sheryl Aleson, RN, CNN  
Anita Aarestad, RD, LRD, CSR  
Sanford Dialysis Fargo, ND

North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota have just experienced one of the best springs that all of us can remember. The prior three years involved snowstorms, massive flooding, and devastating tornados, which had us all dreading the winter of 2011-12.

Based on these experiences, we offer the following tips that will help you be prepared and be more at ease, if an event occurs and causes your dialysis unit to close.

- Pay attention to what is going on around you. Do not assume that it will never happen or someone else will take care of the problem.
- Know your unit's emergency plans and how they will contact you in the case of an emergency. Provide a list of phone numbers where you can be reached and the names of alternative contacts.

- Listen to radio and TV broadcasts. Consider an emergency weather radio. Sign up for your community's Code Red Emergency Notification System.

- Keep a current medication list and at least 1 week's supply on hand. All dialysis units and physician's offices will give you a list of your medications.

- Have an ID card that identifies you as a dialysis patient, which includes your unit's phone number and address. In the 2009 Red River flood, residents were told to stay off the streets. This ID card allows you to get to dialysis and back home.

*Have a manual can opener in case you lose electricity.*

- Ask your unit for information on Emergency Meal Planning. This provides instructions on how and what to eat, if you need to miss any dialysis treatments.

- Have an alternate number to reach your dialysis facility. Your unit may be closed or damaged and unable to provide dialysis.

*Consider buying a battery powered cellphone charger.*

- Know how to reach your local emergency services. These groups can identify patient needs, assist with relocation, and sometimes transport.

Hemodialysis patients in rural areas should contact the local Road Commission to alert them to your needs following blizzards. They may be able to prioritize snow removal on your roads to help you get to dialysis.

The best tip we can provide is to be prepared. Read the emergency planning information provided by your Community Emergency Services, your dialysis unit, Network 11, KCER and the National Kidney Foundation (NKF).

- ESRD Network 11: 1-800-973-3773  
[www.esrdnet11.org](http://www.esrdnet11.org)
- Kidney Community Emergency Response (KCER): [www.kcercoalition.com](http://www.kcercoalition.com)
- National Kidney Foundation: 1-800-622-9010  
[www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)

*Transplant patients should limit their exposure to infections if at all possible. Hand sanitizers, gloves and a mask can help.*

## Are You Ready?

*ImoGene, Detroit, MI*

Have you ever begun a recipe only to discover that you did not have all the ingredients to complete the dish, and you had to either forget about it or improvise? Well, that is pretty much how I think of how prepared I am in case of an emergency. I must THINK about how many main ingredients I have at home.

- A list of my medications.
- An emergency contact number for my dialysis center.
- Certain canned foods and bottled water along with the knowledge of what foods to totally avoid if I am in survival mode and which foods will benefit me.
- A supply of bleach for disinfection.
- A contact number for the Fire Department. Ask if they have a program for medical needs patients in my area.
- A hard copy left/right position/account of my arterial venous location for my Fistula/Graft (in case you do not know it).
- Non-electrical household essentials.

Now for the spices in my recipe.

- A battery operated radio or TV.
- A copy of *Preparing for Emergencies: Guide for Dialysis Patients*.
- Know if my Dialysis Center or the nearest hospital has an emergency generator.
- An inexpensive telephone in an easy to find place.

I do not consider "not completing the dish" an option. You must think about Emergency Preparedness the same way you would if you were considering fixing a special meal or planning a special occasion. Think it through and be successful with the outcome. Being prepared may make that happen.

## Facility Performance Score

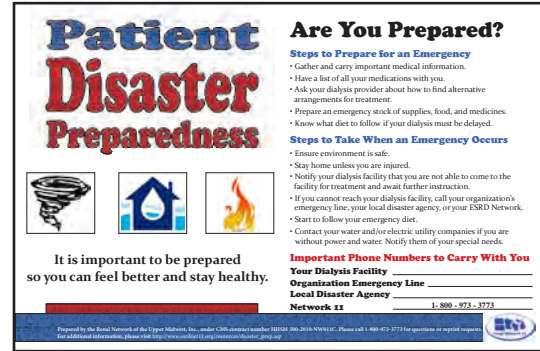
In December 2011, each dialysis facility received a Performance Score Certificate showing its performance in clinical areas and comparing the facility with national results.

This certificate can help dialysis patients understand the quality of care being provided at their dialysis facility. The certificate must be displayed in an area where it is visible to patients. We encourage you to look for the certificate in your dialysis facility and review it. If you have questions about the certificate, ask your health care team.



## Emergency Preparedness Poster for Patients

Network 11 recently developed an emergency preparedness poster for patients that features steps to take and important numbers for you to know. This poster was sent to all dialysis units, so look for it on display in your facility.



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