

## GUARDIAN ANGELS

### GOAL STATEMENT

The goal of Guardian Angels for People with Disabilities is to assist a person with limited mobility by 1) advising him/her on preparing his/her home for an earthquake, and 2) going to the home of the disabled person following an earthquake to determine what assistance the person needs, and providing whatever assistance he/she can.

### STEPS TO PREPAREDNESS

1. Review the fliers on home preparedness and take the appropriate steps yourself so that you can discuss the efforts and costs with the person assigned to you. Read the Senior Tips flier carefully as it contains many suggestions which are useful for anyone with limited mobility or medical problems.
2. Contact the person with disabilities assigned to you and set up an appointment to discuss home earthquake preparedness at his/her residence. Explain that you will want to review the residence with him/her to help evaluate safety issues. This will allow the person to prepare his whole living space to receive company and will save embarrassment for both of you.
3. Take a set of earthquake preparedness fliers to the client and review the steps in preparedness.
  - a. Adequate first aid supplies in a readily accessible location, including all medications and life support material (insulin, oxygen cylinders, backup generator for respirators, etc.).
  - b. Adequate water supply. Make sure he/she has a properly strapped water heater. If s/he lives in an apartment, contact the apartment manager regarding the importance of strapping the water heaters.
  - c. Non-structural hazard mitigation measures. See what steps have been taken, especially the placement of furnishings so they will not block doorways if they fall, and evaluation and removal of all falling hazards in the vicinity of the person's bed, chair, and other locations where s/he spends time within the unit.
  - d. Review the best place for the person to "duck, cover, and hold" in an earthquake in each area where s/he spends time. Review staying in bed (turn on you stomach, put the pillow over your neck and back of your head, and pull the blankets up as high as

possible), sheltering in a wheelchair (get to a doorway or interior wall and use a blanket or small piece of furniture to protect head and face from falling debris).

4. Develop a list of priorities to raise the level of emergency preparedness:
  - a. Medical-related issues to be cared for
  - b. Water supply to be developed
  - c. Non-structural hazards that need to be corrected
5. Assist the person in developing a specific, step-by-step, dated plan to accomplish the priorities you have identified together:
  - a. Where possible assist with no-cost items, like rearranging medical supplies already in the home for greater accessibility, and removing small, light-weight objects from exit routes.
  - b. List all items that need to be purchased on a priority basis with an estimated budget and timetable. For example:
    - (1) Reinstall mirror from over the chair to another wall: 1-hour handyman labor \$25, do in March.
    - (2) Move large bookcase away from bed and bolt to the wall: 1 hour handyman labor \$25, do in March.
    - (3) Generator for respirator: \$250 from camping supply catalog, save \$20/month and purchase in January.

Try to include possible sources of assistance, such as catalog shopping, handyman. Talk with the person about other friends or relatives who might be able to assist with the labor, or who might be willing to give some of the items as a birthday or holiday gift. Encourage them to make a commitment to finding the funds for the most critically needed items (e.g., water, first aid supplies, backup power supply).

At the present time we have no financial resources to assist with the needs of people with disabilities. However, if you discover that the person you are assisting has very limited funds and no one who is likely to assist financially with this need, please contact County Social Services regarding the situation. This information will be treated as confidential. Please remember that any information you receive during this relationship should also be treated as a “confidence” and shared only with sources of help who “need to know.”

6. Keep in touch with the person to let him/her know that you are still available. A card at the holidays and the person’s birthday would be a nice reminder that you are available to him/her. You might call to check up on the progress on the priority list of items to be accomplished.

7. After an earthquake, get to the person's home as quickly as possible and evaluate his/her needs.
  - a. Is mobility in the home impaired?
  - b. Does s/he have a medical emergency?
  - c. Do items need to be removed from the living area for safety?
  - d. Does s/he have access to emergency supplies?

Provide immediate assistance that you can to clear areas in the home. Assist with replacing tumbled objects, replacing items on shelves and in closets that are lightweight, help push other debris to the side so s/he has access to as much of the living space as possible. Make sure that medical supplies, water, sanitation supplies, and food are in an accessible area. Give reassurance that things will be returning to normal. Find the Emergency Alert System station (740 AM in the Bay Area) and suggest that the person tune in for updated information every few hours.

Check back with the person the next day to evaluate his/her psychological health. Be encouraging and reassuring.

If you discover a condition that makes it impossible for the individual to stay in his/her quarters, contact the American Red Cross Shelter Volunteer at the nearest shelter for guidance on alternative space for the person. If you find that the person needs immediate medical attention, organize transport to the nearest hospital. If the roads are impassable, try to recruit neighbors to assist you in pushing the wheelchair or carrying the person on a stretcher made with a sturdy blanket. The radio operator with the local San Jose Prepared! group may be able to provide information on the availability of emergency medical transport or get a message to the City's Emergency Operations Center.

**DO NOT HURT YOURSELF IN TRYING TO HELP!** Evaluate sensibly your ability to provide physical assistance. Your presence and caring are the primary gifts you will give to the client. Knowing that you will find assistance from other sources will be reassuring to the individual.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY.** Please contact the Office of Emergency Services at (408) 277-4595 if you have other questions or concerns about emergency preparedness. This is a new program and your ideas are always welcome.