

Support

Caring better together *at home*

disaster PLANNING



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Thinking ahead about ways to cope after a disaster could save stress... and lives, says the NZ Home Health Association.

The Christchurch earthquake gave many Kiwi families a jolt: just how well prepared are the rest of us for a similar emergency?

The Canterbury earthquake reminded everyone to check their emergency supplies, restock batteries and water, and review their family or business emergency plans.

Being prepared for emergencies is especially important for older people and those with health and disability needs.

Should the worst happen, these New Zealanders may need extra help to reach safety, or have health and support needs that require attention despite the chaos that comes with any civil emergency.

GETTING THROUGH

It's a good idea for anyone who relies on home support services from an agency to ask how the service would cope in an emergency.

Support providers have a duty of care to their patients.

In the Canterbury area, home support providers had several very busy days checking that their thousands of clients were safe. This was made difficult, not only because of the damaged roads and the closure of schools (many support workers have school aged children), but because some families had taken relatives to their own homes.

After a disaster like the Christchurch

earthquake, families and those receiving home support should get in touch with the provider to say the client is safe, and being cared for by family at a different location.

Plans can then be made about resuming the person's support.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

The Canterbury community quickly rallied to the aid of elderly and disabled people after the earthquake.

One agency reported that clients and support workers from across the South Island offered help... from breaks for those whose homes were damaged to volunteering by retired workers.

Since the earthquake, providers have gone beyond the call of duty, helping clients to clear up their homes and gardens, restock cupboards, and provide emotional support. It is heartening to see that the crisis planning of organisations that provide home support in Canterbury has stood up to a real-life disaster, and that senior staff worked effectively with those on the ground to ensure the ongoing safety of people we support.

PREPARING FOR DISASTERS

Disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods, and storms can strike at any time. Basic planning will help us all get through a civil disaster. For planning advice, visit <http://getthru.org.nz>

MAKE A QUICK GETAWAY!

Having a 'getaway bag' will ensure you have everything you need should you ever have to leave your home after a natural disaster or other emergency. Your bag might contain:

- Extra eyeglasses.
- Hearing aids, batteries, and chargers.
- Copies of medical prescriptions, doctor's orders, and the style and serial numbers of the support devices you use.
- Medical alert tags or bracelets or written descriptions of your disability and support needs, in case you are unable to describe your needs after an emergency.
- Supplies for service animals such as guide dogs.
- Physician contact information, a list of your allergies, and health history.
- A list of local nonprofit or community-based organisations that know you, and support people with needs similar to yours.
- A list of family, friends, and support services with current contact details.
- A laminated personal communication board, if help is needed to be understood.
- If possible, extra medicine, oxygen, insulin, catheters, or other medical supplies you use regularly.
- If you use a motorised wheelchair, have a lightweight manual chair available for emergencies... and know the size and weight of your wheelchair, and whether it is collapsible for transport.

Q **What should we do?**
I am 22 and support my wife, whose accident left her with significant disabilities. One of her workers often asks if she can get paid but not come round, or whether she can leave early without finishing her tasks. My partner gives in to her requests because she hates to make a fuss, but when the work isn't done, it all falls back onto me. I don't think it's right to sign time sheets for someone who hasn't done the hours, plus I'm doing her work. What should we do?

MARCUS, BY EMAIL



A *The vast majority of support workers do a great job and are reliable and honest. It's often a true vocational role, with many workers providing services well and truly beyond what is expected of them. All support workers do have clear obligations to their clients. In the first instance, talk to the worker's employer, who will welcome your feedback. Together you can resolve the issues so your wife receives the care she is entitled to. Your service provider will also make you aware of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, which applies to all health and disability services in New Zealand. Rights under the Code cover issues such as being treated with respect, privacy, effective communication, service standards, dignity and independence, the right to be fully informed, and the right to complain about a poor service. Try to resolve any concerns directly with the worker and her employer. If you continue to have problems, you have rights under the Code... learn more about your options at www.hdc.org.nz*

TIPS

1 TALK TO THE SERVICE PROVIDER

The company or agency that employs your wife's support worker will want to know what is happening. Support workers typically do a fantastic job for their clients; you and your wife are missing out! The sooner you talk to the worker's employer, the sooner you can resolve the problem, and receive the full support hours your wife is entitled to.

2 BE UNITED

It sounds as though you and your wife are giving the worker conflicting signals. The last thing you both need is extra tension in your relationship. Show a united front when you talk to her (perhaps with her supervisor present). If things don't improve after trying to resolve your concerns, you can lodge a complaint under the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights.

**Letters
+ Advice!**

Family Care often receives letters and emails from support workers and those receiving help at home about issues they want to share with others.

Do you have a burning question or issue for our Support At Home team?

Post them to PO Box 133, Mangonui Far North 0442 or email them to info@carers.net.nz

Nick's journey to ironman



Nick Ruane is preparing for Ironman New Zealand 2011.

It's an event he describes as "the biggest single-day test of endurance on the planet", involving a 3.8 kilometre swim, a 180 kilometre bike ride, and a 42 kilometre run.

Nick aims to complete the event in less than 13 hours, the first para-athlete in the country to do so.

The training is intense, but Nick relishes the challenge. He's been pushing the limits for most of his life.

FRESH START

Nick was three years old when an accident left him with hemiplegia and epilepsy.

Growing up, Nick felt lonely and awkward. He became overweight, and was unhealthy and unhappy.

Then, in 2001, Nick decided to turn his life around.

He quit smoking and developed a love

of running, which helped him lose 40 kilos and led him to where he is today.

Improved fitness led to a boost in confidence and, a few years later, Nick overcame a fear of water to become a triathlete.

ENCOURAGEMENT

In 2009 he completed the Taupo Half Ironman in just 6 hours, 41 minutes.

Nick enjoys a level of independence that far exceeds the expectations of many, something he attributes to the support of those around him, particularly at home.

"I couldn't go out and do the things I do without the stability I have at home," he says.

Nick's partner, Karyn, helps with "the little things" like opening a can, buttoning his shirt, or putting on his watch.

Above all, she provides stability.

Nick believes that his supportive home life is not only crucial for achieving his physical

goals, but has a significant impact on his health. "I've got control of my epilepsy now; the stability I have at home has a large part to do with it."

HELPING OTHERS

When he's not on his feet, Nick is seated at his desk, completing a law degree.

He plans to work in disability advocacy, and has a particular passion for changing the "bias against employing disabled people".

Nick is also a proud member of the disabled community, and is sponsored by Access to help inspire others.

"I say to people, you can do whatever you want to do, regardless of the nature of the challenge. You just have to decide you want it enough."

For more information about Nick, you can visit his website

www.nickruane.co.nz.

Our Support At Home sponsor is Access, one of New Zealand's leading healthcare organisations, specialising in home-based healthcare and support for New Zealand families since 1927!