



So What Happens When This Happens?

By Susan Saldibar

**“What’s your emergency plan in the event of a . . .
(fill in the blank: hurricane, tornado, flood, earthquake)?”**

Do you have a good response to this question? Because, in the wake of hurricanes Harvey and Irma, you are certainly going to be asked. And it’s a valid question. So what is your plan?

We certainly know what happens when there is no plan. There are plenty of unsettling stories in the wake of recent hurricanes of seniors in nursing homes sitting in flood water waiting for help. That should serve as a dramatic warning for those communities that don’t have a fully operational disaster plan in place.

[SageAge Strategies](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner) has posted some really useful data and insight on their website about what goes into a solid disaster plan and some recommendations as to how to be really be ready for a disaster. They’ve listed resources and lots of statistics from sources such as Argentum and federal agencies. It’s definitely worth checking out and you can read the entire article [here](#).

But SageAge makes another great point about disaster plans. They do more than save lives.

Without question, the main purpose of a disaster plan is to get people into a safe environment as quickly as possible with as little disruption as possible. SageAge notes, however, that there is another upside to having a good disaster plan in place. It can become an important point of differentiation for potential new residents,

whose families are concerned about safety for their loved ones. Today's seniors and their families seek care communities that can demonstrate an authentic capability to provide a safe and positive environment for their loved ones. They will, therefore, appreciate the value of a new home for their loved one that is well equipped and prepared to keep them safe and secure, even under the most challenging circumstances.

In short, your disaster preparedness plan can become a valuable marketing tool for your community; another notch in your competitive arsenal to give your community a leg up on others on a crowded playing field. It makes a lot of sense, especially given today's competitive senior living marketplace.

For that reason, SageAge recommends that you share your community's disaster preparedness plans with the public. Explain the details on your website, social media and in your brochures. This is especially important to family members who may live remotely from a loved one they are considering moving to your community.

One word of caution before you go public with your plan...

SageAge issues one important warning before you tell the world how great your disaster preparedness program is:

"Make sure it has been tested and communicated effectively to all managers, staff, residents and their families so there is no confusion as to what to do and when in the event of an emergency. With major disasters in the news, you can probably expect visiting families of current residents as well as new prospects on tour to ask about your plan, and you'll want all of your team to be on the same page."

You can read the full article from SageAge [here](#).



This article has been brought to you by [Sage Age Strategies](#) in partnership with [Senior Housing Forum](#).

