Disaster Preparedness for the Elderly and the Disabled

Utilizing a Community-Based Exchange Network to Provide Assistance Inclusive of Our Seniors and the Disabled

Tag Words: emergencies; disaster preparedness; elderly; physically and mentally disabled; New York; New Jersey; Pennsylvania; outreach; volunteer; Time Bank; network; profile; Buddy System; emergency kits; emergency cards; health services; emergency providers.

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Summary
During disasters, the elderly and the disabled are not as capable of evacuating their homes quickly and as a result may be more prone to injuries and death. Although federal, state and local emergency management programs exist, some individuals, particularly the elderly and disabled, fail to receive the attention they require and fall through the cracks. We describe our new program which relies on neighbors for assistance using a community exchange network/TimeBanking model to be launched in NJ, NY and PA.

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWGKm_ku46w

Providing Relief to the Vulnerable in Disasters

The Impact of Disasters on the People (CA)

A disaster is an event that causes physical damage to property, a loss of life, or destruction to the environment. Some types of disasters are earthquakes, hurricanes, flash floods, tornadoes, tsunami, fires, explosions, terroristic attacks, etc. As disasters appear to be increasing across the United States, we need to expect that such events will occur and be prepared for them. During disasters and other emergency situations, the population as a whole is in danger. Times like this can be overwhelming and hard to handle for everyone. It is important that everyone get the appropriate care and relief and services needed to handle such events.

Individuals who are not able to adapt fully by themselves or that may have mobility or functional issues would be expected to need more assistance in an emergency. The elderly and the disabled are at particular risk during an emergency. In many cases, the elderly live by themselves and may not be terribly mobile or have a lot of contact with other people. Studies show that the average age of deaths in situations like heat waves and hurricanes is 75. Clearly, populations such as this need more help in an emergency and special programs and procedures need to be in place.

Our aging and disabled populations have increased in the past few years and are expected to further increase in the next decade. According to the Administration on Aging (AOA), our older population (65 years or older) is expected to grow about 19% by 2030 (1). With regards to the disabled population, approximately 54 million Americans have at least one disability, making them the largest minority group in the nation. As our baby boomer population ages and more
veterans return from war, this number will double in the next 20 years (2). The large increase in these two populations will further stress the emergency management plans that exist today.

Vulnerability of the Elderly and the Disabled (CA, JE)

The elderly’s inability to leave their homes during disasters may be associated with them being physically “frail.” A physically frail senior needs help even doing their “basic activities of daily living”, or BADL’s. BADL’s are activities that concern personal care such as brushing one’s teeth, bathing, and other forms of self-care (3). Injury, disease, or simply that their bones deteriorate because of old age are some of the reasons why seniors might become physically frail. This physical state makes it more difficult to evacuate their homes during disasters. “Independent activities of daily living” or IADL’s, include preparing meals, using the telephone, taking prescription medication in the right dose at the right time (4).

Statistics show that about eighty percent of individuals aged 65 or older possess at least one health issue (5). These issues can affect a person’s awareness and cognitive processes in emergency situations. Chronic illnesses and physical impairments can seriously hinder seniors and the disabled from taking care of themselves. Seniors and the disabled may be house-bound and incapable of leaving their homes during disasters and obtaining emergency assistance and services. If seniors are trapped in their homes because of disasters, they may need help with BADL”s and IADL’s.

Generally during disasters, emergency services are not available during the first 72 hours and local communication is not available. People who live on their own are vulnerable during disasters because they may not have anyone to take care of them or help them evacuate. The elderly cannot just rely on emergency managers, health-care providers, emergency responders because the disaster might be preventing these individuals from providing emergency services to people. Ultimately, it is the individuals themselves that are responsible for themselves. The elderly, the physically impaired along with their friends and family need to take responsibility for their own emergency plan. There are resources like informational books, the media, and emergency management guides that will inform individuals about the steps needed to be taken to survive a disaster or emergency. It is extremely important that a plan be in place before disaster strikes. If the relative or friend is too far away or can’t get there to help, then it is the community that should have some responsibility to ensure that the elderly get assistance so they can evacuate or manage in their homes safety.

Current Emergency Management Programs

Federal Emergency Management Agency (JE)

There are many organizations and informational tools available that are set up to help individuals in times of emergency. One example of this is the Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA. Their website provides links to more information, how to make a plan, how to build a kit in times of disaster, and even how to get involved. It also lists items and necessities that each individual should have in the event of an emergency. This informative website provides easy access to tips on what to do in the event of floods, wildfires, tornadoes, blackouts, etc. There are
also text messages that one can subscribe to that would provide notifications of emergency situations. It stresses the importance of being prepared and ready today so that in the future if anything terrible does happen, everyone will be prepared. Their website also lists individuals to turn to in the event of an emergency or disaster (6). It is important that these individuals are able to find someone that they trust to inform them of their needs so that others are aware and able to help in time of need.

The use of software to identify the individuals who are most likely to require assistance in disaster situations can create this network for those who do not have family/friends in their immediate area. It also supplements their network to include individuals with special skills (medical skills: administer medicine, operate medical equipment, etc.)

**Extension Disaster Education Network (CA)**
The Extension Disaster Education Network or EDEN was an initiative of land grant Universities and their research on disaster preparedness. The EDEN network links Extension educators through a land grant system to use and share resources about disaster preparedness to reduce the impact of disasters. Its website connects individuals from all over the nation to discuss and share important resources and information in times of emergency and disaster. It has easy to use tabs that provide information about agricultural disasters, families and communities, hazards and threats, human health, and disaster watch. EDEN used this information to set up the online lessons (7). The four online lessons are: “Make a Plan,” “Get a Kit,” “Be Informed,” “Get Involved.” Each lesson contains a learner’s guide, PowerPoint slides, resource information, and disaster fact sheets. They also have a Family Preparedness Education Program that consists of online courses for families to take in order to be ready for disaster situations

**Office of Emergency Management Websites (JE)**
Another resource that is available and very similar to the two above is the local Office of Emergency Management website. This website is more specific to the area itself and is therefore able to inform and update individuals on local emergencies. The New Jersey website provides information in emergency situations. It is particularly useful when needing information to plan and prepare such as putting together a kit; types of emergencies for schools, pets, businesses, local governments, evacuation routes, protective actions, etc. (Plan and Prepare). They provide information in ways to volunteer and get involved and other programs that they offer. Most importantly, this site provides local information that is going on currently. This includes weather related updates and also what the governor is doing to help the community. The website for San Francisco provides specific lists to see whether you are prepared or not. It covers households, children, seniors, disabled, pets, food, water, first aid, etc. It also covers “What to do if” there are, for example, earthquakes, evacuations, storms, terror, disease, etc. There is a PDF file that provides a brochure with all the information that can be distributed to the community (8). These sites are very useful for the community and provide support and information locally. The only issue with these kinds of resources is that many people may not have access to this kind of information since it is found online. As technology advances and more and more information is sought after online, the elderly and the disabled are put more at a disadvantage. However, the fact that these specific areas have informational websites set up is noteworthy. One thing to consider is to have this kind of information perhaps provided in person (such as on paper or in handouts) to individuals who do not have access to the Internet and other technology.
**New York’s Attempt**

This article describes New York’s attempt to adopt a policy to help those in need during times of disaster. After the events of Hurricane Sandy, the governor of New York tried to ameliorate the issue by implementing a registry to help the disabled and the elderly. They were found to be the most affected by this disaster. Almost half of the people that died that day were the elderly (9). The population that is disabled was left stranded for days. Immediately after the hurricane occurred, the governor discussed plans to help. However, it appeared that this kind of registry was never put into place. No one really took the initiative to take action and put it all together. There needed to be a more definite description of how this should and can be implemented. Essentially New York lacked a definitive evacuation and help system for the elderly and the disabled. States and towns are starting to realize the necessity for this specific population to receive the aid and support that they need.

A huge issue is that such a registry needs to be made known to everyone and ready to use before an emergency occurs. Being prepared in advance of a disaster is key. Countless people were trapped in skyscrapers in New York following Hurricane Sandy. Although there was some aid given, the evacuations, accessibility of shelters, and the raising of the awareness of emergency services were not provided properly or at all. A lawsuit was filed after the storm of Irene against the State of New York because of the State’s inability to respond to individuals with disabilities and their overall lack of a program that would come to the aid of these individuals in an emergency. The lack of action by the state violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (10). The state overlooked the necessity of aid, and this ended up being detrimental to many people. Currently, New York is working on a remedy to tackle this issue. Although it is something that is difficult to overcome and solve, it can be done, and needs to be done. The elderly and disabled compose of a good portion of the population and they cannot simply be left out.

**Community Action: A Buddy System Implemented through a Time Bank**

To provide an alternate solution in assisting the elderly and disabled with responding and coping in disaster situations we designed a Buddy System within a Time Bank network to push for individuals within the community to reach out, build ties, and take responsibility for looking after the individuals that need their help in a disastrous event. This design concept relies on the essence of community with the outreach of one individual to another in seek of assistance. But to provide additional motivation to the individuals providing assistance in this system apart from the satisfaction and gratitude from helping another, the buddy will receive payment in time credit through the Time Bank that they can use to request assistance from the community for any services they may need.

**Time Bank**

We have designed our novel solution of the Buddy System within a Time Bank network because it provides the social network structure to tie the individuals of the community together, strengthening the community, through the gift based economy allowing individuals to provide services to others while receiving the services they need. The Time Bank system functions on the basis that any individual registered and accepted to the network can contact a person requesting
services for which they will be "paid" in hours of time if they provided the services. The hours of
time credits are transferred from the requester’s Time Bank account to the individual’s account
that provided the services at a 1 to 1 ratio. Based on these rules of the Time Bank hours cannot
be created or destroyed but instead only traded between individuals through requesting and
providing services where the time credits paid/received is always equal to the number of hours
spent providing the services. The Time Bank is a zero sum entity as all services are scaled to the
same value, the number of hours of service provided. In this economic system all services are
considered equal and the only variable between trades is the number of hours services are
provided for.

To allow elderly or disabled individuals who fear they will be unable to provide any type of
services to others to receive time credit so they can have a buddy who will check in and help
them in the event of an emergency, the community can create a Community Time Reserve. Any
Community Time Reserve created will be provided for a single purpose, in this case for helping
these individuals provide the time credits to the buddies that are willing to help them in their
times of need. This Community Time Reserve would be created with the purpose of providing
assistance to the elderly and disabled in the community and would be allotted a certain number
of time credit hours that renew each year. The number of hours allotted to any type of
community reserve can be determined by a poll of the individuals in the community registered to
the Time Bank. The elderly and disabled in the community can freely apply to receive aid from
the Community Time Reserve but they should always be seeking instances where they can
provide services back to the community to uphold its zero-sum quality and to refrain from
unnecessarily depleting the allotted reserve hours that others may need. Although the elderly and
disabled may not be able to fulfill physically demanding services they can provide many other
types of services back to the community. They could provide intellectual, experiential, or historic
based lectures to individuals or small groups of the community drawing on their own life to offer
advice and guidance to individuals in the community. Services such as reading books to children
in libraries or providing one's time and company to a lonely individual would certainly count as
providing back to the community. In a diverse community there will be numerous types of
requests which the elderly and disabled can take up to give back to the community.

The Time Bank functions on the transactions of providing services to gain time credits and
receiving services to spend time credits. For individuals to join the Time Bank and become a part
of their community they must register an account with the network at their website providing
some generalized personal data which will only be used to verify one's eligibility to the
community time bank and reach others within the community to carry out service trades.
Registering individuals will need to provide their name, location, and contact information. The
name is used as an identifier on the network as well as in person when providing and requesting
services from others in the community. The location information can be generalized to only
include a town/city and state but it is required to assess the individual’s eligibility to the specific
community time bank being registered for. Time Banks are designed as a county/state specific
network of individuals so that individuals outside the state where the Time Bank is identified for
will not find other individuals from their community which they can trade services with. Instead
individuals from outside a Time Bank's location of focus can be re-routed to a more appropriate
Time Bank while registering. The contact information provided in a user's profile when
registering to the time bank will be publicly available on the network so that individuals
requesting/providing services from/for them will be able to contact them to speak privately and
share personal information such as an address. For this reason the contact information provided on the site can be non-identifying such as an email address to prevent privacy/security concerns with publicly available information.

**The Buddy System** (AH)

The Buddy System within the Time Bank creates a buddy-elderly/disabled relationship where the buddies can help the dependents they are responsible for in the event of a disaster or emergency in minutes when other assistance such as first aid squads and emergency medical services would take longer to respond. Buddies will be chosen by the seniors and the disabled individuals from other members in their communities. It is important they choose someone within their community who can easily reach their household and that is trustworthy. The senior or disabled individual will need to share personal information concerning their needs with the buddy. Buddies should be available several times per week and are responsible for checking in on their dependent in the event of a disaster or emergency. The dependent and the buddy must decide on a medium of communication and procedure in the event of an emergency. It is recommended they both have access to telephones so that the buddy can be responsible for calling and checking on the dependent’s status in the event of a disaster such as power outages, heavy storms/flooding, blizzards, etc. If telephone access is not available then buddies should contact their dependents in the most effective manner available. For instance the dependent and buddy can implement the practice that the buddy is responsible for coming to the dependent’s residence and knocking on the door to ensure everything is okay. It is recommended to gain access to a telephone if you do not already have one through low cost plans. Low cost plans are available from providers such as AT&T's Lifeline, Verizon's low minute senior plans, and many others. The availability of a telephone can allow for dependents to contact their buddies in the event of a less severe emergency that could have temporarily immobilized them without any serious harm. The buddy system doesn't need to be constricted to only being responsible for responding in the event of an emergency but could also be to share several instances per week with their dependent to check in on them and see if they need help with anything in general. Depending on the dependent’s circumstances and the buddy's capabilities the terms of their personal dependent-buddy system a buddy may be able to help with additional chores and services such as preparing meals, laundry, transportation, and shopping. This type of an expansion on the buddy system could work to improve the relationship between the individuals and strengthen the community as a whole.

It's understood everyone in a community would be willing to help each other in the event of a disaster or emergency out of altruism, but the buddy system relies on a stable devotion of time and effort every week from the individual to the dependent they are accountable for. The Time Bank creates a system where the buddies will be able to receive help from the community for having provided this service for the seniors and disabled individuals. The individuals who choose to be these buddies will find the form of "time payment" to be a second factor for aspiring to become a buddy of a community member, as well as the satisfaction for being able to help someone who needs them.

The Time Bank is designed for ease of access and functionality especially since some user's may not commonly use computers or have everyday access to computers. The hours spent by the
buddies with their dependents can be logged by either the dependent or the buddies themselves and the buddy will be able to receive the time credits for their assistance.

A high degree of importance is emphasized on the choice of an individual as a dependent’s buddy. The characteristics of the individual can determine their capability of fulfilling the role of a buddy. The individual must be responsible and trustworthy as they are expected to check in on their dependent in the event of any emergency and their dependent must feel confident as they open themselves to a potential security and privacy concerns with the disclosure of personal information. The personal information must be shared with the dependent’s buddy as it allows them to be able to appropriately respond in the event of an emergency. This includes whether the buddy can recognize the severity and necessary urgency in an emergency situation. To minimize the security concern the dependent’s personal information should be given directly to your buddy in person instead of submitting it through the Time Bank profile page. The information on the website will only be used to identify the dependent-buddy relationship while the personal information exchanged between the two directly should include any medically necessary information that may help the buddy understand the dependent’s circumstances and needs or to advise emergency service personal. Attached in the appendix is a list of questions concerning personal and medically relevant information that should be answered directly to the buddy to prepare them for responding in an emergency situation.

Time Bank Website Disaster Preparedness Page

SOS - Emergency

Nowadays, emergency contact is not as readily available as some people may perceive. Being readily prepared for disasters and tragedies are overlooked until the time of crisis arrives. The elderly and the disabled are the ones that are most affected by this and help needs to be administered and provided to these individuals. Specifically focusing on the states of New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, a time bank would be something that can be utilized to help ameliorate this issue. Before this is implemented, each individual should be aware of the necessary procedures and supplies that they themselves can do to be prepared in any type of incident. An important tool that each individual should have is a safety kit placed inside the home. The kit should include materials such as a flashlight, batteries, first aid kit, medications, multi-purpose tool, personal hygiene items, copies of personal documents, emergency contact information, emergency blanket, and a map of the area. Not all of these things need to be stored in the kit but it should all be easily accessible. An idea that has been implemented in some areas is to have a list of the medications that an individual uses in a vile that is stored in the fridge. The firefighters or any person associated with emergency relief will know to go to the refrigerator to obtain this information. Also personal documents should be kept in a safe place that is easily accessible to the owner. Knowledge of shelters in your county is also useful. Simply go to this link from the Red Cross: http://www.redcross.org/find-help/shelter, put in your zip code and find the nearest shelters in case of emergency and disaster.
To appropriately utilize this time bank in disaster relief, a buddy system will be implemented. This system will ensure security for your privacy. The Buddy System by the Time Bank creates a buddy-senior relationship where the buddies can help the seniors they are responsible for in the event of a disaster or emergency in minutes when other assistance such as first aid squads and emergency medical services would take longer to respond.

Buddies will be chosen by you from the individuals in your community. It is important to choose someone within your community who can easily reach your household and that you trust with personal information concerning your needs. Don't worry if you currently aren't familiar with individuals in your community you could ask to be your buddy, we can help you build ties within your community.

The buddy you choose should be available several times per week and responsible for checking on you in the event of a disaster or emergency. You and your buddy must decide on a medium of communication and procedure in the event of an emergency. If you both have access to telephones your buddy can be responsible for calling and checking on your status in the event of a disaster such as power outages, heavy storms/flooding, blizzards, etc. If you do not have access to a telephone to contact your buddy you can implement the practice that your buddy is responsible for coming to your residence and knocking on your door to ensure everything is alright. It is recommended to gain access to a telephone if you do not already have one through low cost plans for seniors from providers such as AT&T’s Lifeline, Verizon’s low minute senior plans, and many others. The availability of a telephone can allow for seniors to contact their buddies in the event of a less severe emergency that could have temporarily immobilized them without any serious harm. Such as in the example where you have fallen and unable to get up, you can contact your buddy for immediate assistance, but in the event where you have fallen and are bleeding or injured you should always contact emergency services first, then you may contact your buddy for more immediate assistance until emergency services arrives.

Your buddy will not only be responsible for responding in the event of an emergency but should also be able to share several instances per week with you to check in on you and see if you need help with anything. Depending on your circumstances, your buddy's capabilities, and the relationship and terms of your senior-buddy system your buddy may be able to help you with additional chores and services such as preparing meals, laundry, transportation, and shopping.

It's understood everyone in a community would be willing to help each other in the event of a disaster or emergency out of altruism, but the buddy system relies on a stable devotion of time and effort every week from the individual to the senior they are accountable for. The Time Bank creates a system where the buddies of the seniors will be able to receive help from the community for having provided this service for the seniors. The individuals who choose to be
these buddies will find the form of "time payment" to be a second factor for aspiring to become a buddy of a senior, as well as the satisfaction for being able to help someone who needs them.

The Time Bank website allows you or your buddy to document the hours spent by the buddy helping their senior, whether in response to an emergency or helping with chores such as laundry and cooking. If you do not commonly use computers or have internet access your buddy can be solely responsible for reporting their hours providing aid and services. These hours will be "paid" to the buddy's account on the Time Bank network in the form of hours where they can request services from members of the community equal to the number of hours spent helping their senior.

A high degree of importance is emphasized on the choice of an individual as a senior's buddy. The characteristics of the individual can determine their capability of fulfilling the role of a buddy. The individual must be responsible and trustworthy as they are expected to check in on their senior in the event of any emergency and their senior must feel confident as they share potential security concerns with the personal information they share. The personal information must be shared with the senior's buddy as it allows them to be able to appropriately respond in the event of an emergency. This includes whether the buddy can recognize the severity and necessary urgency in an emergency situation. To minimize your security concern your personal information can be given directly to your buddy in person instead of submitting it through your Time Bank profile page. The information on the website will only be used to identify you and your buddy while the personal information exchanged between you and your buddy directly should include any medically necessary information that may help your buddy understand your circumstances and needs or to advise emergency service personnel.

It would be preferred to have a buddy that you are familiar with and trust. However, if you do not have a buddy when signing up for the time bank, do not worry because we will be having community events where you will be able to get to know the people in your local neighborhood and town who will be ready to help you in time of need.

Community events can consist of meet and greets, fundraisers, or a community project. Fliers for every event will be posted around the neighborhood and sent via email. Members of the community can attend just one event or attend all of them. We do recommend members to attend more than one event just so they can get a chance to meet a lot of people; of course if a member is physically unable to come to multiple community events or any at all, it is certainly fine.

Meet and Greets: The first event will be a Meet and Greet to get the community involved with the Time bank and the buddy system. They will get a chance to talk each other over drinks.
Food will also be served. It will be held at a public place like a park. Members will get the chance to exchange numbers.

Fundraisers: Some of the members of the community are already involved in different organizations that are not related to Disaster Preparedness, so they will can invite members to any of the events that their organization is hosting.

Community project: All the members of the community will participate in a project (for example, making a garden). The hours spent working on the project can go towards a community bank account. The hours in this account can be used in case a member, for instance, is unable to a certain duty for another community member.

References


(5) Nancy Aldrich, William F. Benson Disaster Preparedness and the Chronic Disease Needs of Vulnerable Older Adults


Appendix:

Profile Questions
1. Do you live by yourself?
2. Are you part of an in-home care program?
3. Do you have a family member who lives in a 15 mile radius from you?
4. Do you use a wheelchair to move around your house? If so, is there an accessible ramp to help you evacuate from your home during a disaster?
5. Are you blind or visually impaired? If so, do you have access to a cane or a whistle?
6. Do you have a medical history of illnesses or injuries? If so specify:
7. Do you require specialized medical treatment? (Dialysis, oxygen therapy, catheters)
8. Do you currently take any prescription medication?
9. Do you have an emergency supply of prescription medication? (will your pharmacist allow you to obtain an emergency supply?)
10. Do you have a health information card?
11. Do you have a first aid kit handy and accessible in the house?
12. Do you have an emergency contact card?
13. Do you know how the provider will respond in an emergency? Do you have designated backup or alternative providers that you can contact in an emergency?
14. In the past, have you ever experienced a natural disaster that has affected your home?
15. Do you know the proper procedure in the case of a natural disaster?
16. Do you have access to the phone or internet or other sources of media?
17. Do you have access to a disaster preparedness website?
18. How have you been notified of emergency situations in your area in the past?
19. Do you have a disaster supply kit? (What does it contain?)
20. Do the utilities in your house work efficiently? For example: water, gas, electricity.
21. When you go grocery shopping, do you buy enough food to last you for the week?

Home
Type (mobile home, hospice, apartment, etc.)
How many people/pets do they live with?
How many stairs or elevators in home?
Languages spoken in home
Form of transportation (car, bus walking, etc.)

Days Available
Should be available at least three days out of the week.
Morning, Afternoon, Evening
Any special concerns or issues

Below are a list of links for the State Office of Emergency Management, and any links that are specific for each county in NJ, NY and PA.

Below is the list of counties in PA with their respective OEM sites

Below is the list of counties in NY with their respective OEM sites.
- Albany County -
- Allegany County - http://gov.allconet.org/DES/
- Bronx County - http://www.dhses.ny.gov/oem/contact/
- Broome County - http://www.gobroomecounty.com/e911/
- Cattaraugus County - http://www.cattco.org/emergency-services
- Cayuga County -
- Chautauqua County - http://chautcofire.org/
- Chenango County - http://www.co.chenango.ny.us/
- Clinton County - http://www.clintoncounty-ia.gov/Page/EMA.aspx
- Columbia County -
- Cortland County -
- Delaware County - http://www.dcdes.org/AHMP%20page.htm
- Dutchess County -
- Erie County -
- Essex County - http://www.co.essex.ny.us/OfficeOfEmergencyServices/
- Franklin County - http://www.dhse.ny.gov/training/NIMS/contacts.cfm
- Fulton County -
- Genesee County -
- Greene County -
- Hamilton County -
- Herkimer County -
- Kings County (Brooklyn) -
- Lewis County -
- Livingston County -
- Madison County -
- Monroe County -
- Montgomery County - http://www.dhse.ny.gov/oem/contact/
- Nassau County -
- New York County (Manhattan) -
- Niagara County -
- Oneida County -
- Onondaga County - http://www.dhse.ny.gov/training/calendar/?agency=OEM
- Ontario County -
- Orange County -
- Orleans County - http://www.dhses.ny.gov/training/NIMS/contacts.cfm
- Oswego County - http://www.co.oswego.ny.us/emo.shtml
- Otsego County - http://www.otsegocounty.com/depts/ems/training.htm
- Putnam County - http://www.putnamemergency.com/
- Queens County - http://www.queensbp.org/content_web/emergency.shtml
- Rensselaer County - http://www.rensco.com/publicsafety_emsp.asp
- Rockland County - http://www.rocklandgov.com/
- Saint Lawrence County - http://www.co.st-lawrence.ny.us/departments/emergencyservices/
- Saratoga County - http://www.dhses.ny.gov/training/calendar/
- Schoharie County - http://www.ryalert.gov/
- Seneca County - http://www.co.seneca.ny.us/res-emergency-services.php
- Tioga County - http://www.tiogacounty.ny.gov/departments/emergency-management.html
- Tompkins County - http://www.dhses.ny.gov/oem/contact/
- Ulster County - http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/resources/emergency.html
- Washington County - http://www.co.washington.ny.us/Departments/ps911/ps911_1.htm
- Wayne County - http://www.co.wayne.ny.us/departments/emergency/emermt/emermt.htm
- Wyoming County - http://www.wyomingco.net/emergency/main.html

NJ see http://www.ready.nj.gov/about/association.html for all counties and their links.
Individual county links are below:

Atlantic
http://www.readyatlantic.org
Bergen County
http://www.bcoem.org/
Burlington
http://www.co.burlington.nj.us/pages/ViewDepartment.aspx?did=31
Camden
Cape May
http://www.capemaycountygov.net/
Cumberland
http://www.ccoem.org
Essex
Gloucester
http://www.co.gloucester.nj.us/depts/e/emergency-management
Hudson
Hunterdon
http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/oem.html
Mercer
http://www.mercercountyoem.com/Pages/default.aspx
Middlesex
http://www.co.middlesex.nj.us/emergency/index.aspx
Monmouth
http://co.monmouth.nj.us/page.aspx?ID=145
Morris
http://www.morrisoem.org
Ocean
http://www.co.ocean.nj.us/EMMgmt/Main.aspx
Passaic
Salem
http://www.salemcounty.gov/departments/emergency-services/
Somerset
http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/division/emergency-management.html
Sussex
http://www.sussexcountysheriff.com/about/emergency_management/
Union
Warren
http://www.co.warren.nj.us/publicsafety/wcoem/wcoemtop.html

Letters to the Editor

John Prendergast, Editor
Dear Mr. Prendergast

My name is Cornelius Asare and I am senior at Rutgers University. I am currently writing a paper which consists of a plan to help the elderly, physically, and mentally disabled in Pennsylvania evacuate their homes during a natural disaster. Generally during disasters, emergency services are not available during the first 72 hours and local communication is not available. There is a need for a system in which members of a community can reach out to help other members in need of assistance during a disaster. Also, every community member needs to be well prepared for disasters and informed about natural disasters, so they can take care of themselves before their community assistance arrives.

With the help of my professor Julie Fagan, we have come up with a Time Bank System for individuals in the neighborhoods of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The Time Bank is an online network that connects members of the community and allows them to volunteer to help other members with their daily activities and most importantly, disasters. Instead of money, members will putting in hours every week to help out their neighbors and will receive assistance from other members in return. The tasks that members will complete can consist of babysitting, preparing meals, carpooling, etc.

To start participating in the outreach program, community members will create a Time Bank account online by going to their county’s Time Bank website. On every website (regardless of county) will have information about Disaster Preparedness and the guidelines to follow during disastrous situations? To sign up into the account, every member will enter basic information about themselves (First name, Last Name, County) that will be placed in their profile. The more personal information will be given to what is called a “Buddy.” A buddy is person in a community that is chosen by a community member to assist them in an emergency as well as help them with their chores around the house and vice versa. The Time Bank website allows you or your buddy to document the hours spent by the buddy helping their senior, whether in response to an emergency or helping with chores. A buddy can be a family, a friend, or someone you trust. If a community member has trouble selecting a buddy because they are not familiar with anyone in their neighborhood, they can attend community events held by the Time Bank community of their county to meet and socialize with other members. The elderly and the disabled are not physically capable or mobile enough to evacuate their homes on their own; they need assistance and guidance along the way. The Time Bank system is a great way for members of a community to volunteer to help one another during disasters. The Time Bank can get a community connected through a network so they can communicate with one another and help each other survive during disasters. Thank you so much for your time, I look forward to hearing from you. My email address is enclosed in this letter and it is as follows: cjones3287@gmail.com

Sincerely,
Cornelius Asare

The Daily Targum
Targum Editorial Office:
Dear Skylar A. Frederick,

Seniors and the disabled are sometimes incapable of leaving their homes during disasters and obtaining emergency assistance and services. Generally during disasters, emergency services are not available during the first 72 hours and also long distance communication is fixed before local communication. A couple of students and I are researching more information on this topic at Rutgers University for our Ethics class taught by Professor Fagan. We are interested in utilizing a time bank, which is an online service exchange that utilizes time rather than money. For our specific situation, a person would put in a certain amount of time that they would be able to help an elderly person or a disabled person. In exchange of this, they will receive something that they need help in as well. This is something that we are planning on implementing in the states of New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. I was wondering if you were able to promote or advertise the importance of this necessity and specifically how the time bank can be utilized to help ameliorate this issue. New time banks have been launched in New Jersey and they can be accessed on the web using the name of their county, state and the word strong (ex: Somerset County NJ Strong) or by using the url: http://somersetnjstrong.timebanks.org/ (for example). Please let me know if you need more information pertaining to this.

Thank you for your time,

Junia Easo

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Dear NJ Herald Editor,

My name is Adem Hasan. I am a senior at Rutgers University where I am currently investigating and designing a novel communal system for helping the elderly seek assistance in times of crisis. During natural disasters such as severe storms and blizzards we commonly face power outages, flooding, road closures, and a stop in the everyday life. Most notably this disruption to functionality affects our emergency response personnel causing the emergency services to be delayed in a time where individuals will need it most. The elderly are especially vulnerable in a disaster as they may be reliant on power for medical equipment or unable to evacuate their residence quickly due to mobility impairments. If affected by cognitive or communication impairments they could find it difficult to cope in evacuee temporary housings or even within their own residence with the new stressors caused by the disaster.

To address the growing security concern for the elderly in times of crisis we have designed a Buddy System built within a Time Bank network to incentivize the individuals to step forward and take responsibility of the care for the seniors within their community during an emergency. The Buddy System is built within the network of the Somerset county Time Bank accessible at:
http://somersetnjstrong.timebanks.org/ where anyone can make an account to learn more. A Time Bank allows individuals to receive services from individuals within the community for having completed services for individuals in the community based on a time credit currency where an hour of work can be traded for an hour of services. The Time Bank was created in the name of Somerset county but individuals from all counties can sign up and utilize the Time Bank by identifying their county and creating a community within the network. The Buddy System is designed within this Time Bank network so the buddy responsible for a senior will be rewarded with time credit for checking in with them and assisting them during an emergency. The Buddy System functions on the basis of the senior identifying an individual from their community which they believe is responsible and trustworthy to fulfill the role as their buddy. The buddy can recognize when their senior may be in need of assistance if they share personal information concerning their medical needs with them while ensuring they understand the confidentiality of the information shared. The Buddy System's greatest strength is its capability to foster the quickest reaction time from the occurrence of a disaster or a call for help and the arrival of assistance. If a buddy lives within the same building complex or on the same street as their senior, they could arrive at their residence within seconds while emergency personnel would take minutes or longer given the circumstances of a disaster. In an emergency where a senior may have fallen within their residence, are not seriously injured, and cannot get up but they have access to a phone, a buddy could assist them sooner than emergency services while also serving as a second check if the senior should seek professional medical care. Having a buddy is not a substitute for needing emergency services but instead a solution for the elderly to have access to quick, pro-active assistance in an emergency situation.

Sincerely,
Adem Hasan