

# Emergency Alert and Preparedness Program Details

Together, the Rockwall County Committee on Aging and the Rockwall Fire Department, are implementing an Emergency Alert and Preparedness Program for people with disabilities and older adults throughout Rockwall County.

## **BACKGROUND**

We conducted an informal risk assessment to identify the vulnerability of injury and death suffered by persons with disabilities and older adults within the Rockwall County area. Our community does not have an emergency preparedness program that focuses on the needs of persons with disabilities and our older adults, although the need and the potential impact of the program became evident.

The State of Texas exceeds the national average of deaths and injuries per year caused by fires and severe weather. Both local and national agencies identify persons with disabilities and older adults as a high-risk population for injury and death caused by fires and severe weather. Data indicates that the percent of the population that falls into these two high-risk categories is going to continue to increase.

Although people with disabilities and older adults have a higher risk of injury or death from fire and severe weather, typically they are not the target of education and awareness efforts. Therefore, the Rockwall County Committee on Aging and the Rockwall Fire Department have established an Emergency Alert and Preparedness Program for people with disabilities and older adults in our community.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Our Emergency Alert and Preparedness Program has two vital components, which are education and awareness.

The educational component includes the development of Personal Emergency Action Plans to address the specific needs of persons with disabilities and older adults. We utilize the National Fire Protection Associations (NFPA) "Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities" to provide information on this topic to our recipients.

The U.S. Fire Administration emphasizes the importance of early recognition of an emergency in populations where physical limitations may increase the time needed to exit or respond to an emergency. The awareness component ensures that our recipient has the devices necessary to provide them early awareness of an emergency. We provide devices that will bridge the gap created by the existing warning devices designed only for the hearing and seeing population. We provide alarm monitor systems that will notify disabled persons of an alarm due to fire, carbon monoxide, and severe weather. The alarm monitor system includes all three of the ADA and USFA recommended alert methods for persons with disabilities including an ultra bright 177 cD or greater strobe light, a 95-120 dB siren, and strong bed shaker, which all activate on the audible alarms from smoke detectors, CO detectors, and weather radios. The system has AC power with rechargeable battery backup for all components to ensure protection during loss of power.

The Emergency Alert and Preparedness Program provides the alarm devices as needed to work in conjunction with the alarm monitoring system. We will install UL Listed smoke detectors with 10-year lithium batteries in the proper locations as needed. We will also install CO detectors with lithium batteries in homes that warrant such devices. We will pre-program and install weather radios with

lithium battery back up, if needed. The weather radios will be equipped with the S.A.M.E. weather/Hazard alert feature to provide localized alerting. The S.A.M.E. feature will allow for alerting of messages for the area directly around the recipient and eliminate unnecessary alerts. The weather radio will also include a flashlight to assist in evacuation during a power outage.

The entire system is wireless, saving the cost of wiring the system and allowing for greater flexibility. The recipient will be able to relocate the system as needed, as they may change rooms or homes.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

This program is truly a multijurisdictional partnership. We are implementing this program countywide. Some of the community partners include Rockwall Fire Department, Rockwall Housing Authority, Rockwall County Emergency Management Office, Rockwall Community Emergency Response Team, Heath Fire Department, Fate Fire Department, Royse City Fire Department, McClendon Chisholm and other community partners.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Rockwall County has a very successful Meals on Wheels program that delivers meals and provides personal contact to people with disabilities and older adults each weekday. This program's volunteers deliver over 30,000 meals a year. We will utilize these current in-house volunteers and team with our community fire department partners to conduct the one-on-one personal emergency preparedness evaluations, develop the personal emergency evacuation plans, and to install the alert system, smoke detectors, CO detectors, weather radios, replace batteries in existing devices, and relocate existing devices that are improperly installed.

## **RECIPIENTS QUALIFICATIONS**

Anyone with a limited or impaired ability to respond to an emergency condition is qualified to receive the system. Such impairments may include physical, sensory, and cognitive or developmental disabilities. Mental disorders (also known as psychiatric or psychosocial disability) and various types of chronic disease may also be considered qualifying disabilities. A physical impairment is any disability, which limits the physical function of limbs or fine or gross motor ability. In addition, anyone over the age of 55 is qualified to receive the system.

There is no cost for the system and all installation is included. Qualified applicants can contact Rockwall Meals on Wheels directly to request a system.

Rockwall Meals on Wheels contact information:

950 Williams St 200  
Rockwall, TX 75087  
Phone: (972) 771-9514  
Fax: (972) 771-9514  
Email: RockwallMOW@hotmail.com  
Website: [www.rockwallmow.com](http://www.rockwallmow.com)

The goal of the program is two fold; one to provide the resources to those who could not otherwise afford the fire and life safety devices and the second is to provide community wide education on the emergency preparedness needs for persons with disabilities and older adults and to inform everyone on the available devices and resources to help protect them.