



Care Partner Information

Tips for Providing Older Adult Care

Communicating with First Responders

Who is a First Responder?

A first responder typically works or volunteers for fire, police or emergency medical service (EMS) departments. When 911 is called, they are sent to help. Trained staff at an assisted living or senior care facility can also be first responders.

Before First Responders Arrive

- 1. Stay calm.** It is important to stay calm to be able to tell the first responders what they need to know. Staying calm also can help the person in an emergency be less anxious. To calm down in an emergency, take slow deep breaths in and out. Then, prepare for the first responders to arrive so they can do their job better.
- 2. Make it easy for first responders to get to the person.** Think about the easiest way to get in and out of the house or building. For example, the back door may be wider than the front door. Or one exit may have fewer steps. Remove anything that might get in the first responders' way, including furniture.
- 3. Collect the person's important documents.** Having accurate health information can improve the person's care. The table below lists the key documents to find. If these items are not available or can't be found, write down what is known while waiting for the first responders. Some information is better than none.

Documents to find for first responders
The person's driver's license or ID card
The person's health insurance cards
Allergy information
List of current medications
List of current illnesses
Names of the person's doctors
Living will or other documentation about the person's medical care wishes

This Care Partner Information page is part of a series on older adult caregiving tips. They are written to help family and community caregivers, direct care workers and community health representatives care for older adults. Available in English and Spanish at www.aging.arizona.edu

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When first responders arrive

1. Let first responders focus on the person. Stay nearby to answer questions. Listen carefully to what they ask, and answer clearly, calmly and openly. Being honest can help the person get the best care possible.

2. Take notes. It is a good idea to take notes while the first responders are working. Write down any instructions from the first responders. Important details are easy to forget in emergencies.

Emergencies are stressful. It is hard to remember what to do while waiting for first responders, and after they have arrived. Below is a brief guide for care partners to help first responders.

Step-by-step guide to help first responders
Stay calm. Take deep breaths and exhale slowly.
Be prepared to explain why first responders were called.
Pick up clutter and make it easy to get to the person.
Prepare a list of doctors, medical conditions, and medications to give to first responders.
Look for the person's ID and health insurance cards.
Allow space for first responders to move around and do their job.
Listen carefully to the first responders' questions.
Answer any questions.
Take notes to see if any important information has been forgotten, and to remember any instructions or information from first responders.
Call family and friends for support and help.

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