The Climate Change Challenges for Family Caregivers

How turbulent weather and fires are adding stress to what are often already stressful responsibilities

GROWING UP IN NEW ORLEANS

In the 70s, for me, meant that during hurricane season there would be extended family sleepovers with pallets of blankets, sheets and pillows covering the floor. We’d congregate in our public housing project’s brick apartment home and offer safe harbor in the storm.

Today, climate change means that many family members need to take on their own additional caregiving responsibilities to assist loved ones dealing with stronger winds, higher storm surges and record rainfalls. I speak from experience, as the founder of The Caregiver’s Guardian, a Denver-based consulting service supporting and advocating for family caregivers.

For family caregivers, the decision to leave during intense weather is much harder than for others because of the difficulty of moving someone who may not be ambulatory and the weight of durable medical equipment that must be transported, along with medication and supplies.

When Hurricane Ida quickly began to gain strength along the Gulf Coast and was projected to be a Category 5 storm in 2021, The Caregiver’s Guardian reached out to all our clients to find out what their plan of action was.

A Family Caregiving Story from Hurricane Ida

For some, it was a no brainer: they were leaving as quickly as possible. Others decided to wait it out, includ-
Climate Change Challenges for Caregivers, continued from page 1

ing my 91-year-old father and his
wife, who is his primary caregiver.

Let me share with you the Hurri-
cane Ida story of Karen Hill, of Stone
Mountain, Ga. At the time, she was a
long-distance caregiver to her moth-
er who has Alzheimer’s and lived
seven hours away in New Orleans.

During the storm, Karen attempted to
convince her brother in New Orleans
to drive their mother to Georgia and
stay until the storm subsided. When
he refused, Karen got in her car and
headed to The Big Easy.

After arriving, she packed up her
mom, but failed to
convince her brother
to leave with them.
Within 30 minutes,
Karen and her mom
were on the road
to Stone Mountain.
They arrived safe
and sound, but
Karen then had 24-
hour sleep depriva-
tion with a mother
who was confused
disoriented.

For the next two weeks, as New
Orleans experienced power out-
ages, they would acclimate to life
in a different environment and the
challenges associated with living
with, and caring for, a loved one with
Alzheimer’s.

These days, it appears that Karen’s
mom will be with her for some time
to come.

“Being a long-distance caregiver is
hard, but at least I had my brother’s
help and could receive some respite.
Now, that’s not possible,” says Karen.
“Hurricane Ida has certainly changed
life as we know it. I believe that my
mom may be best served staying
here in Georgia with me.”

California Fires and Family
Caregivers

In California, climate change is
presenting itself in a wholly different
way. The rising temperature that is
warming the ocean is also evaporat-
ing moisture from the ground, drying
out the soil and making vegetation
more flammable. The resulting
dryness has been increasing the
frequency of enormous wildfires in
California that burn hotter and longer
than in the past.

According to the California De-
partment of Forestry and Fire Protec-
tion, eight of the state’s 10 largest
fires on record and 12 of the top
20 have happened in the past five
years, collectively destroying 40,000
homes, businesses and infrastructure.

Some in California are being chal-
enged with family caregiving respon-
sibilities and evacuation orders due
to wildfires that threaten their homes
and communities. These caregivers
grapple with where to go, what to
take and the unimaginable dilemma
of knowing that there may be no
home to come back to.

And just how do you evacuate with
a wheelchair, hospital bed or bedside
commode and oxygen tank?

Raya, a caregiver in Northern Cali-
ifornia (who prefers not to reveal her
last name) has lived
on the edge for the
past two years. She
created a Plan of Care for Evacuation
and a strategy for where she and her
husband might go if need be. Raya
keeps her bags packed and essential
items and medications in a specific
place, so if the call for evacuation
comes, she and her husband will be
ready to go.

The Caregivers’ Guardian has cre-
ated an evacuation checklist for fam-
ily caregivers and making discussions
about it is an essential part of our
caregiver education and training.

Caregiving is a demanding, all-
embracing challenge. Add in the
impacts of climate change and that
raises the stakes exponentially.

Talk to the caregivers in your
family to address the possibility of
evacuation from storm or fire. And try
to create or expand a neighborhood
watch program for caregivers in the
community. The need is great and
urgent.

By Nadine Roberts Cornish, Certified
Senior Adviser, gerontologist, author,
speaker and founder of The Caregivers
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https://www.nextavenue.org
### Family Caregiver Alliance’s Emergency Preparedness Checklist

Floods, earthquakes, tornados, snowstorms . . . wherever you live, there likely exists the potential for a variety of natural disasters that can create an emergency situation. When you’re caring for a loved one, it’s times like these that you’ll be thankful for having prepared for such a situation . . .

<table>
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<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>Do I know the most important disaster issues for the area where I live (earthquakes, floods, etc)?</td>
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<td>Do I know how I should respond to a disaster that might strike with little or no warning?</td>
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<td>Do I know the recommended evacuation route if there were an evacuation order?</td>
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<td>What are my transportation options?</td>
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<td>Where is the nearest shelter?</td>
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<td>Do I know where the shut off valves to my home are? Do I know how to shut them off? If special tools are needed, do I have them? Do I know where they are?</td>
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<td>Do I have an emergency contact person who lives out of the area? Do my relatives or close friends know who this person is?</td>
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<td>Do I know my neighbors in case we need to help each other in an emergency?</td>
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<td>If I’m receiving home health services, have I discussed emergency procedures with the provider?</td>
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<td>If I have special needs, do I have a plan for dealing with them in an emergency? (Mobility, medical equipment, incontinence supplies, others)</td>
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<td>If I live in a senior community, am I familiar with its emergency planning and procedures?</td>
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### Home Supplies Checklist:

- Drinking water (3-6 day supply)
- Food (3-6 day supply, requires no cooking, high energy)
- Flashlight (check batteries regularly)
- Portable radio (check batteries regularly)
- First aid kit
- Spare batteries
- Manual can opener
- Light sticks
- Waterproof matches
- Medications
- Medications list
- Cell phone
- Cash
- Emergency medical form
- Personal hygiene items
- Backup prescription glasses
- Extra clothes
- Rain slicker
- Walking shoes
- Blankets
- Water bottles
- Dust masks
- Other .................................................................

Source: Family Caregiver Alliance. https://www.caregiver.org/
That Which Is You, That Which Is Me  by Simone Nazzal

You are sleeping now, floating in a morphine-induced haze that numbs but does not erase pinpricks of pain inside your bones, inside your brain. We spent the last hour bathing: the slow trek to and from the shower, a grim processional. You’ll never have occasion or opportunity to feel cool jets against your skin again—just sponge and terrycloth. You realized this sitting on a plastic lawn chair I brought in from the backyard, weeping, while I washed your hair. I swallowed my own epiphany in silence.

In the hospital bed, you look small, a sliver of the statuesque giant of my childhood, pushing me higher and higher on the swing, defying gravity. The light from a dull lamp hits your face; I observe drastic changes in its dimensions, an unnatural outcropping of skin and sinew on your forehead. The purple mass appears to push outward—emerge from—your skull, as if another face is gazing back. This gives me pause.

I recall when you told me you could feel the cancer tingling inside your head, like an anxious dinner guest, arriving late, ringing the doorbell before abruptly barging in. I remember how you winced when I asked if it hurt, and said, No, not yet.

Muted and diffuse, dimming light illuminates the outrageous beauty of your own cells, far removed from breasts where they were born, giving birth to themselves, again and again and again, terraforming your lovely face, a text I learned to read over 25 years of intimate study.

My breath hitches; I’m struck, terrified by this cubist re-arrangement of your high and sloping forehead, landscape once marked by noble aspirations of progress, a world where poverty is not a life sentence, where human dignity is guaranteed. There is nothing dignified, I think, about such shameless mutiny.

Then I realize, with suffocating certainty that these cells reaching beyond their outer limits, deforming you—well, they are also you. How, then, can I despise that which is you? How, then, can I rail against the inexorable desire to live—so characteristic of you—the same force that once ushered me into the world through rapid divisions beneath your skin? Like me, like you, it wants to live, that which is you, that which is me.

So, I do not cry. I do not walk away. I simply sink to my knees, witness this metaphor with unease and tremendous fear of God.
Del Oro is Turning 35!

IN 1984, the Comprehensive Act for Family Caregivers of Brain-Impaired Adults became law, due in large part to the avid advocacy of unpaid family caregivers in the San Francisco Bay Area. This legislation established the California Caregiver Resource Center (CRC) system that today represents roughly 5.5 million people. Since 1987, Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center has served as the greater Sacramento region’s local CRC, carrying out our mission to improve the well-being of family caregivers through various services designed to support the physical and mental health of those caring for another vulnerable adult. We are so excited to celebrate this significant milestone and look forward to another 35 years!

THE FRIENDSHIP LINE
An Accredited Crisis Intervention Program for the Elderly
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24-Hour Telephone Hotline/Warmline

Call In Service – Confidential telephone discussions for people 60+ who may be lonely, isolated, grieving, depressed, anxious and/or thinking about death or suicide, their caregivers and/or younger disabled adults.

Friendly Volunteers Needed!

Do you love people? Do you love Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center? We are looking to fill several volunteer positions at Del Oro and we need YOU! Whether you can spare a few hours a week, or make a more significant time commitment, please consider becoming a Del Oro volunteer.

We can use your help in the following areas:
Office Help
Fundraising
Speaking Engagements
Advocacy

If you are interested, please contact Amber Henning, Director of Finance and Administrative Services, at ahennen@deloro.org or (916) 728-9333.

Join Our Team!

DELORO IS HIRING! Join our tight-knit team of dedicated professionals who work together to improve the well-being of caregivers caring for an adult with cognitive and physical impairments within a thirteen-county service area.

Apply online TODAY at:
https://www.deloro.org/available-postions

Program Assistant II
The Program Assistant II will support the Del Oro team by providing excellent customer service to our vendors. Other job duties include answering a multi-line telephone system, conducting data entry, greeting visitors, collecting and distributing the mail, and providing general office support. This position is full-time (40 hours/week) and based in Citrus Heights. Salary will be based on experience.

Family Consultant (2 positions available)
The Family Consultant provides direct and indirect social services to family caregivers of physically and cognitively impaired adults through Intake, Assessment, Information & Referral, Family Consultation, Care Management, Counseling, Support Groups, and Education Classes. This position is full-time (40 hours/week) and based in Citrus Heights. Salary will be based on experience.

Institute on Aging
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For additional information or to schedule a presentation by Founder and Director Patrick Arbore, Ed.D, please contact Natalie Schroeder at 415.750.4137 or nschroeder@aging.org.
17TH ANNUAL COOK-OFF AND FUNDRAISER

Cruise Around the World

BENEFITTING FAMILY CAREGIVERS IN OUR COMMUNITY

COMING SUMMER 2022

Ahoy, mateys! Our Cruise will feature a cook-off by local chefs, live entertainment, a silent auction and raffle prizes! This fun and festive annual fundraiser is an opportunity to support Del Oro’s efforts to expand much needed programs and services for unpaid family caregivers in our region. And it’s coming to a shore near you.

If you’re interested in becoming a Culinary Partner or Cruise Sponsor or donating auction items, please continue to visit www.deloro.org/support for updated information.

Join the Sacramento region on Thursday, May 5th, 2022 for a celebration of philanthropy! Our community will come together for one Big Day of Giving, a 24-hour giving challenge that brings together the region’s nonprofit community to help raise much needed unrestricted funds and shine a spotlight on the work nonprofits do to make the region the place we call home. We hope your heart is with Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center, serving family caregivers of brain-impaired adults and the frail elderly in our region. Visit us at https://www.bigdayofgiving.org/delorocares to donate!
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to our Generous Donors

You can make a difference! There are many ways YOU can help family caregivers in our community:

- Donate by mail, make your check payable to Del Oro CRC and mail to 8421 Auburn Blvd., Suite 265, Citrus Heights, CA 95610
- Donate Stocks or Mutual Funds
- Donate online at www.deloro.org
- Designate Del Oro as your nonprofit at www.smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to your charity of choice.
Your contributions help fund critical programs for family caregivers. Donations or memorial gifts of any size are most welcome.

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Please make your check payable to Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center and send to:
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For information or assistance, contact Del Oro CRC at (800) 635-0220
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