



Supporting People Living with
Dementia and their Caregivers
During Emergencies: The Los
Angeles Fires Webinar



Logistics

Please use the chat and Q&A functions to enter your questions throughout.

A recording and materials will be available on **dementiacareaware.org** at the end of this webinar.



Today's speakers



Presenter
Jennifer Schlesinger
Vice President, Healthcare
Services & Professional Training
Alzheimer's Los Angeles



Presenter
Ana Flores
Care Counselor
Alzheimer's Los Angeles



Moderator
Anna Chodos, MD, MPH
Executive Director
Dementia Care Aware



Review: the cognitive health assessment

Begin~ Detection: the Cognitive Health Assessment

Screen patients older than age 65 annually (who don't have a pre-existing diagnosis of dementia)

Part 1



Take a Brief Patient History

Part 2



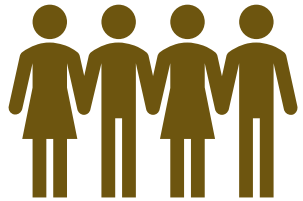
Use Screening Tools

Part 3



Document Care Partner Information

Next steps after a positive screen: a care pathway



Think about your population at risk and screen.



Learning Objectives

What we will cover today

- Unique considerations faced by people living with dementia and their caregivers during emergencies
- Ways professionals can support families

Setting the Stage



Los Angeles Times

61.46 DEMONSTRATED ANNUAL INCREASE © 2013 NYT

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2013

latimes.com

‘LIKE A THOUSAND FIRES’

WIND-DRIVEN BLAZES DESTROY HOMES; AT LEAST 5 DEAD

PALISADES FIRE: Some residents who fled are anxious to see if houses survived

EATON FIRE: 32,500 told to evacuate as 10,600 acres burn in Altadena, Pasadena



What Happened

January 7, 2025

- 10:30am Plume of smoke over Malibu/Palisades Fire
10 acres burning
- 11:00am-12:00pm Gridlock on Sunset Blvd
200 acres burning
- 3:30pm Evacuations, houses burning, winds
1,262 acres burning
- 6:00pm Eaton Fire, Altadena evacuations
 - Foot, car, hard to stand, breathe, see
- 10:30pm Hurst Fire, Sylmar



What Happened

January 8, 2025

- Houses, schools, nursing homes destroyed
- Lives lost
- Evacuations
- Red flag warnings
- Power outages
- Air quality issues
- Strong winds
- Do not drink water



What Happened

January 22ish, 2025

- Palisades Fire—23,448 acres burned and 77% contained
- Eaton Fire—14,021 acres burned and 95% contained
- This was just 2 out of 9 fires





Dementia and Emergency Situations





Vulnerable Populations

One measure of the strength of a community's response and recovery system is its attentiveness to its most vulnerable citizens—children, the frail elderly, the disabled, and the impoverished and disenfranchised. It is a cruel fact: disasters discriminate. NCDP research focuses on populations that are most likely to be seriously affected by disasters, and least able to recover without support.

People 60 + are almost 4 times as likely to die in extreme weather events as those who are younger.

Adams et al., 2021



Median age of those killed in LA Wildfires was 77.

At least 1/3 of deaths were among those with impairments that could affect mobility.

LA Times Analysis




1/21/25, 2:43 PM Altadena family says disabled father and son were left to burn in fire - Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles fires | Help for Angelenos | L.A. fire victims | How to help

CALIFORNIA

Altadena family says disabled father and son were left to burn: 'Nobody was coming'



Anthony Mitchell Sr. with two of his great grandchildren. The Altadena patriarch died in the fast-moving Eaton fire Wednesday while waiting to be evacuated with his disabled son. (Anthony Mitchell)

The image is a screenshot of a news article from the Los Angeles Times. At the top, it shows the date and time (1/21/25, 2:43 PM) and the page title "Altadena family says disabled father and son were left to burn in fire - Los Angeles Times". Below the title is the newspaper's name "Los Angeles Times" and a navigation bar with links for "Los Angeles fires", "Help for Angelenos", "L.A. fire victims", and "How to help". The article is categorized under "CALIFORNIA" and has the headline "Altadena family says disabled father and son were left to burn: 'Nobody was coming'". The main image shows an older man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a dark blue shirt, smiling and posing with two young children. One child is making a peace sign. Below the image is a caption: "Anthony Mitchell Sr. with two of his great grandchildren. The Altadena patriarch died in the fast-moving Eaton fire Wednesday while waiting to be evacuated with his disabled son. (Anthony Mitchell)".

Challenges Faced by Older Adults

- Chronic health conditions
 - Respiratory conditions → susceptibility to smoke
- Mobility challenges
- Hearing and visual impairment
- Less likely to regularly check cell phones
- Social isolation
- Fixed incomes make costs associated with evacuation magnified



Challenges Faced by Older Adults

Policies and Systems

- Registries of people with mobility challenges or other special need who may need assistance?
- Requirements for pharmacies to issue a 30-day supply of medications ahead of a disaster?
- Are people with dementia, caregivers, and those with expertise in dementia involved in local preparedness efforts?
- Are emergency management agencies specifically focusing on people with dementia?



CALIFORNIA

After botched fire evacuations, L.A. County considers disaster registry for elderly, disabled

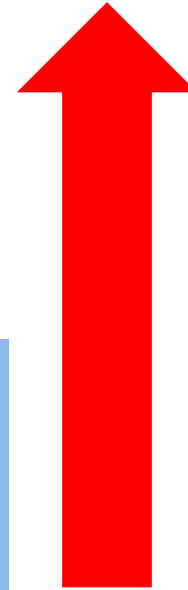




660,000
*Californians
with Alzheimer's
in 2019*



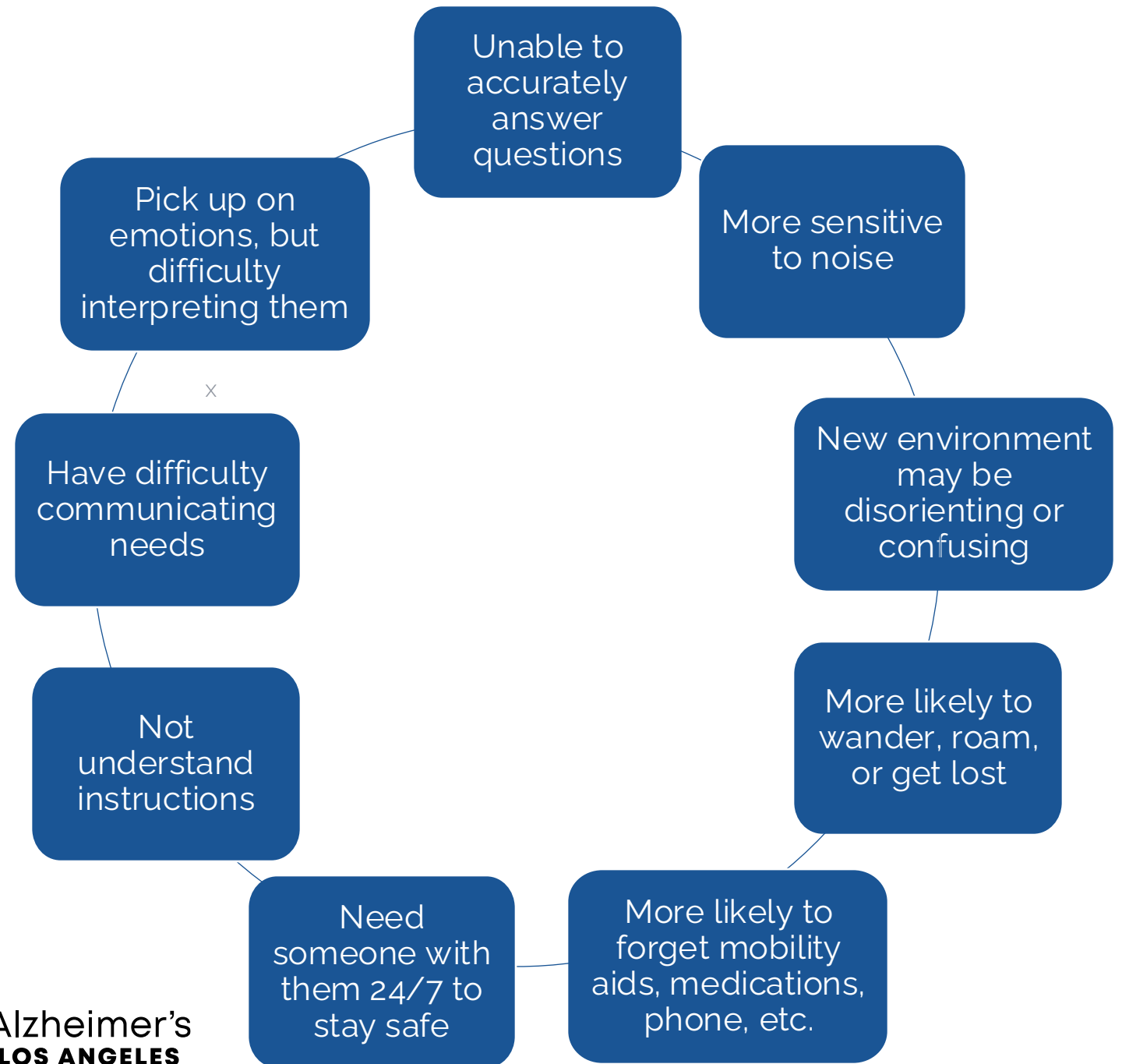
866,000
*Californians
with
Alzheimer's in
2025*



1,965,820
*Californians with
Alzheimer's in
2040*

Source: Ross, L, Beld, M, and Yeh, J. (2021). Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Facts and Figures in California: Current Status and Future Projections. Report prepared for the California Department of Public Health, Sacramento, CA at the Institute for Health and Aging, University of California, San Francisco, CA.

What is Unique About Someone Living with Dementia?



Think about how an emergency may exacerbate these



SAN GABRIEL VALLEY TRIBUNE



<https://www.sgvtribune.com/2025/02/04/new-site-sought-for-272-living-at-pasadena-convention-center-fire-shelter/>

Nursing home evacuees faced cot shortages in Pasadena, medical staff say

By [Aaron Schrank](#)

Published Jan 9, 2025 5:30 PM



Caregiver Story

Maria's Story: Caring for her Mother Amidst the Palisades Fire

- Maria worked as a housekeeper while caring for her mother, Elena, who has dementia
- The Palisades Fire destroyed her work neighborhood, leaving Maria without a job and focusing on her mother's care
- Evacuating was difficult due to Elena's dementia, adding stress to the situation
- Maria became her mother's full-time caregiver, facing emotional strain
- Alzheimer's Los Angeles provided respite care, financial relief, and guidance on managing Elena's dementia
- This support helped Maria cope and find strength during this challenging time

Emergency Situations can Trigger Dementia-related Issues



Wandering

Challenging Behaviors

Caregiver Stress

Supporting Families



Prepare

- Have you talked to the family/caregiver about an emergency plan?
- Go bags
- Safety planning → wandering
- Education on dementia-related behaviors and tools for use



GET *Ready,* Stay **READY!**

**SD3 EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS EVENT**

**Saturday, October 5th
9:00AM - 1:00PM**

Skirball Center
2701 N Sepulveda Blvd,
Los Angeles, CA 90019

Learn how to keep yourself, your family,
and your community prepared for
natural disasters including wildfires,
earthquakes, floods and more.

Complimentary breakfast provided!

Scan the QR code to RSVP,
or text your RSVP to
213-359-3515.



 **LINDSEY
Horvath**
THIRD DISTRICT

 **RICK CHAVEZ ZBUR**  **KATY YAROSLAVSKY**  **TRACI PARK**

L.A. Co FIRE

LA Found

A countywide initiative to help locate individuals with Alzheimer's, dementia, or autism who wander

www.lafound.lacounty.gov

Resources page:

<https://lafound.lacounty.gov/county-resources/?type=alzheimers-dementia>




Alzheimer's Caregiver Tip Sheets

- Plain language tip sheets
- Multiple topics
- English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, and Japanese
- Free to download
 - www.alzheimersla.org/professionals

Caregiver Tip Sheets

Anger, Frustration, & Fighting



People with Alzheimer's or dementia can get confused, depressed, and angry. Their feelings and actions are sometimes hard for them to control.

They may hit and yell.

Don't take their words or actions personally.

Listen to what they mean, not what they are saying.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

KEEP THINGS SIMPLE

- try to match tasks and what you expect with what your person can do
- keep your home quiet and calm when you can
- speak slowly and try not to say too much at one time

MAKE A CHANGE

- offer a treat like a cookie or some ice cream
- lead your person to a different room
- offer to watch a TV show or listen to music
- ask a question about a topic your person enjoys


BE SAFE

- remove or lock away all weapons (guns, knives, etc.)
- back away slowly if the behavior is scary
- call 911 if you are afraid for your or someone else's safety

WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

People with Alzheimer's or dementia might:

- be confused by:
 - new places or people
 - something they see and don't know
- become frustrated because they can't:
 - pull on a sweater
 - open a door
 - find a lost item like a purse, wallet or glasses
- be frightened/scared of:
 - the shower or bath
 - a new place or person

 Alzheimer's
LOS ANGELES
844.HELP.ALZ
AlzheimersLA.org
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Supported by DHRIS, ACS (PH06-0002-01-02)

Prepare



Dementia Friends

Dementia Friends is a global movement that is changing the way people think, act, and talk about dementia. With a little bit of understanding, each of us can make a difference for people touched by dementia.

Alzheimer's Los Angeles Response

- Families affected by: evacuations, power outages, smoke/poor air quality
- Checked in on all active clients within first few days
- Social work team available to provide support to callers



Comprehensive Support for Caregivers During Emergencies

- Emergency Preparedness Resources
- Temporary Respite Care Assistance to help manage the increased stress and disruptions caused by evacuations
- Emotional and Psychological Support
- Resource Coordination
- Partnered with local agencies to help caregivers access shelter, food, medical care, and other essential services
- Disaster Relief Grants
- Offered financial assistance to caregivers facing hardship due to property damage, relocation costs, or loss of employment
- Caregiver education managing dementia-related behaviors during emergencies and maintaining care routines despite disruptions
- Helpline support to offer real-time assistance, referrals, and crisis support to affected caregivers



‘Where are our patients?’: Three days of searching during the LA fires

Most are older than 80, about half have dementia — and I had no idea where many were



Response
is local



Residents of a senior center are evacuated as the Eaton Fire approaches on Jan. 7 in Altadena, Calif. Ethan Swope/AP

By **Gabriel Waterman** Jan. 27, 2025

Waterman is the vice president of primary care for SCAN Health Plan, where he leads Embrace, an integrated payer/provider serving residents of senior living communities.

Respond

- Check on families
- Fill prescriptions
- Assistance with behaviors
- Referrals to home health for short-term needs (while person is living in a shelter)
- Intake/placement paperwork for SNF
- Referrals to behavioral health services



Resources

1. Administration for Community Living
 - Emergency preparedness resources, toolkits, etc. <https://acl.gov/emergencypreparedness>
 - Elder Locator: Connection to local support and resources, including dementia-specific services, immediately after an emergency
 - a) 1-800-677-1116
2. The American Red Cross Safe and Well: provides a central location for people in a disaster to register their current status
 - <http://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter>
 - 1-800-RED CROSS
3. Disaster and Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities
 - Department of Rehabilitation: Emergency Preparedness Guide
 - a) <https://www.dor.ca.gov/Home/disasterpreparedness>
4. FEMA Text Messages: To search for local shelters and disaster recovery centers: 43362

Bottom Line



- 1) Elevating dementia care NOW will help prepare families for emergencies
- 2) Consider your role
- 3) Advocate for people with special needs



Alzheimer's LOS ANGELES

844.HELP.ALZ
(844.435.7259)
AlzheimersLA.org

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Questions

Training and support for providers and clinics



Education and Training:

- Core: CHA training
- More on-line training modules
- Bi-Monthly Webinars and Podcasts



Warmline:

1-800-933-1789

- A provider support and consultation service staffed by Dementia Care Aware experts



Practice change support:

- UCLA Alzheimer's and Dementia Care program
- Alzheimer's Association Health Systems team
- Implementation guide

www.dementiacareaware.org

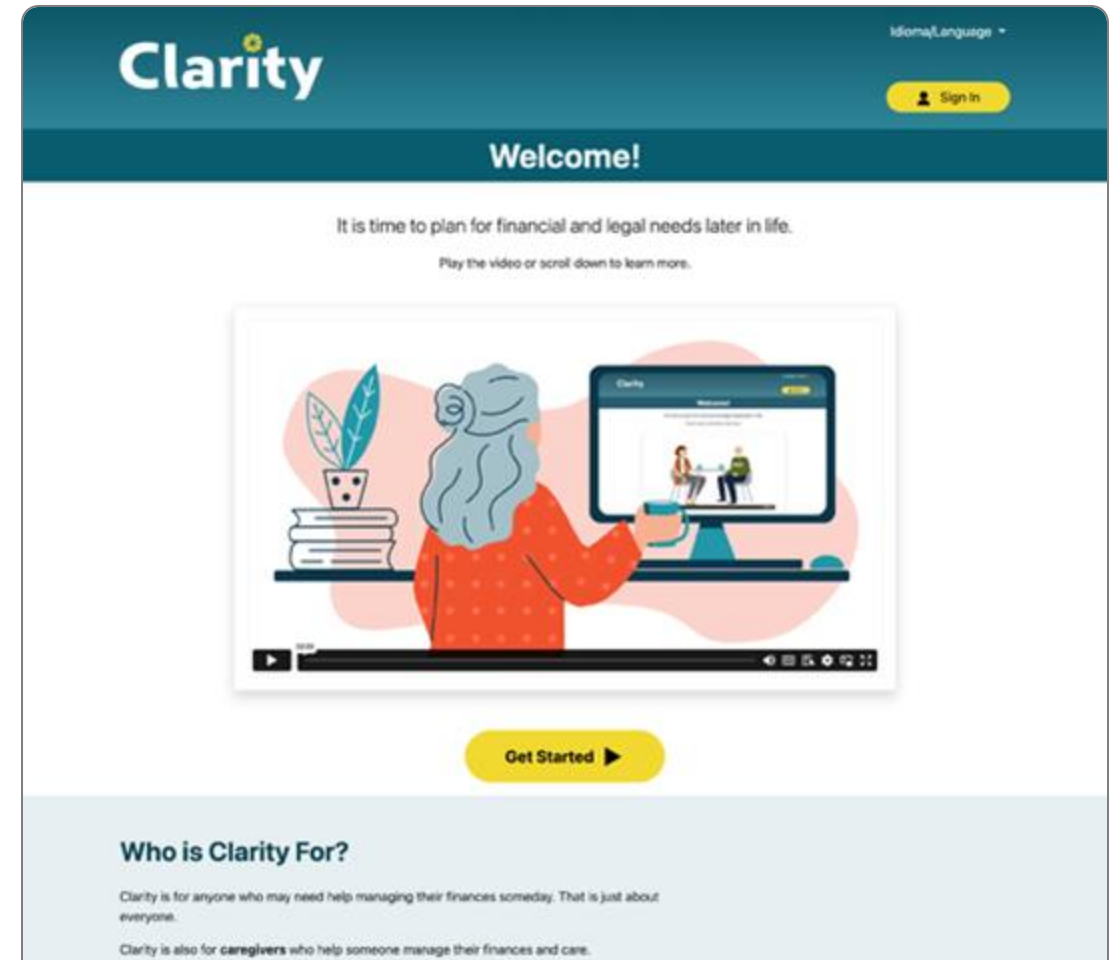
DCA@ucsf.edu

PlanforClarity.Org is a free tool for patients and caregivers to learn about legal and financial aspects of care planning.

NEW! Free tools, live training, & consults for health care teams!

Starting July 2025

Contact: peterselizabeth@uclawsf.edu



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