Case Vignette 2: Evacuation of nursing home resident

Robert Baker is a 76-year-old African American man who lives in a nursing home located in an area prone to drought and wildfire. An uncontrolled wildfire has developed in the vicinity. In an emergency evacuation, the nursing home residents have been taken to a temporary shelter set up specifically for them. Mr. Baker was transported with his wheelchair, but he was not able to bring any of his personal belongings.

Due to a stroke 1 year ago, Mr. Baker has speech problems, requires a wheelchair for mobility, and is unable to care for himself. His wife, who had been his primary caregiver, died suddenly several months ago. Although Mr. Baker is alert and oriented to place and time, his expressive speech impairment hinders his ability to communicate fully with staff and family.

Mr. Baker has two grown children who live in different states. Mr. Baker’s son is only distantly in touch with his father and is not directly involved in his care. Mr. Baker’s daughter is listed as the primary contact person in his chart. While she is more involved in his care, she is quite busy raising her young family. She rarely visits her father and prefers to let facility staff determine what is best. She does, however, like to be kept up to date on her father’s health status and on any changes that occur in his care.

In the emergency shelter, Mr. Baker appears confused and disoriented. He does not seem to understand the imminent wildfire danger. He is tearful and attempts to verbalize his questions and concerns to anyone who will listen. As a staff member, you are concerned for Mr. Baker.

- How could the nursing home staff have better prepared Mr. Baker and the other residents for evacuation?
- What steps could staff take to prepare for a disaster?
- What could be distressing to Mr. Baker during the evacuation?
- What could be distressing to Mr. Baker while staying in a shelter?
- What other challenges might Mr. Baker be experiencing as a result of the evacuation?
- What else could be done to improve the situation?