**It’s not too late to update your emergency plan**

But it’s not too soon, either. The danger of contagion from COVID-19 adds a layer of complexity to our emergency back-up plans. We all need to consider who will meet our responsibilities if we are unable to do so – who will care for our kids, our pets, even for us if we live alone, if we fall ill. Whether or not we require hospitalization, there may be a period when we are unable to function normally.

To help think this through for your particular situation, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/index.html

**- If you live with others,** designate a sickroom, and a dedicated bathroom too, if you can. The sick person will need to be isolated as much as possible from others in the house, including animals, and everyone in the house must be quarantined – that is, they must remain at home and avoid contact with others. *The only permissible reason for any of you to leave home is to seek medical care.*

**- If you live alone** there are additional considerations. If you are sick, either at home or in the hospital, someone else may need to enter your home to care for you or for your pets. You should determine now who that person will be, and who that person’s back-up will be, if they fall ill, and you should take steps now to ensure that anyone entering your home is protected from contagion. A household disinfectant, along with paper towels and a closed trash container, should be left by the entry door of the home and used to clean any surfaces touched by the visitor both before and after use. Figure out now how to store pet food and supplies in such a way as to minimize time and contact.

If you need to have someone care for you while you are ill, it is crucial that this person minimize contact with you to the greatest extent possible. Please consult the guidelines for isolation (of a sick person) and quarantine (of that person’s contacts) for instructions. You will find links to these documents below, under “Some practical information.” Even a homemade mask can provide significant protection; some designs don’t even require sewing. Why not check out the instructional videos on the internet and make a few now in your copious spare time?

We all hope that we won’t become ill, at least not seriously. We mustn’t let that hope blind us to the necessity to be prepared for every eventuality.

The Shutesbury Board of Health