

# Beacon News

FOR BEACON COMMUNITY SERVICES  
HOME SUPPORT CLIENTS

Beacon  
Community  
Services

Fall 2011  
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www.beaconcs.ca

## Words of *Thanks*

“It would be impossible to improve my bi-weekly service, Virgie. Bed linen changes, bed re-made, bedding washed, dried, folded and put away; me: showered, dressed, breakfasted and ready to face the day! Thank you!”

“I was finding I couldn’t manage all my husband’s needs....

Beacon Community Services workers were a life saver for me. I can’t thank you enough for this efficient service.”

“(Client’s mother reported that) CHW Philip M. is a remarkable worker...

Everything settles down when Philip is present, and his meals are splendid.”

## Beacon buzzes with fall activities

from Isobel Mackenzie,  
President and CEO

Fall can be a busy, energetic season: that’s certainly been the case here at Beacon! We recently participated in a province-wide earthquake drill (read earthquake preparedness tips in this newsletter), hosted a series of safety information sessions to help staff safely serve you, and participated at a University of Calgary forum on the future of long term care in Canada. We also presented at the Canadian Home Care Conference and began planning for the upcoming gold-standard Accreditation Canada evaluation of our care and services. All these activities included a focus on client care and safety and reflect our commitment to you, our clients, and to the importance of delivering quality care in our community.



We also continue to evaluate and, when necessary, revise, practices in response to client survey results from earlier this year. That’s why, in the New Year, the *Beacon News* will be mailed to you: readers say they value the newsletter but the survey showed a need for more effective, broader distribution.

As we move through the autumn season, we look forward to continuing to serve you and to hearing your feedback and input: please feel free to contact us at any time!

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**Safety is Everyone's Responsibility** We ensure you receive the best care possible and we consider your safety at all times. Please help us by ensuring that your home -- our workplace -- provides safe working conditions.

## Fall sparks focus on fire prevention

Fire Prevention Week was officially celebrated in October, but it's always a good idea to practice fire safety. As days grow shorter and colder, many of us 'fire up' various devices for warmth or convenience. However, special care should be taken when using such devices. Remember:

- **Unplug space heaters** when not in use. When in use, keep them well-ventilated and at least three feet away from flammable materials.
- **Regularly check for damaged cords** and thermostats on electric blankets, heating pads, kettles and other appliances.
- **Don't use extension cords with space heaters** or electrical blankets; these cords are only for temporary use.
- **Never run electrical cords under a rug** or carpet.
- **Clean chimneys** at least once a year, always use a fire screen (appropriately sized for the fireplace opening), and have a professional check your furnace every year.

It's also a great idea for smokers to light up only in a designated zone, away from your home's upholstered areas (the kitchen table may be a suitable location.)

Never smoke in the bedroom. Among older adults, the two leading causes of fire deaths and injuries are smoking materials and the misuse of portable space heaters – avoid having these items in your bedroom.

A working smoke alarm should be on every floor and outside every sleeping area: replace smoke alarms if they're more than 10 years old, change the battery once a year, and have somebody test each alarm once a month (push the test button and drift smoke from a snuffed-out candle into the alarm).

If you're a senior, hard of hearing, or using medicine which may cause drowsiness, have a friend or relative test your smoke alarm while you're asleep to ensure you can hear it.

Fire safety experts also stress the importance of having (and practicing!) a fire escape plan.

## Keep safe in the bedroom

Community health workers (CHWs), work to help keep you safe and healthy. Simple things – such as how your bedroom is arranged – can make a big difference to their efforts.

To help CHWs avoid musculoskeletal injuries (and minimize your risk of falls or other incidents during bed care) please remember:

- If CHWs make beds, position clients in bed or provide bed care, **the bed must be accessible from both sides**. Please make sure the bed isn't against a wall or window. If a bed isn't easily accessible, CHWs have been instructed to leave it unmade until a supervisor can arrange for the client and/or family to reorganize the room.
- If fitted sheets are tight on your bed or it's difficult to make the bed, please **use a flat sheet instead of a fitted one**. CHWs may also leave loose corners so they don't risk injury by 'wrestling' sheets on to the mattress.
- Bed height is important in order to safely give bed care or assist with a transfer. If you depend on others for care in this situation, please **understand that an adjustable hospital bed may be necessary** (the height can be adjusted for every CHW, ensuring each caregiver helps you from the safest possible position).



## Policy on short-notice cancellations

If you need to cancel your Home Support visit we need to know by 6 p.m. the day before.

If we do not receive sufficient notice about your cancellation, you could be charged the full rate for the visit (\$33.72/hour).

## Health Highlights

### Free hotlines offer help for seniors

According to recent news reports, about 12 percent -- or 46,000 -- older adults in BC are abused or neglected at some point in their senior years.

If you have suspicions or concerns about possible abuse, GET HELP.

- In immediate emergencies, such as assault, call [9-1-1](tel:911).
- Older adults who have been abused or mistreated can also call a confidential Elders Advocacy and Support Line between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Monday-Friday. The toll-free number is [1-866-437-1940](tel:18664371940).
- VictimLink BC also gives confidential information and support, 24 hours a day, every day. Call [1-800-563-0808](tel:18005630808), toll-free.

Elder abuse is most often committed by spouses, adult children or grandchildren, and other caregivers. Abuse is a form of mistreatment which can take many forms, including:

- emotional (including treating an older person in a demeaning way, like a baby);
- financial (such as forgery or theft);
- sexual or physical (including inappropriately using medication or restraints); or
- neglect (not giving adequate care).

People may hesitate to report mistreatment because of shame or fear – or even because they aren't sure that what's happening is actually abuse and think they should wait for proof. *Don't wait: if you have any concerns at all, call for help.*

### New training partnership increases client safety

A new partnership between Beacon Community Services and a company, Motion Specialities, is aimed at preventing injury to Beacon clients as well as their community health workers (CHWs).

Motion Specialties provides mobility devices and adaptive seating systems for individuals with limited mobility. The company is kindly making its state-of-the-art showroom and assessment room available to Beacon CHWs.

The partnership will help reduce client falls and CHW musculoskeletal injuries (injuries to the muscles and other soft tissues) by allowing CHWs to refine how they lift objects and people or transfer them from one position or location to another.

With a wide range of innovative equipment and special features, Motion Specialties' room provides an ideal setting for CHWs to practice their safety techniques. They can also familiarize themselves with a vast array of lifts, seats and other equipment that might be encountered in the home care setting, improving their ability to meet clients' needs.

### Zap the flu bug

Influenza (flu) is an upper airway infection that's very easily spread through personal contact, coughing and sneezing. Caused by influenza viruses, flu can increase the risk of other serious or potentially deadly infections, such as pneumonia. Protect yourself and others from it!

**Be vaccinated.** Talk to your doctor about getting an influenza vaccination every year: last year's shot will not protect you against this year's strains of the virus. (*Vaccine cannot cause the flu.* If you know someone who became sick after vaccination, they probably had similar symptoms but didn't have influenza or were ill from a flu virus different than that which they were vaccinated against. )

**Wash hands** thoroughly and frequently. (Scrub for at least 20 seconds – about how long it takes to sing the Happy Birthday song twice.)

**Capture the cough.** Cough or sneeze into your shirt sleeve, never your hand.

**Promptly dispose** of used tissues.

**Clean hard surfaces** (such as countertops, light switches and phones): viruses can live on these surfaces for far longer than previously thought.

And if you're ill, **STAY HOME** if possible! Don't share the virus. Wear a protective mask if you have flu symptoms or other signs of infection and must be near people (such as caregivers or at medical offices).

# Get ready to rattle and roll

Experts say a major, damaging earthquake will hit Vancouver Island – possibly soon. Recent quake activity around the world (including some tremors close to home) reminds us that it’s important to be prepared. That’s why Beacon Community Services staff recently participated in a province-wide ShakeOut earthquake drill, practicing what to do during a quake.

The same tips apply to clients and their families. When a quake hits:

**DROP** (onto your hands and knees, before the earthquake knocks you down);

**COVER** (head and neck – and, if possible, entire body – under a sturdy desk or table. Or – only if there’s not nearby furniture suitable for ‘shelter’ – get down next to an interior wall or low furniture that won’t fall and cover your head and neck with arms and hands); and

**HOLD ON** (to the shelter or your head and neck) until the shaking stops. Be ready to move with your ‘shelter’ when it moves during the quake.

*If you’re in a wheelchair and unable to follow the above steps, lock the wheels and protect the back of your head and neck.*

## What to do in an earthquake

If a quake hits and you’re:

**Driving-** pull over to a safe place; stay inside. Don’t block the road. Avoid power lines, bridges, buildings or anything that could collapse. Put a help sign in your window if you need help after the quake.

**In a bus-** stay in your seat until the bus stops. Take cover in a protected place – if that’s not possible, sit in a crouched position; protect your head from falling debris.

**Outdoors-** Stay outside, go to an open area away from buildings, trees, etc; if in a crowded place, take cover where you won’t be trampled.

**In a shopping mall-** go into the nearest store. Stay away from windows, doors, and shelves with heavy objects.

**In an elevator-** hit the button for every floor; get out as soon as you can.

## Beacon Bulletin Board

### SHOAL Centre Programs

Beacon’s SHOAL Activity Centre in Sidney offers a harvest of adult activities. For example, on Nov. 30, the BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation will hold Living Well, Driving Well workshops at SHOAL, for mature drivers. Please call SHOAL for fall program information: 250-656-5537.

### Thanks to our volunteers

Beacon proudly offers a wide range of community programs and services. Many (including medical drives for seniors) rely on a 400+ volunteer corps. To say “thanks” we’re hosting a Dec. 9 volunteer appreciation lunch: if you’re a Beacon volunteer, we hope to see you there!

#### HOME SUPPORT MAIN OFFICE

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Phone: 250-658-6407  
Toll-free: 1-877-658-6003  
Fax: 250-658-6417

#### ESQUIMALT/WESTSHORE

#111-2787 Jacklin Road  
Victoria, BC V9B 3X7  
Phone: 250-658-6003  
Fax: 250-478-6551

#### PENINSULA

9860 Third Street  
Sidney, BC V8L 4R2  
Phone: 250-656-0134  
Fax: 250-656-0139

#### SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS

#2 - 137 Crofton Road (Annex)  
Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2R8  
Phone: 250-537-9955  
Fax: 250-537-9969