Preparing Makes Sense For People With Disabilities, Others with Access and Functional Needs and the Whole Community.

Get Ready Now.

This information was developed by the US. Department of Homeland Security in consultation with AARP, the American Red Cross and the National Organization on Disability and updated by the FEMA Office of Disability Integration and Coordination.

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The likelihood that you and your family will recover from an emergency tomorrow often depends on the planning and preparation done today. While each person’s abilities and needs are unique, every individual can take steps to prepare for all kinds of emergencies from fires and floods to potential terrorist attacks. By evaluating your own personal needs and making an emergency plan that fits those needs, you and your loved ones can be better prepared. This guide outlines commonsense measures individuals with disabilities, and others with access and functional needs, and the people who assist and support them can take to start preparing for emergencies before they happen.

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Get a Kit

1 Of Emergency Supplies

The first step is to consider how an emergency might affect your individual needs. Plan to make it on your own, for at least three days. It’s possible that you will not have access to disaster assistance, a medical facility or even a drugstore. It is crucial that you and your family think about what kinds of resources you use on a daily basis and what you might do if those resources are limited or not available.

Basic Supplies: Think first about the basics for survival - food, water, clean air and any life-sustaining items you require to maintain your health, safety and independence. Consider two kits. In one kit put everything you will need to stay where you are and make it on your own for a period of time. The other kit should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you have to leave your home. Recommended basic emergency supplies include:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three day supply of non-perishable food and a can opener if kit contains canned food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Battery-powered or hand crank cell phone charger
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Local maps
- Pet food, extra water and supplies for your pet or service animal

Be Informed

About What Might Happen

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling an emergency supply kit and making an emergency plan are the same regardless of the type of emergency. However, it’s important to stay informed about what might happen and know what types of emergencies are likely to affect your region. For more information about specific types of emergencies, visit www.ready.gov.

Be prepared to adapt this information to your personal circumstances and make every effort to follow instructions received from authorities on the scene. Above all, stay calm, be patient and think before you act. With these simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected.

In addition to your personal preparedness, consider getting involved in neighborhood and community emergency preparedness activities. Assist emergency planners and others in considering the preparedness needs of the whole community, including people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. Communities are stronger and more resilient when everyone joins the team. People with disabilities often have experience in adapting and problem solving that can be very useful in emergencies.

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family records, medical records, wills, deeds, social security
important documents in your emergency supply kits such as
providers within your area and the areas you might evacuate
work with them to identify back-up service providers within your area and the areas you might evacuate to. If you use medical equipment in your home that requires electricity to operate, talk to your health care provider about what you can do to prepare for its use during a power outage.
Depending on your needs, items for your Go Kit may include:
• Extra eyeglasses, hearing aids if you have them, or have coverage for them
• Extra batteries for hearing aids
• Battery chargers for a motorized wheelchair or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices
• Copies of medical prescriptions, doctors orders, and the style and serial numbers of the support devices you use
• Medical alert tags or bracelets of written descriptions of your disability and support needs, in case you are unable to describe the situation to emergency responders
• Supplies for your service animal
• Medical insurance cards, Medicare/Medicaid cards, physician contact information, and health history
A list of the local non-profit or community-based organizations that know you or assist people with your disability and support needs
• A laminated personal communication board, if you might need assistance with being understood or understanding
• If possible, extra oxygen, insulin, catheters, or other medical supplies you use regularly
• If you use a motorized wheelchair, have a lightweight manual chair available in case of emergencies
number, charge and bank accounts information, and tax records. Practice using your plan with those who have agreed to be part of your personal support network.
Inform your employer and co-workers about the assistance you will need in an emergency. This is particularly important if you need to be lifted or carried. Talk about communication difficulties, physical limitations, equipment instructions and medication procedures, so that your employer is aware of your needs. Ask to work with your employer to determine how to best notify you of an emergency and what instruction methods are easiest for you to follow. Always participate in exercises, trainings and emergency drills offered by your employer.
Develop a Family Communications Plan: Your family may not be together when disaster strikes so plan how you will contact one another and review what you will do in different situations. Consider creating a family call tree, which sends a message to a friend or relative in the event of a disaster. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call to a friend or relative than to your doctor, pharmacist or other service provider. Your doctor or pharmacist may be busy with other patients and not be able to discuss your medication. Using a communication device, mobility aid, or service animal, what will you do if these are not available? If you require life-saving equipment such as a ventilator, how do you get on or off the equipment? Does your home have a battery backup? If you need help in a disaster situation, as a part of your plan.
Finances:
• Arrange electronic payments for your paycheck and federal benefits by check, please consider switching to one of these services. The Direct Express® prepaid debit card is designed as a safe, convenient alternative for people who don’t have a bank account. Sign up is easy, call toll-free at (877) 212-9991 (phone), (866) 569-0447 (TTY) or sign up online. Signing up for direct deposit or the Direct Express card is a simple but important step that can help protect your family’s access to funds in case the unthinkable were to happen. If you or those close to you are still receiving Social Security or other federal benefits by check, please consider switching to one of these easier options today.

Make a Plan
For What You Will Do in an Emergency
The reality of a disaster situation is that you will likely not have access to everyday conveniences. To plan in advance, think through the details of your everyday life. If there are people who assist you on a daily basis, list who they are and how you will contact them in an emergency. Create your own emergency plan and talk to all of the people who help you in an emergency. Think about what modes of transportation you use and what alternative modes could serve as back-ups. If you require accessible transportation be sure your alternatives are also accessible. If you have tools or aids specific to your disability, plan for what you will do if they stop working. For example, if you use a communication device, mobility aid, or service animal, what will you do if these are not available? If you require life-saving equipment such as a ventilator, how do you get on or off the equipment? Does your home have a battery backup? If you need help in a disaster situation, as a part of your plan.

Developing a Family Communications Plan:
Consider your Service Animal or Pets: Decide how you will stay in touch with your animal, and also consider how you will contact your pets in an emergency. How do you contact your pets if you and your pet are not together when disaster strikes so plan how you will contact one another and review what you will do in different situations. Consider creating a family call tree, which sends a message to a friend or relative in the event of a disaster. Contact your local emergency management agency to find local government offices that identify your access and functional needs can be a crucial aid in an emergency situation. When traveling, consider alerting hotel or motel workers if you will need help in a disaster situation, as a part of your plan.

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Include Medications and Medical Supplies: If you take medicine or use medical supplies on a daily basis, be sure you have what you need on hand to make it on your own for at least a week. You should also keep a copy of your prescriptions as well as any other medical information. If it is not possible to have a week-long supply of medicines and supplies, keep as much as possible on hand and talk to your pharmacist or doctor about what else you should to prepare.

If you undergo routine treatments administered by a clinic or hospital or if you receive regular services at home, such as home health care, meals, oxygen or door-to-door transport, talk to your service provider about their emergency plans. Work with them to identify back-up service providers within your area and the areas you might evacuate to. If you use medical equipment in your home that requires electricity to operate, talk to your health care provider about what you can do to prepare for its use during a power outage.

Depending on your needs, items for your Go Kit may include:
- Extra eye glasses, hearing aids if you have them, or have coverage for them
- Extra batteries for hearing aids
- Battery chargers for, motorized wheelchairs or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices
- Copies of medical prescriptions, doctors orders, and the style and serial numbers of the support devices you use
- Medical alert tags or bracelets or written descriptions of your disability and support needs, in case you are unable to communicate your needs to emergency personnel
- Supplies for your service animal
- Medical insurance cards, Medicare/Medicaid cards, pharmacy contact information, list of your medications, and the location and availability of more than one facility. For every aspect of your daily routine, plan an alternative procedure. Make a plan and write it down. Keep a copy of this plan for both you and any caregivers who help you in an emergency. Think about what modes of transportation you use and what alternative modes could serve as back-ups. If you require accessible transportation be sure your alternatives are also accessible. If you have tools or aids specific to your disability, plan ahead for what you can do in an emergency. For example, you can use a communication device, mobility aid, or service animal, what will you do if these are not available? If you require life-sustaining equipment in an emergency, require additional travel time or need transportation assistance, make them clear in your transportation plan.

Develop a Family Communications Plan: Your family may not be together when disaster strikes so plan how you will contact one another for updates and how you will contact your emergency management agency. Create your own plan for both your home and workplace and where you will go in case of a disaster. Make sure your plan includes how you will contact each other in an emergency. Contact your local emergency management agency to find links to government offices in your area. In addition, wearing a disaster preparedness bracelet or adding your name to a registry can be used to offer assistance in emergencies. If you add your name to a registry, be sure you understand what you are signing up for. Some local emergency management offices maintain registries for people with disabilities. Some registries are only used to collect planning information, others may be completely be used to offer assistance. If you add your name to a registry, others may be able to contact you in advance of a disaster to get information about pet preparedness, visit www.ready.gov. If you anticipate that you will live alone and you need help in a disaster situation, as a part of your plan.

Make a Plan: For What You Will Do in an Emergency

The reality of a disaster situation is that you will likely not have access to everyday conveniences. To plan in advance, think through the details of your everyday life. If there are people who assist you on a daily basis, list who they are and how you will contact them in an emergency. Create your own plan for both your home and workplace and where you will go in case of a disaster. Make sure your plan includes how you will contact each other in an emergency. Your plan will vary depending on your personal support network. It is important to understand that no plan is perfect; you should have a plan for both you and any caregivers who help you in an emergency. Think about what modes of transportation you use and what alternative modes could serve as back-ups. If you require accessible transportation be sure your alternatives are also accessible. If you have tools or aids specific to your disability, plan ahead for what you can do in an emergency. You can use a communication device, mobility aid, or service animal, what will you do if these are not available? If you require life-sustaining equipment in an emergency, require additional travel time or need transportation assistance, make them clear in your transportation plan.

Consider Your Service Animal or Pets: Whether you decide to stay put in an emergency or evacuate to a safer location, you will need to make plans in advance or your service animal and pets. You should still consider that what's best for your animals. If you must evacuate, take your pets with you, if possible. However, if you are going to a public shelter, it is important to understand that not all shelters are safe for pets. If you choose to stay put, make sure your shelter is one where your pets will be safe. In an emergency, plan in advance for shelters that will work for both you and your animals; consider loved ones or friends outside of your immediate area, who may be able to help others who are not able to be together when disaster strikes so plan how you will contact one another for updates and how you will contact your emergency management agency. Create your own plan for both your home and workplace and where you will go in case of a disaster. Ask about evacuation plans at the place where you spend time including work, school, community organizations and other places you frequent. If you typically rely on a service animal, have a backup plan that identifies your access and functional needs can be a crucial aid in an emergency situation. When traveling, consider alerting hotel or motel workers if you will need help in a disaster situation, as a part of your plan.

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Include Emergency Documents: Include copies of important documents in your emergency supply kits such as family records, medical records, wills, deeds, social security number, charge and bank accounts information, and tax records. Include copies of important documents in your home, if possible. Make sure you keep a copy of all important documents and instructions for the best way to communicate with you. Also be sure you have cash or travelers checks in your kits in case you need to purchase supplies.

If you have allergies or chemical sensitivities, be sure to include items that you are able to use for personal hygiene and for cleaning.

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