

Emergency Preparedness at Home for People with Disabilities: Guidelines

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Protecting yourself at home when disaster strikes requires planning by both you and others who live with you for at least 72 hours. This checklist can help you get started.

Get Information

- Find out how you would be warned of an emergency. If the warning is by means not accessible to you, suggest or arrange alternatives.
- Determine aid that might be available to you in an emergency.
- Contact your local fire department or emergency management office to see if they maintain a register for people with disabilities so help can be provided quickly in an emergency.

Create a Plan

- Talk to your landlord, service provider, family and/or roommates to discuss what plans are in place for emergencies that might occur.
- Discuss provisions that have been made to assist you in an emergency.
- Discuss what preparations you can make to prepare yourself for different kinds of emergencies.
- Learn what you will need to know for each of these emergencies (e.g., how to evacuate or shelter-in-place, where emergency equipment is located, where a designated meeting place is, where you will be evacuated to, etc.).
- Learn what to do for each kind of emergency. For example, if you use a wheelchair, can you access the 'safe area' for a tornado (usually the basement), or do you need to go to an alternate place?
- Be self-reliant. Assume responsibility for your safety - even if your building has a plan that takes into account your disability.
- Learn escape routes and how to exit the building without help if necessary.
- Establish two evacuation routes in case the primary one is blocked.
- Practice evacuating the building on your own as well as in the building's drills.
- Determine alternative 'safe areas' with input from the fire marshal.
- Arrange how your family can contact you and how you can contact them if you must leave your home suddenly.
- Find a secure place to store things you may need that can be easily accessed in an emergency.
- Obtain and use health and information cards with critical information such as your ID, people to contact, and any medical issues affecting you.
- Determine any special aid you may need from emergency responders in relation to your disability.

- Acquire a cell phone with a GPS. Program in emergency numbers so they can be activated without speech.
- Consider acquiring a medical alert system that will allow you to call for help if you are immobilized.

Prepare a Disaster Kit

Assemble supplies you might need in an evacuation. Store them in an easy-to carry container such as a backpack or duffel bag. Tailor this kit to your specific needs. Your emergency kit should include these items:

- Battery-powered radio, flashlights, lighter, candle, matches and extra batteries.
- A first aid kit, medications and copies of prescriptions.
- Water purifying tablets.
- Change of clothing, sturdy shoes, and rain gear.
- Personal hygiene items.
- Special equipment you may need such as augmentative communication equipment, insulin supplies, cane, food and water for sight dog, etc.
- Hearing aid batteries.
- The style and serial numbers of medical devices you use.
- Blanket and a sleeping bag.
- A list of family, physicians, and a relative or friend who should be notified if you're injured, along with a back-up contact person living outside the immediate area.
- Important documents including contacts, ID cards, and bank account numbers, as well as cash.

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