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

Get Ready Now.

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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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.

1 Get a Kit 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

www.ready.gov


3 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 skills in emergencies.

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Include Medications and Medical Supplies: If you use medicine or other 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 a list of all medications you are taking in case you become unable to read your bottles or labels. In addition, you should also make sure that a trusted friend or family member has a copy of these documents. Include the names and numbers of everyone in your personal support network, as well as your medical and disability service providers. If you are hearing impaired or have a speech disability, make sure your emergency information includes 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.

If you are putting important information onto a portable thumb drive, or if you use a computer yourself, consider getting a waterproof case for it, in case it has to be transported. If you have a manual chair available for emergencies, know the size and weight of the chair, and be able to transport it if necessary. If you have tools or aids specific to your disability, make sure your emergency information includes instructions for how to alert you in an emergency. Consider the best ways to alert you in case you are not hearing impaired 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 and practice using them. 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-sustaining equipment such as a ventilator or insulin pump or other devices, what is 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 your emergency supply kits and a list of important information in contacts in your wallet. Share your plan with your family, friends, service providers and others in your personal support network.

Create a Personal Support Network: If you anticipate needing assistance during a disaster, know who your friends and others who will be part of your plan. Talk to these people and ask them to be part of your support network. Share each aspect of your emergency plan with your emergency contact. Include a friend or relative in another area who would not be impacted by the same emergency so that you can help each other. Make sure everyone knows how you plan to evacuate your home, school or workplace where you will in case of a disaster. Make sure that someone in your support network is aware of your disabilities. Make sure that you have a key to your home and know where you keep your emergency supplies. Teach them how to use any lifesaving equipment or assistance devices you use. Create all important emergency contact numbers in your cell phone. Make sure that everyone has directions to evacuation exits, and that you understand the emergency procedures. When you go on vacation, you should leave behind copies of your emergency plans with relatives or friends. Make sure your emergency plan is as up to date as possible. Be sure to have copies of your emergency plans and other important documents in a safe place. You may want to keep copies of your emergency plans in a safe deposit box, a fireproof cabinet, or with someone who will look out for you in an emergency.

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. Practice what you would do in an emergency. If it is not possible to have a week-long supply of medications and supplies, keep as much as possible on hand and talk to your pharmacist or doctor about what else you should do 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 transportation, 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 eyeglasses, 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 describe the situation to medical professionals.
• Supplies for your service animal.
• Medical insurance cards, Medicare/Medicaid cards, phi charts, social security card, driver’s license, birth certificate, and health history. A list of the local non-profit or community-based organizations that know you or assist people with disabilities.
• A laminated personal communication board, if you might need assistance with being understood or understanding others.
• If possible, extra oxygen, insulin, catheters, or other medical supplies you use regularly.
• If you use a motorized wheelchair, have a light weight manual chair available for emergencies. Know the weight and weight of your wheelchair, in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.
• Even if you do not use a computer yourself, consider putting important information in a portable thumb drive for easy transport in an evacuation.

Make a Plan

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 by identifying those who can 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 and practice using them. 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-sustaining equipment such as a ventilator or insulin pump or other devices, what is 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 your emergency supply kits and a list of important information in contacts in your wallet. Share your plan with your family, friends, service providers and others in your personal support network.

Deciding to Stay or Go: Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the emergency, the first important decision is whether you should stay or go. Plan for both options. Use common sense and available information to determine if there is immediate danger. In any emergency, local authorities may or may not have the capability to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should monitor television, radio internet or social media news reports for information or officials instructions. If you become critically low on fuel to evacuate or seek medical treatment, do so immediately. If you require additional travel time to get to your vehicles or will not be able to easily get through, or the phone system may be down altogether, but when the crisis is over, you are able to use your phone. Be aware of your surroundings and of others in your vicinity, but stay alert for emergency and non-emergency personnel. Your personal support network may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.

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. Keep in mind that what’s best for you is typically 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 only law enforcement or any sheltering agencies work with the pets. Plan in advance for shelter alternatives that will work for both you and your animals. If you have a companion animal, you can consider a shelter that will accommodate both your needs.

Stayin Put: Whether you are at home or elsewhere, there may be situations in which it’s simply best to stay where you are and avoid any uncertainty outside. Consider what you can do to safely shelter in-place alone or with friends, family or neighbors, also consider how a shelter designated for the public would meet your needs. Work with local emergency managers and others in your community on preparing shelters in advance to meet the access and functional needs of the general population, including those with disabilities (see www.access-board.gov/about/odic to learn more about functional needs support services in general population shelters). If you have options and decide to stay put, consider that you will not be able to reach or use your cell phone, and that there may be limited internet access. Do not rely on your phone for information or assistance. Consider that you will not be able to call emergency services.

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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 identify others 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 how you will safeguard them. For example, use a communication device, mobility aid, or service animal, what will you do if these are not available? If you require life-sustaining equipment or life-saving devices that you rely on, include instructions for using them in an emergency and what instruction methods are easiest for you to understand. Consider your service animal or pets: Whether you decide to stay in an emergency or evacuate to a safer location, you will need to make plans in advance or your service animal and pet. You should also think about what you will need in an emergency. 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 only service animals must be allowed to enter the shelter. In advance for shelters that will work for both you and your animal consider loved ones or friends outside of your immediate area. Include any pets who may be at risk. Develop an alternative plan if your pets are not included in the emergency plan for the area. Pet-friendly shelters and veterinarians who would be willing to take in you and your pets in an emergency. For more information about pet preparedness, visit www.ready.gov.

Financial Assistance
If you do not have a bank account. Sign up is easy, call toll-free at (877) 212-9981 (phone), (866) 569-0477(TTY) or sign up online at DirectExpress.com. 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.