

Disaster Preparedness Tips for Seniors and People with Disabilities or Special Needs

How might a disaster affect you? Could you make it on your own for at least three days? After a disaster you may not have access to a medical facility or even a drugstore. It's crucial to plan ahead for your needs and to know what you would do if resources are limited or unavailable.

Suggested planning steps:

- Create a support network of friends, neighbors or family who can assist you in an emergency. Keep their contact information in a watertight container in your emergency kit. Inform your support people where you keep your emergency supplies. You may want to give one of them a key to your home or apartment.
- Designate someone to check on you in an emergency and to help with evacuation or with sheltering in place.
- Prepare and carry with you an emergency health information card in case you are found unconscious, incoherent or need to be quickly evacuated. Include information about your medications, adaptive equipment, blood type, allergies and sensitivities, insurance numbers, immunization dates, communication difficulties, and preferred treatment. Also list contact information for your health providers, personal support network and other emergency contacts.
- Be ready to explain to first responders that you need to evacuate and want to go to a shelter with your family, service animal, caregiver, personal assistant and/or your assistive technology devices and supplies.
- Plan ahead for accessible transportation that you may need for evacuation or getting to a medical clinic. Work with local services, public transportation or para-transit to identify your local or private accessible transportation options.
- Contact your city or county government's emergency management agency or office. Many local offices keep lists of people with disabilities so they can be helped quickly in a sudden emergency.
- Plan for children with disabilities and people who may have difficulty in unfamiliar or chaotic environments.

Medical conditions

- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets.
- If you are dependent on dialysis or other life-sustaining treatment, know the location and availability of more than one treatment facility.
- If you use medical equipment in your home that requires electricity, talk to your doctor or health care provider about how you can prepare for its use during a power outage.
- If you use a wheelchair, plan your evacuation strategy with your personal support network. Have a manual wheelchair as backup.
- If you have diabetes, get preparedness tips at <https://www.diabetes.org/tools-support/disaster-relief/tips-for-emergency-preparedness>

Important items for your emergency kit

- At least a week-long supply of prescription medicines
- A list of all medications, dosage and any allergies
- Contact information for doctors, relatives or friends to be notified if you are hurt
- Copies of medical insurance and Medicare cards
- Extra eyeglasses
- Extra hearing aid batteries
- Extra wheelchair batteries (or a manual wheelchair if possible)
- Oxygen
- A list of the style and serial number of medical devices (include special instructions for operating your equipment if needed)
- If you have a service animal: pet food, extra water, collar with ID tag, medical records and other supplies

Tips for People Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Keep extra batteries for hearing aids with your emergency supplies.
- Consider storing your aids in a container attached to the bed or nightstand for quick location in an emergency at night.
- Keep a weather radio (with text display and a flashing alert).
- Have pen and paper readily available (in purse and emergency kit), in case you have to communicate with someone who does not know sign language.

Tips for People Who are Blind or Have Low Vision

- Mark emergency supplies with Braille labels or large print. Keep a list of your emergency supplies and where you bought them on a portable flash drive, or make an audio file that is kept in a safe place where you can access it.
- Keep communication devices for your particular needs, such as a Braille or deaf-blind communications device, as part of your emergency supply kit.
- Have a collapsible cane by the bed with a whistle to call for help. Exercise caution when moving around after an earthquake; items may not be in their normal location.

Tips for People with Speech Disability

- Make sure your emergency information states the best way to communicate with you.
- If you use an augmentative communications device or other assistive technologies, plan how you will evacuate with the devices or how you will replace equipment if it is lost or destroyed. Keep model information and note where the equipment came from (supplier, plus Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, etc.)
- Plan how you will communicate with others if your equipment is not working, including laminated cards with phrases and/or pictogram.
- Consider how you will communicate with emergency personnel without your normal communication devices. Store paper, writing materials, letter board and/or laminated cards with important phrases, pictures or pictograms. Keep these in your emergency kits, your wallet or purse.
- Keep Braille/text communication cards, if used, for two-way communication.

Tips for People with a Mobility Disability

- If you use a power wheelchair, have a lightweight manual wheelchair available as a backup if possible. Know the size and weight of your wheelchair in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.
- Show others how to operate your wheelchair.
- Purchase an extra battery for a power wheelchair or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices. If you can't purchase an extra battery, find out what agencies, organizations or local charitable groups can help you buy one. Keep extra batteries on a "trickle charger" at all times.
- Keep a portable air pump for wheelchair tires. Consider keeping a patch kit or can of sealant for flat tires and/or extra inner tube if wheelchair or scooter is not puncture proof.
- Keep an extra mobility device such as a cane or walker if you use one.
- If you use a seat cushion to protect your skin or maintain your balance and you must evacuate, have an extra cushion to take with you.

Tips for Individuals with Sensory Disabilities (including autism spectrum disorder)

- Consider keeping in your emergency kit:
 - Handheld electronic devices (loaded with movies and games)
 - Spare chargers or batteries
 - Sheets and twine or a small pop up tent (to decrease visual stimulation in a busy room or to provide instant privacy)
 - Headphones (to decrease auditory distractions)
 - Comfort snacks

Useful FEMA/Ready.gov webpages and videos

[Prepare for Emergencies Now, Information for People With Disabilities](#)

[We Prepare Everyday](#) (Video with open captions and ASL)

[We Prepare Everyday](#) (Video with open captions, ASL and audio description)

[Be Informed](#) (Video with open captions and ASL)

[Make A Plan](#) (Video with open captions and ASL)

[Build A Kit](#) (Video with open captions and ASL)

[Emergency Communication Plan](#)

[Transit Commuter Emergency Communication Plan](#)

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