
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, special needs and their caregivers can take to start preparing for emergencies before they happen. Preparing makes sense for people with disabilities and special needs.

Get Ready Now.

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 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:
- 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
- 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

Get a Kit of Emergency Supplies

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.

Prepared Plans May Informed.

This information was developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in consultation with AARP, the American Red Cross and the National Organization on Disability.
Include Medications and Medical Supplies: If you take medicine or use a medical treatment on a daily basis, be sure you have what you need on hand to make it through your own for at least a week. You should also keep a copy of your prescriptions as well as dosage or treatment 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 do to prepare.

If you undergo routine treatments administered by a clinic or hospital or if you receive regular services such as home health care, treatment or transportation, talk to your service provider about their emergency plans. Work with each of those 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.

Additional Items: In addition, there may be other things specific to your personal needs that you should also have on hand. If you use eyeglasses, hearing aids and hearing aid batteries, wheelchair batteries, and oxygen, be sure you always have extras in your home or car. Have copies of your medical insurance, Medicare and Medicaid cards readily available. If you have a service animal, be sure to include food, water, and other emergency pet supplies.

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. It is best to keep these documents in a waterproof container. If there is any information related to operating equipment or life-saving devices that you rely on, include backups in your emergency kit as well.

In the event of a fire, be sure your family knows where each family member calls or e-mails the same family member. You may have trouble getting through, or the phone system may go down altogether, but be patient. For more information on how to develop a family communications plan, visit www.ready.gov.

Deciding to Stay or Go: Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the emergency, the first important decision is whether you stay or go. You should understand and plan for both possibilities. Use common sense and judgment to decide whether it is safe to stay in place or to evacuate. If you are dependent on life-sustaining equipment or treatment such as a dialysis machine, find out 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 plan in your emergency supply kits and a list of important information and contacts in your wallet. Share your plan with your family, friends, care providers and others in your personal support network.

Create a Personal Support Network: If you anticipate needing assistance during a disaster, make a list of family, friends and others who will be part of your plan. Talk to these people and ask them to be part of your safety plan. Consider establishing an emergency plan with everyone in your group, including a friend or relative in another area who would not be impacted by the same emergency who can help if needed. Make sure everyone knows how you plan to evacuate your home, school or workplace and where you will go in case of a disaster. Make sure that someone in your personal support network has an extra key to your home and knows where you keep your emergency supplies. Teach anyone who lives with you how to use these devices so they can move if necessary or help you evacuate. Practice your plan with those who have agreed to be part of your personal support network.

Inform your employer and co-workers about your disability and let them know specifically what 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. If you are hearing impaired, use ways to alert you in an emergency. If you have a cognitive disability, be sure 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.

Evacuation: There may be conditions in which you will not be able to get to other places where you will go in case of an emergency. If you have a cognitive disability, be sure to plan how you will contact one another and review your plan an alternative procedure. Make a plan and write it down. Keep a copy of your plan in your emergency supply kits and a list of important information and contacts in your wallet. Share your plan with your family, friends, care providers and others in your personal support network.

You may not be able to do yourself, enlist the help of your personal support network by identifying others who will help you in an emergency. Think about what modes of transportation you use and what alternative modes could be used. Make sure there is accessible transportation. Be sure your alternatives are also accessible. If you have tools or aids specific to your disability, plan how you would cope without them. For example, if you use a communication device, mobility aid, or rely on a service animal, what will you do if these are not available? If you are dependent on life-sustaining equipment or treatment such as a dialysis machine, find out 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 plan in your emergency supply kits and a list of important information and contacts in your wallet. Share your plan with your family, friends, care providers and others in your personal support network.

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When traveling, consider alerting hotel or motel workers who would be willing to take in you and your pets in an emergency. For more information about pet preparedness, visit www.ready.gov.

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