

Disaster Preparedness



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Topics being discussed

- Getting out of your home
- Planning in the event of an evaluation
- Where to go if evacuated

Preparing Takes Time and Effort

- Preparation may seem like work.
 - It is
 - Preparing does take time and effort
 - You can do a little at a time
 - The important thing is to start preparing
 - The more you do, the more confident you will be that you can protect yourself
 - Don't assume you have been included in emergency plans.

Disaster Preparedness for People With Disabilities

- 1. Know what kinds of **disasters** could happen in your area and consider what your **environment** might look like after one occurs
 - Certain resources or utilities may not be available and conditions could hamper your **independence**
- 2. Complete a **personal assessment**
 - Decide what you will be able to do for yourself and what assistance you may need before, during and after a disaster (based on the disrupted environment, your capabilities and your limitations)
- 3. Create a **personal support network** of family, friends, relatives, neighbors, roommates and co-workers who could assist you at a moment's notice
 - Discuss your special needs with them, including evacuation plans and medical information lists.

Disaster Preparedness for People With Disabilities

- 4. Make an emergency information list so others will know whom to call if they find you unconscious, unable to speak or if they need to help you evacuate quickly
 - Include the names and numbers of out-of-town contacts, as well as everyone in your network
- 5. Compile a medical information list that contains the names and numbers of your doctors, your medications, dosage instructions, and any existing conditions
 - Make note of your adaptive equipment, allergies, and any communication difficulties you may have
- 6. Keep at least a seven-day supply of medications on hand
 - Ask your doctor or pharmacist what you should do if you cannot immediately get more. If you undergo treatments administered by a clinic or hospital, ask your provider how to prepare for a disruption caused by a disaster

Disaster Preparedness for People With Disabilities

- 7. Install at least one smoke alarm on each level of your home and test them once a month
 - Know the location of main utility cutoff valves and learn how and when to disconnect them during an emergency. Identify evacuation routes and safe places to go during a disaster
- 8. Complete a summary checklist to make sure that your personal disaster plan is comprehensive
 - Be sure to include your medical needs, evacuation routes, care plans for your service animals, an alternative place to stay, etc.
- 9. Keep a disaster supply kit in your home, car, workplace or anywhere you may spend your time
 - Include such items as food, water, a first aid kit, adaptive equipment, batteries, and supplies for your pets or service animals

Disaster Preparedness for People With Disabilities

- 10. Make your home or office safer by checking hallways, stairwells, doorways, windows and other areas for hazards that may keep you from safely leaving a building during an emergency
 - Secure or remove furniture and objects that may block your path.
- 11. Show others how to operate your wheelchair or other assistive devices
- 12. Keep contact information for local independent living centers and other disability services organizations in a safe and easy-to-access place
- http://www.redcross.org/museum/prepare_org/disabilities/disabilitiesprep.htm

Disaster Preparedness for People With Disabilities

- 13. If you use in-home support services, Meals-on-Wheels, Life Alert or other support services, work with them to personalize emergency preparedness plans to meet your needs so you can keep in touch with them during and after an emergency
- 14. Work with local transportation and disability services (e.g., Paratransit, Independent Living Centers) to plan ahead for accessible transportation if you may need that for evacuation or other reasons during a disaster
- 15. Develop back-up plans for personal assistance services, hospice, or other forms of in-home assistance
- 16. Keep in mind that during an emergency, you may need to explain to first responders and emergency officials that you need to evacuate and shelter with your family, service animal, caregiver, or personal assistance provider so they can provide the support you need to maintain your health, safety and independence

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 available information to determine if there is immediate danger. In any emergency, local authorities may or may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do
 - However, you should monitor television or radio news reports for information or official instructions as they become available
 - If you're specifically told to evacuate or seek medical treatment, do so immediately
 - If you require additional travel time or need transportation assistance, make these arrangements in advance

Staying put

- Whether you are at home or elsewhere, there may be situations when 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
- There could be times when you will need to stay put and create a barrier between yourself and potentially contaminated air outside
 - This process is known as “sealing the room.” Use available information to assess the situation. If you see large amounts of debris in the air, or if local authorities say the air is badly contaminated, you may want to take this kind of action. For more information about “sealing the room,” visit
- www.ready.gov.

Evacuation

- There may be conditions in which you will decide to get away or there may be situations when you may be ordered to leave
 - Plan how you will get away and anticipate where you will go
 - Choose several destinations in different directions so you have options in an emergency
 - Ask about evacuation plans at the places where you spend time including work, school, community organizations and other places you frequent
 - If you typically rely on elevators, have a back-up plan in case they are not working.

Health Card

An emergency health information card communicates to rescuers what they need to know

- about you if they find you unconscious or incoherent, or if they need to quickly help evacuate you
- An emergency health information card contains information about your medications, adaptive equipment, blood type, allergies and sensitivities, insurance numbers, social security number, immunization dates, communication difficulties and preferred treatment, as well as contact information for your health providers, personal support network and emergency contacts
- Make multiple copies of this card to keep in emergency supply kits, car, work, wallet (behind your driver's license or primary identification card), wheelchair pack, etc.
- Update this information every six months

Tips For People With Communication Disabilities

- **Communication**
- • Determine how you will communicate with emergency personnel if you do not have your communication devices (augmentative communication device, word board, artificial larynx)
- **Communication Aids**
- • Store paper, writing materials, copies of a word or letter board and pre-printed key phrases specific to anticipated emergencies in all your emergency kits, your wallet, purse, etc.
- **Emergency Health Information Card**
- • Make sure your emergency health information card explains the best method of
- communication for you (written notes, pointing to letters/words/pictures, finding a quiet
- place)
- **Alternate Power Source**
- • Obtain an alternative power source (power converter, batteries) if you use a computer or laptop as a means of frequent communication
- **Checklist**
- • _____ Determine your ideal method of communication in the event of an emergency and
- be prepared to use it.
- • _____ Store communication aids in all of your emergency kits.
- • _____ Make an emergency health information card and be sure to include your
- communication needs.
- • _____ Store batteries or chargers for communication equipment

Tips For People With Life-Support Systems

- **Secure Equipment**
 - Secure your life-support equipment to prevent damage from falling. If you use a chain, make sure it is welded (not bent)
- **Alternate Providers**
 - Determine which facilities/providers can serve you if your home system becomes inoperable or your current provider is unable to assist you
- **Alternate Power**
 - Ask your vendor about alternative power sources that will sustain you for up to seven days
 - Could you use manually-operated equipment?
 - Can your equipment be powered from a vehicle battery? If yes, obtain any hardware necessary for the hook-up.
- **Generators**
 - For all-day use over several days, a gasoline-powered **generator** is the preferred alternative power source. Test it periodically and operate it only in an open area to ensure good ventilation. If you store an adequate gasoline supply, make sure you do so safely. Keep a syphon kit on hand in case you need to obtain gasoline directly from your vehicle.
 - Some generators can be plugged into house wiring systems. **Consult your utility company before you do this.**

Tips For People With Life-Support Systems

- **Oxygen Users**
- Ask your provider if a reduced-flow rate may be used during a disaster to prolong the life of the system.
 - Record on your equipment the reduced flow numbers so you can refer to them
- Be aware of oxygen safety; avoid areas where gas leaks or open flames may be present
- • Post "Oxygen in Use" signs.
- • Keep the shut-off switch for oxygen equipment near you so you can get to it quickly in an emergency
- **Test Backups Regularly**
- • If your backup power system relies on batteries, be aware that stored batteries require periodic charging, even if they are unused. A charging routine must be strictly followed
- Test your alternative power equipment regularly to ensure it will function in an emergency
- Know the working duration of any batteries that support your system
- • Ask your power company about the type of backup power you plan to use and get their advice

Utility Company Registry

- Many utility companies keep a list of names of people dependent on life-support systems and tag their meters
 - Registering for this service may qualify you for a discount rate; contact the customer service department for more information
 - **Never count on your power being quickly restored**
 - Utility personnel may not be able to reach you right away after a major disaster

Tips For People With Mobility Concerns

- **Storage**
- Store emergency supplies in a pack or backpack attached to your walker, wheelchair or scooter
- Store needed mobility aids (canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs) close to you in a consistent, convenient and secured location
 - Keep extra aids in several locations, if available.
- **Emergency Kit**
- • Keep a pair of heavy gloves in your supply kit to use while wheeling or making your way over glass and debris
- If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter, consider having an extra battery available. A car battery can be substituted, however, it will not last as long as a wheelchair's deep-cycle battery
 - Ask your vendor if you can recharge your batteries (in the event of a power outage) by connecting jumper cables to a vehicle battery or using a special converter that plugs into your vehicle's cigarette lighter
- If you do not have puncture-proof tires, keep a patch kit or can of "seal-in-air" to repair flat tires and/or keep an extra supply of inner tubes
- Store a lightweight, manual wheelchair if available

Evacuation Plan for People in Wheelchairs

- Arrange and secure furniture and other items to create barrier-free passages in your home and office
- If you spend time above the first floor of an elevator building, plan and practice using alternate methods of evacuation. If needed, enlist the help of your **personal support network**
- **network**
- There will be instances where wheelchair users will have to leave their chairs behind in order to evacuate safely
 - If you cannot use stairs, familiarize yourself with lifting and carrying techniques that will work for you
 - Alert rescue personnel to any areas of vulnerability
 - For example, the traditional "fire fighter's carry" may be hazardous for people with respiratory weakness
 - You need to be able to give brief instructions regarding how to move you

Have a “go” bag

- Can be used for evacuation or in the event of unexpectedly going to the hospital
 - Medications and list of meds
 - Health form
 - Copies of insurance cards
 - Communication board
 - Liquid nutrition/feeding tube supplies
 - Glasses
 - Cash/travelers checks
 - Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container. You can use the [Emergency Financial First Aid Kit \(EFFAK\)](#) - PDF, 277Kb) developed by Operation Hope, FEMA and Citizen Corps to help you organize your information
 - Call bell

Home Safety—Fire and Natural Disasters

- Call your local fire department and report to them that a disabled person resides in your home.
 - In the event of an emergency, the 911 system would have a “disability notice” that would alert the responders that a person living at that residence either moves slowly, can not get out of the house unassisted, or is confined to a second (or higher) floor of the house
- Ask your local fire department if they have any personnel or volunteers that could come to your home to work with them and their family on an evacuation plan in the event of an emergency.
- Stress the importance of smoke detectors (and carbon monoxide detectors)
- Have an evacuation plan for not only in the event of a fire, but also a natural weather emergency
- For information about adapted fire safety equipment, go to:

<http://www.abledata.com/abledata.cfm?pageid=19327&top=10756&deep=2&trail=22>

Home Safety—Evac-Aide

- Evac-Aide Emergency Evacuation Blanket
 - An emergency evacuation system designed for use with individuals with mobility disabilities
 - Made of fire-resistant heavy gauge ripstop vinyl with webbing reinforced edges, the unit has four hand loops on each side and S hooks in each corner
 - The device can be used as stretcher, lifter, drag surface, or slide/chute

<http://www.tietechinc.com>



Home Safety--Comfort Carrier Evacuation System

- The Comfort Carrier Evacuation System is an emergency evacuation system designed for use by individuals with mobility or severe physical disabilities or spinal cord injury. -
-Designed for use in multistory buildings, the package includes an ADA-compliant steel cabinet with an alarm and a clearly illustrated acrylic window, which is placed on the wall near a fire exit; a Comfort Carrier Evacuation Sling which fits inside the cabinet



Calling for Help

- The most crucial assistive technology that can be in the home
 - ALWAYS ALWAYS have a way to call for attention
 - What type of call do you need to make?
 - Within the home
 - In the home and also the yard
 - Call out for help (911)
 - What dexterity does the user have?
 - If user can still speak, baby monitors make great call systems
 - If user has limb movement, any type of bell...cow, dinner, etc...will attract attention

Calling for help within the home

- Wired or wireless device
 - Wired device has a call bell for the PALS and an alarm which will emit a loud beep until the user releases the bell
 - Med Labs EZ Call Bell and Alarm
 - About \$125.00
 - http://www.medlabsinc.com/Med_Labs/PA-1_ALARM.html



Calling for help within the home

- **Bite or Puff Alarm by Med Labs**
- The pressure required to operate it is very small, and is provided by a gentle bite, puff, or squeeze on the bulb connected to the air tube
- The bulb can be a *Bite-or-Puff* bulb or an infant ear syringe
 - Can also be operated as a puff switch by cutting off the end of the bulb with scissors
- Bite frequently has a significant advantage over puff, since
 - (1) Jaw muscles are powerful,
 - (2) Bite does not need lip seal around the bulb
- http://www.medlabsinc.com/Med_Labs/BITE-OR-PUFF.html



Calling for help within the home

- **Wireless Pagers**
 - Can be as simple as a wireless doorbell from local home improvement center
 - Approximately \$20.00



Calling for help within the home

- Adapted Wireless Pagers
 - Can be used up to 40-100 feet away
 - Either chime only or chime and vibrate
 - \$51.95-\$67.95



Calling for help outside of the home

- Emergency Alert System (monitored)
 - Two-way 24-hour a day, 365-days-a-year emergency response service designed to provide assistance and reassurance to people in need
 - Monthly service charge and an installation fee
 - Installation around \$80.00
 - Monthly fee around \$50.00
 - User wears a transmitter and there is a fixed communicator unit that is placed in the home
 - Users call for assistance by pressing a small, portable, waterproof button worn around their wrist or as a pendant
 - The communicator unit, which is attached to the subscriber's current phone system, is then activated and automatically dials the service
 - Incoming calls can be answered

Emergency Alert System



Emergency Call Systems—non-monitored

- Affordable emergency alert devices that are easy to use
 - Connect to your telephone
 - Dial "911"
 - Call up to 5 telephone numbers of your choice
 - Send an emergency pre-recorded
 - About \$225.00 or less
 - <http://www.teleemergency300.com/>
 - <http://www.centrol-inc.com/two-wayvoicesystem.html>



Determine Your Evacuation Options When Traveling

- When you have a choice, do you think about whether you want the view or the safety of a lower floor? If you have difficulty using stairs, do you ask for a guest room on a lower floor? Do you identify yourself to registration staff as a person who will need assistance in an emergency and state the type of assistance you may need?
- Do you check exit routes on the back of guest room doors and familiarize yourself with the exits (by tracking the escape route, noting the number of doors between your room and the emergency exit)? Maps may be confusing unless you check them out.

Resources

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