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.

Preparing Makes Sense for People with Disabilities and Special Needs. Get Ready Now.

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.

AARP

American Red Cross

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON DISABILITY EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INITIATIVE www.nod.org/emergency

Ready

citizen corps

READY-RP-0406-01.

Ready

Prepare. Plan. Stay Informed.

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Get Ready Now.

Homeland Security

www.ready.gov

Preparing Makes Sense. 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, 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.

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 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. 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
- 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

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 on 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 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.

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. Also have copies of your medical insurance, Medicare and Medicaid cards readily available. If you have a service animal, be sure to include food, water, collar with ID tag, medical records 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 those in your emergency kit as well, and also make sure that a trusted friend or family member has copies of these documents. Include the names and numbers of everyone in your personal support network, as well as your medical providers. If you have a communication disability, make sure your emergency information list notes 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.

2 Make a Plan

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 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 serve as back-ups. If you require handicap 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.

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 support network. Share each aspect of your 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 necessary. 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 them how to use any lifesaving equipment or administer medicine in case of an emergency. If you use a wheelchair, oxygen or other medical equipment show friends how to use these devices so they can move you 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, discuss the best 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.

Develop a Family Communications Plan: Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another and review what you will do in different situations. Consider a plan where each family member calls or e-mails the same friend or relative in the event of an emergency. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact, not in the impacted area, may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members. You may have trouble getting through, or the phone system may be 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 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.

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 for 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 by law only service animals must be allowed inside. Plan in advance for shelter alternatives that will work for both you and your animals; consider loved ones or friends outside of your immediate 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.

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.

Fire Safety: Plan two ways out of every room in case of fire. Check for items such as bookcases, hanging pictures, or overhead lights that could fall and block an escape path. Check 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. If there are aspects of preparing your home or workplace that you are not able to do yourself, enlist the help of your personal support network.

Contact Your Local Emergency Information Management Office: Some local emergency management offices maintain registers of people with disabilities so you can be located and assisted quickly in a disaster. Contact your local emergency management agency to see if these services exist where you live or visit www.ready.gov to find links to government offices in your area. In addition, wearing medical alert tags or bracelets that identify your disability can be a crucial aid in an emergency situation. When traveling, consider alerting hotel or motel workers if you will need help in a disaster situation.