



Individuals with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs

How To Make A Plan & Create A Support Network

How might a disaster affect me? What are my personal needs during a disaster? By evaluating your own individual needs and making an emergency plan that fits those needs, you and your loved ones can be better prepared. Here are three easy steps to start your emergency communication plan:

1. **Collect information.** Create a paper copy of the contact information including phone, email, and social media info for your family, friends, caregivers, neighbors and other important people/offices, such as medical facilities, doctors, schools, workplace contacts or service providers.
 - Add information for connecting through relay services on a landline phone, mobile device and computer, if you are Deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability and use traditional relay services or video relay service (VRS)
2. **Share your emergency plans** with the trusted people in your support network – tell them:
 - Where your emergency supplies are kept
 - What you need and how to contact you if the power goes out
 - If you will call, email or text agreed upon friends or relatives if you're unable to contact each other directly
 - What medical devices or assistive technology devices that you need to have with you if there is an evacuation order from local officials
 - Your plans to remain independent if you require oxygen or mechanical ventilation
3. **Practice your plan with your support network**, just like you would a fire drill.
 - Discuss your needs and/or the needs of a family member; learn about their assistance or services. Advocate including people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs into emergency planning in your community.
 - Talk with your employer about your emergency plan, and find out how your employer includes the needs of people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

- Contact your city, county, or [state office of emergency management](#), local fire and police department, disability organizations, such as the local [Independent Living Center](#), or community groups.

✓ [Download And Print A Plan](#)

[Family Emergency Communication Plan PDF](#)

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

[Transit Commuter Emergency Communication Plan](#)

✓ [Check Your Emergency Supply Kit](#)

- Stock a basic disaster supply kit. Plan for sheltering at home, at work and on the road.
- Inventory what you use every day to maintain your health, safety and independence. Identify essential items you and your family will need to survive for three to five days or longer, if emergency responders or other people cannot get to you following an emergency or disaster and if you have needs that are not easily accommodated, even when you aren't on your own.
- As you go about your usual routines, carry a pad for several days and jot down anything that might be difficult for you to manage without in an emergency, and then begin to brainstorm solutions that might work for you.
- **Stock your kit with essential items** which may include medical supplies, assistive devices, food for your specific dietary needs, prescription medicines, diabetic supplies, hearing aid batteries, phone charger and back up battery land line phone (and TTY if you use this technology), manual wheelchair, extra seat cushion, egg crate padding and other medical equipment and mobility devices you may need to maintain your health, safety and independence, and supplies for your service animal.
- **Plan for the specific needs of children with disabilities and people who may have difficulty in unfamiliar or chaotic environments.** This may include handheld electronic devices loaded with movies and games (including 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, and comfort snacks and toys that meet needs for stimulation.

✓ Make A Medical Plan: Including Medications And Medical Supplies

Even if you do not use a computer, put important information onto a flash drive or mobile device for easy transport in the event of an evacuation. Have your medical professionals update it every time they make changes in your treatment or care.

- Maintain a list of phone numbers for your doctors, pharmacy, service providers and medical facilities.
- Ask your local pharmacy or doctor to provide a list of your prescription medicine and medically prescribed devices.
- Make hard copies and maintain electronic versions, including a portable thumb drive containing:
 - Medical prescriptions
 - Doctors' orders for Durable Medical Equipment, Consumable Medical Supplies and assistive devices that you use. Include the style and serial numbers of the support devices you use and where you purchased them.
 - Medical insurance cards, Medicare or Medicaid card, a list of your allergies, and your health history.
 - The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services online tool helps people locate and access their electronic health records from a variety of sources: <http://healthit.gov/bluebutton>
- If you own a medical alert tag or bracelet, wear it. Keep medical alert tags or bracelets or written descriptions of your disability and support needs, in case you are unable to describe the situation in an emergency.
- If possible, stock extra over the counter and prescription medicine, oxygen, insulin, catheters, feeding tubes, cannulas, tubing, trach tubes, wipes, pads, undergarments, ostomy supplies, leg bags, adhesive and other medical supplies you use.
- If you have allergies or chemical or environmental sensitivities, be sure to include cleaning, filtering and personal items that you may be able to use to decrease the impact of irritants as much as possible.
- If you work with a medical provider or organization to receive life sustaining medical treatment such as dialysis, oxygen, or cancer treatment, work with the provider in advance of an emergency to identify alternative locations where you

could continue to receive treatment if you are unable to go to your regular medical provider.

- If you receive in-home assistance or personal assistance services and meals on wheels, work with your provider agency in advance of an emergency and develop a backup plan for continued care.
- Ask how you can continue to receive services from providers such as disability, mental and behavioral health and social service providers, or medical and life alert services.

✓ Plan For Possible Evacuation

- During an emergency, be ready to explain to first responders and emergency officials that you need to evacuate and choose to go to a shelter with your family, service animal, caregiver, personal assistant, and your assistive technology devices and supplies. You may want to have laminated instructions in print or pictograms if you may find it difficult to describe your needs and preferences or to be understood.
- Plan ahead for accessible transportation that you may need for evacuation or getting to a medical clinic. Work with local services, public transportation or paratransit to identify your local or private accessible transportation options.
- Be sure all of your assistive devices are clearly labeled with your name and contact information using methods that are resistant to water and other kinds of damage.
- If you cannot evacuate with your wheelchair, take your cushion.

Note: People should only be referred to a medical shelter when they have acute health care needs and would typically be admitted to a hospital. Work with your community emergency planners to plan for meeting the health, safety and independence needs of disaster survivors with disabilities in general shelters with their family and neighbors.

✓ Make A Power Outage Plan

- Plan alternative ways to charge your mobile devices, and communication and assistive technology devices before disaster strikes.

- Plan how you will address your dependence on electricity. Tell your power company if you use oxygen- or mechanical ventilation. Be very clear about what you can expect from them in a power outage.
- Before disaster strikes, you may register with your power company. They may alert you when power will be restored in an unplanned outage and before a planned outage. This is particularly important if you use oxygen or mechanical ventilation.
- If you cannot be without power, plan for how you will obtain power backup. If possible, have backup battery, generator, solar or alternate electrical resources. Explore newer solutions, and also consider foot pumps and other simple tools that might suffice when nothing else works.
- Charge devices that will maintain power to your equipment during electric outages.
- Purchase extra batteries for power wheelchairs or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices. **Keep the batteries trickle charged at all times.** Find out if you can charge your wheelchair or devices from a car or using rechargeable marine batteries. Make sure you assemble what you'll need in advance.
- Backup chargers for a cell phone could include a hand-crank USB cell phone emergency charger, a solar charger, or a battery pack. Some weather radios have a built in hand crank charger.
- Backup chargers for a laptop or tablet could include a 12V USB adapter that plugs into a car, an inverter, or a battery jump pack with an USB port.
- Receive important information on a cell phone or smart phone. Sign up for emergency emails and text messages on your cell phone from your local government alert system.
- Plan how you are going to receive emergency information if you are unable to use a television, radio or computer. This may include having an adaptive weather alert system to alert you in the event of severe weather.
- Plan for medications that require refrigeration.

✓ Deaf or Hard Of Hearing

- Extra batteries and a spare charger for hearing aids, cochlear implant and/or personal assistive listening device. Keep records of where you got your hearing aids and exact types of batteries.

- Consider how to receive emergency information if you are unable to use a TV, radio or computer, such as social media or through your mobile device.
- Use a [NOAA Weather Radio for Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) that has an adaptive weather alert system.
- Many new cell phones and smart phones [have an alerting capability](#) that includes specific sounds and vibrations that can be set to signal users of an emergency. Download the FEMA app to receive **safety tips** and **weather alerts** from the National Weather Service for up to five locations across the nation, **maps of** open shelters and disaster recovery centers, **information in Spanish and to apply for assistance**.
- Keep a TTY or other analog-based amplified or captioned phone as part of your emergency supply kit.

✓ [Blind or Low Vision](#)

- Keep Braille/text communication cards, if used, for 2-way communication.
- Mark emergency supplies with Braille labels or large print. Keep a list of your emergency supplies on a portable flash drive, or make an audio file that is kept in a safe place where you can access it.
- Keep a Braille, or Deaf-Blind communications device as part of your emergency supply kit.
- If you use assistive technology devices, such as white canes, CCTV, text-to-speech software, keep information about model numbers and where you purchased the equipment, etc.

✓ [Speech Disability](#)

- 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 lost or destroyed. Keep Model information, where the equipment came from (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 pictograms

✓ Mobility Disability

- If you use a power wheelchair, if possible, have a lightweight manual chair available as a backup. Know the size and weight of your wheelchair in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.
- Purchase an extra battery for a power wheelchair or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices. If you are unable to purchase an extra battery, find out what agencies, organizations, or local charitable groups can help you with the purchase. Keep extra batteries on a trickle charger at all times.
- 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. (*from Nusura/CalEMA*)
- 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 without your wheelchair, take your cushion with you.

✓ Service Animals

- Make plans in advance for your service animal's health and safety whether you both stay at home, or throughout evacuation.
- Stock food, water, portable, water dish, potty pads and bags, and medications. Have identification, licenses, leash, harness and a favorite toy for your service animal.
- Consider paw protection. You may be evacuating over sharp objects such as debris and broken glass.
- If you go to a public shelter, by law all service dogs and miniature horses (but no other animals) are allowed inside and must be allowed to remain with you in all areas of the shelter. You do not need to show any proof but you may be asked to answer two questions that service animal owners are taught to anticipate. Some shelters will accommodate other service animals. Know what to expect before you need sheltering.
- Plan for someone else to take care of your service animal if you are not able to following a disaster.

✓ Behavior Support

- Plan for children with disabilities and people, who may have difficulty in unfamiliar or chaotic environments.
- This may include handheld electronic devices loaded with movies and games (and spare chargers), 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, and comfort snacks and toys that meet needs for stimulation.