



1990 * Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the ADA * 2015

Special Edition Consumer Informer: Disability Emergency Preparedness

Issue Date: August 2015

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EMERGENCY PLANNING AND DISASTER RECOVERY: BE AWARE...AND BE PREPARED

Potential fall and winter weather emergencies are around the corner, and other emergencies can happen at any time. Emergency/disaster and recovery planning for people with disabilities or special needs is sometimes overlooked in our communities. In honor of the 25th Anniversary of the 1990 Americans with Disability Act (ADA), which supports equal rights for people with disabilities, this Special Edition Consumer Informer offers our consumers and members some key information and tools for being aware and being prepared so that people with disabilities have the same opportunities for needed assistance and recovery as do people without disabilities.

Some common special assistance needs are outlined below. People with disabilities, loved ones involved in supporting them, emergency planners, first responders, neighbors, and others in the community can help ensure that there are plans in place to meet these needs promptly and effectively.

BE AWARE: SPECIAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Maintaining independence - Individuals requiring support to be independent in daily activities may lose this support during an emergency or a disaster. These supports might include supplies, durable medical equipment, caregivers, etc.

Communication - Individuals that may not be able to hear verbal announcements, see directional signs, or understand how to get assistance due to hearing, vision, speech, cognitive, or intellectual limitations, and/or limited English proficiency. Communication supports might include interpreters, translators, hearing aids, braille or audio transcription of visual instructions, non-verbal prompts/cues, etc.

Transportation - Individuals who cannot drive or who do not have a vehicle may require transportation support for successful evacuation. This support may include accessible vehicles (e.g., lift-equipped or vehicles suitable for transporting individuals who use oxygen) or information about how and where to access mass transportation during an evacuation.

Supervision/Guidance - Before, during, and after an emergency individuals may lose the support of caregivers, family, or friends or may be especially challenged to cope in a new environment (particularly if they have dementia, Alzheimer's or psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia or intense anxiety).

Medical care - Individuals who are not self-sufficient or who need support from caregivers, family, or friends may need assistance with managing conditions that require observation and ongoing medical treatment.

BE PREPARED: TIPS FOR SUPPORTING SPECIAL NEEDS IN AN EMERGENCY

The simplest way to prepare to meet special assistance needs in the event of an emergency is to jot down instructions (bullet lists might suffice) that identify the disability, what specific supports are needed, and how they can be retrieved, replaced, or implemented. The instructions should include names and contact information for any vendor, service or care provider, or other individual(s) whose assistance might be needed in making sure specific needs are met. These emergency special needs instructions can be laminated and kept in a custom Emergency Preparedness Kit maintained by the individual. (The following Checklist offers more on emergency kits.) These instructions can be used as part of an emergency plan developed by the individual based on his or her unique needs.

Another suggestion for being prepared is to practice the emergency plan. Individuals with special needs and those in their support network can stage an evacuation to see how well the plan works. Calls can be made to phone numbers on contact lists to make sure they are all correct and working. If there are any shortcomings discovered in the plan and emergency kit materials, remedies can be written into an updated plan. If they have the capacity, your local police or fire department might be willing to help you establish a drill – it can't hurt to ask.



Who's in Charge? Locating Emergency Planning Agencies in Your Area.

- Ready America (www.ready.gov)
- National Organization on Disability's Interactive Map of Disability and Emergency Preparedness Resources (www.nod.org/EPIResources/interactive_map.html)
- Citizen Corps (www.citizencorps.gov)
- PandemicFlu.gov (www.pandemicflu.gov)

"Carry-With-You" Supplies to Keep with You at All Times

Packing/Container Suggestions:

A fanny pack, back pack or drawstring bag which can be hung from a wheelchair, scooter or other assistive device.

Pack should contain:

- Emergency Health Information Card
- Instructions on personal assistance needs and how best to provide them
- Copies of emergency documents
- Essential medications/copies of prescriptions (at least a week's supply)
- Flashlight with batteries
- Signaling device (whistle, beeper, bell, screecher)
- Small battery-operated radio with extra batteries

Source:

<http://www.ilrcsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Medical.pdf>

For more information and resources regarding emergency preparedness specifically for the following groups:

1. People with Disabilities
2. Employers of People with Disabilities
3. Local Government and First Responders

...please visit the DAWN website at dawncil.org under "Resources" and review the ADA Emergency Preparedness Toolkit.





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Disability Emergency Preparedness CHECKLIST

Keep a copy of this list and check off each activity as it is accomplished. You can use this list to create a personal Emergency Kit.

- Establish a personal support network, and make a list of those individuals with their contact information. If you can, identify an out-of-area contact in your list, as well.
- Make an emergency health information card (i.e. medications, equipment used, allergies, communication difficulties etc.).
- Make an emergency contact list.
- Collect copies of your emergency documents (i.e. family records, wills, deeds, Social Security numbers, bank account information etc.).
- Store copies of your health card, contact list and emergency documents in your wallet, purse, supply kits and safe deposit box. Give copies to members of your personal support network as well as your out-of-area contact.
- Conduct an ability self-assessment. (See reverse side.) This evaluates individual capabilities, limitations and needs, as well as surroundings, to determine what kind of help would be needed in an emergency.
- Collect and maintain "carry-with-you supplies" at all times.
- Compile disability-related supplies for emergency kits.
- Maintain a seven day supply of essential medications.
- Keep important equipment and assistive devices in consistent, convenient and secured places (i.e. mobility aids, hearing aids, communication devices etc.)
- Keep three days' worth of water and non-perishable foods.
- Write out instructions for items you will need help with in an emergency.

Visit the following link online to view examples and obtain further information about checklist materials:

<http://www.cert-la.com/education/EmergencyPreparednessForPeopleWithDisabilities.pdf>





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Disability Emergency Preparedness ABILITY SELF-ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT DATE: _____

1) Shutting Off Utilities

- a) Will you be able to independently shut off gas, water, and electricity? Yes No
- b) Do you know where all shut-off valves are? Yes No
- c) Can you get to them? Yes No
- d) Can you find and use the right wrench to turn those handles? Yes No

2) Operating a Fire Extinguisher

- a) Can you operate a fire extinguisher? Yes No
- b) Have you practiced? Yes No
- c) Will extended handles make these items usable for you? Yes No

3) Evacuation

- a) Will you be able to carry your evacuation kit? Yes No
- b) What do you need to do, in order to carry it? Yes No
- c) How much can you carry regularly? Yes No
- d) Do you have duplicate evacuation kits at other locations? Yes No
- e) Have you moved or secured large objects that might block your escape path? Yes No

Use your Self-Assessment as the basis for instructions in handling the following issues in the event of an emergency. Keep a copy and share a copy with your personal support network.

How to turn off utilities: Color-code or label these for quick identification, for example -

Main gas valve, located next to the meter – blue

Electrical power circuit breaker box – red

Main water valve - green

Checking for gas leaks: If you have a reduced/limited sense of smell, alert your personal support network to check for gas leaks.

Operating and safely moving your essential equipment: Consider attaching simple to read and understand instructions to your equipment.

Establishing safe transport if you need to be carried: Write down instructions and share with your personal support network. Describe any areas of vulnerability.

How to provide personal assistance services: Remind anyone who assists you to practice strict cleanliness and keep fingers out of mouth. With limited water and increased health hazards, the possibility of infection increases. Keep a supply of latex gloves in your emergency supply kit and ask people assisting you with personal hygiene to use them. List all personal care assistance needs (dressing, bathing, etc.) with instructions on how best to assist you. Make a map of where to find medications, aids and supplies. Share with your personal support network.

Evacuation: Be aware of barriers and possible hazards to a clear path of exit. Change what you are able to change (clear obstacles from aisles; secure large, heavy items such as bookcases that may fall to block your path). Plan alternate exit paths.