

INFORMATION/EDUCATION PAGE

Emergency Preparedness for People With Disabilities

Guide and Checklist

Natural disasters and other public emergencies can leave people stranded for days, cause breaks in communication networks, and make streets and walkways impassable. What will you do to ensure your safety during those critical first days of an emergency in your community? Presented here are guidelines for preparing for emergency situations and a checklist for building an emergency kit.

CREATE AND PRACTICE YOUR EMERGENCY PLAN

Create an emergency plan for each place where you ordinarily spend your time, and practice your plan. The National Organization on Disability (NOD) recommends having an emergency plan for home, work, and school.

Each plan should include the following:

- Personal network — For each location identify 2 or 3 people who will make sure you are OK and will help you during an emergency. Make sure you have their contact information (in your mobile device, laptop computer, or on paper) and that they have yours.
- Escape — For each location identify primary and secondary routes to a safe place inside your building (bathroom, basement, stairwell, etc.) and outside your

building (public shelter, grocery store parking lot, etc.). Practice your escape plans with your personal network.

- Information — Identify the devices you will use to stay informed about events related to the emergency (mobile device, laptop computer, radio, television, etc.). Make sure you know the phone numbers, websites, and radio and television stations that you will use to get information.
- Essential items — In addition to the basic needs required by everyone, plan to have items you need for your particular disability such as medicines, supplies, and assistive devices (like hearing aids and batteries, white cane, service animal, heavy-duty gloves for pushing your wheelchair through mud, debris, etc.).

RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES—KNOW THE SIGNS OF STRESS

Public emergencies and disasters are stressful. Homes and other property may be damaged. People may be hurt or in danger. Environmental conditions may make normal activities like eating, sleeping, breathing, and thinking more difficult. Medical

conditions you have could become worse under these conditions. Recognizing the symptoms of stress in yourself and others around you helps manage stress and its negative effects. The list below gives examples of each type of stress you may feel. These are natural responses to emergency situations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

American Red Cross “Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities”
<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family/disabilities>

American Red Cross “Be Red Cross Ready” - multiple languages
<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster-safety-library>

National Organization on Disabilities, “Disaster Readiness Tips for People with Disabilities”
http://nod.org/research_publications/emergency_preparedness_materials/for_people_with_disabilities/
www.nod.org/assets/downloads/Readiness-Tips-Disabilities.pdf

SIGNS OF STRESS

Psychological or emotional

- Anxiety, irritability, anger, regret, guilt
- Depression, moodiness, crying
- Jumpiness, flashbacks to bad memories
- Uneasy sleeping or excessive sleeping

Thinking

- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Mental confusion, inability to set priorities
- Inability to express yourself clearly
- Inability to make decisions

Physical

- Headaches, weakness, tiredness
- Upset stomach and digestive problems
- Muscle soreness or numbness
- Difficulty catching your breath

EMERGENCY KIT CHECKLIST

The National Organization on Disability recommends preparing 2 emergency kits:

- **Ready kit** – supplies needed for a minimum of 3 days
- **Go bag** – your most essential items to take with you if you must leave immediately

Items on this list can be included in both the ready kit and go bag. You should decide which items should be in one or both of these kits.	Ready Kit	Go Bag
3-day supply of nonperishable food and manual can opener. Make sure the food meets your dietary requirements		
3-day supply of water (1 gallon per person per day, but you may need more)		
Medical equipment and supplies, and assistive devices – glasses, hearing aids, catheters, augmentative communication devices, cane, walker. Label each with your name and contact information. Be sure to have chargers and extra batteries		
Personal medical information – including blood type, hospital affiliation, health insurance provider, policy number, and customer service phone number		
Medications – include a 7-day supply plus a list of the prescription name, dosage, frequency, doctor, and pharmacist. If medications need to be refrigerated, bring a cooler with an ice pack. Drug allergies should also be listed		
List of emergency contact information – including your primary physician, pharmacist, assistive equipment supplier, medical supplier, and support network members in and out of the region		
Copies of important documents – birth certificate, passport, driver's license, insurance information, proof of address (electricity or water bill with your name on it)		
Extra set of keys (to give someone access to your home or car if needed)		
Flashlight and radio with extra batteries		
Money – cash, credit cards, checkbook, ATM card		
Sanitation and hygiene items – including soap, denture care, absorbent pads, etc.		
Items for infants – formula, diapers, bottles, and pacifiers		
Supplies for a service animal – food, identification tags, proof of up-to-date vaccinations, and veterinarian contact details		
Clothes, blanket, pillow		
Alerting items – white distress flag or cloth, whistle, and/or glow sticks		
Basic first aid kit – Band-Aids, roll of bandages, tape, scissors or knife, aloe (for burns and scratches), antibiotic or disinfectant ointment, pills for pain and headaches (aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or naproxen)		
List of your needs related to your disability or health conditions. Write it down or wear medical alert tags or bracelets		
Additional items to meet to your disability needs (make your own list)		

Authorship

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