

# Emergency Preparedness For Person's With A Disability

- ◆ Mobility
  - ◆ Visual
    - ◆ Hearing
      - ◆ Intellectual



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# Introduction

Past events such as 9/11, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have brought to the forefront the need for Emergency Preparedness plans, especially for individuals with disabilities, special needs and seniors.

# Emergency Preparedness

For the millions of Americans who have physical, medical, sensory or intellectual disabilities, emergencies such as fires, floods and acts of terrorism present a real challenge.

# Emergency Preparedness

Typically, disaster preparedness and emergency response systems are designed for **non-disabled persons**, for whom escape or rescue involves walking, running, hearing, sight or climbing stairs.

# Why Prepare?

- Where will you or your coworkers be when an emergency or disaster strikes?
- Emergencies and disasters can strike quickly and without warning
- Can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home or workplace.
- What would you do if basic services – water, gas, electricity or telephones – were cut off at home or at work?

## Why Prepare (cont.)

- You know your functional abilities and possible needs during and after an emergency or disaster situation.
- You can cope with disaster by preparing in advance with your family, neighbors, co-workers and community.
- You are in the best position to plan for your own safety.
- **Planning is Surviving!**

# How to prepare?

## A Four Step Approach

1. Get informed
2. Make a plan
3. Assemble a “Go-kit”
4. Maintain your plan and kit



**Get Informed!**

# Get Informed

## Individuals

- Identify a personal support network
- Complete a personal assessment

# Get Informed - Individuals

## Who Needs a Support Team During An Emergency?

**Everyone!**

All of us will need people we can count on during a crisis.

## Daily Support

For those of you who use a personal care attendant on a daily basis and rely on others for things like transportation, meals daily care, WHO will assist you with these tasks during an emergency?

# Get Informed - Individuals

## Increased Support Needs in Emergencies - Mobility is Situational

- Plan ahead and consider your abilities in disaster conditions.
- During an emergency situation, there may be conditions such as flooding, or debris that makes it more difficult than usual to move around the neighborhood.
- There may be a need to walk distances and carry supplies.
- You may become fatigued, hungry, over heated or cold, which can negatively affect mobility.
- These circumstances can create a need for more support than you may require on a daily basis.

## Complete a personal assessment

### A personal assessment

- Should be done before you develop your plan.
- Identifies your needs in an emergency.
  - Assistive Technology
  - Medical requirements (medications, water etc)
  - Personal assistance (how will you call for help?)
  - Mobility devices
  - Transportation requirements – Public transportation may NOT be available!

## Personal Assessment (cont.)

- Familiarizes you with the environment.
  - Exits (Elevators, Ramps, Auditory alarms)
  - Current evacuation plans
  - Current emergency procedures of your location and the community
    - Typically, disaster preparedness and emergency response systems are designed for non-disabled persons, for whom escape or rescue involves walking, running or using stairways.
- Service animal requirements
  - Will you be able to care for your animal (provide food, water etc.)

## Get Informed - Professionals

- Seniors and people with disabilities function on many different levels.
- Know your local disabled population and their needs.
- Effective planning must include and meet the needs of those with mobility, visual and hearing limitations.
- Consult with knowledgeable disabled individuals in all phases of planning.

# Get Informed - Professionals

- Organizations such as the Red Cross, SCIAVA, Federation for the Blind and other professional disability organizations need to be consulted on accessibility.
- Not all individuals with disabilities require medical attention.

# Get Informed - Professionals

- What type of accessible transportation will be needed.
- Advocacy Organizations can offer insight if a shelter is accessible to “their” population.
- People with disabilities may also have a secondary disability.



# **Make A Plan**

## Choosing the Right Support Team

Consider who may be able to assist you:

- Do they have the physical stamina.
- Convenience of assisting (how many family members do they have and of what age, is there space in their car for one more, etc.)
- Transportation - would they be available to stay behind with you until assistance arrives?

## Support Team-Think 3

- You may not be near your primary support people when an emergency occurs.
- Develop a Support Team of 3 people in each setting you are routinely in during the week.
  - Home
  - Work (multiple buildings)
  - Church
  - Recreation activities
  - Volunteering

# Make a Plan - Individuals

## Identify Then Ask

- Talk to the 3 people you identified in each setting.
- Discuss the type of assistance you would need in an emergency and find out if they would be able and willing to assist you.

# Make a Plan - Individuals

## Be Pro-active

If the emergency allows you lead time such as a hurricane:

- Contact your identified support team and find out if their availability to assist has changed in any way.
- Determine ahead of time who will assist you.
- Physically connect with your support team early, so there is no possibility that the storm may arrive early and keep them from getting to you.
- Telecommute if a pending disaster!

# Make a Plan - Individuals

## Be Pro-active

- Orient your support team ahead of time to key tasks.
  - Transfer into a car
  - How to fold your wheelchair
  - Proper way to turn off or charge up a battery or communication device.
- Put it on your calendar to touch base once every quarter.
- Schedule training with your support team.

# Make a Plan - Individuals

- Develop a plan from the information in your “Personal Assessment.”
- Use “What If” scenarios in your plan’s development.
  - How will you get from A to B if the ramp is broken or the elevators aren’t working?
- Meet with your family, emergency professionals, co-workers and friends to go over or get advice about your plan

## Complete a Communications Plan

- Your plan should include contact information for family members, members of your support network, caregivers, and work.
- Choose an "Out-of-Town" Contact
- Your plan should also include information for meeting locations and available emergency services.
- Be sure each family member has a copy of your communication plan and post it near your telephone for use in an emergency.
- Reverse 911

## Professional Communications Plans

- Educate the public through media (radio, T.V., local news) so we can all plan together - we should never plan in isolation
- Always incorporate disability specific planning tips in general emergency planning brochures, posters or media events
- All communications need to be adapted for people with hearing, visual or mobility disabilities.
- Advocacy Organizations are key in getting the message out and consulting on many different issues

# Make a Plan - Professionals

- Ensure that news coverage of impending emergency situations are close captioned including breaking alerts.
- Make sure that writing on the screen does not cover line 21, the close captioning line on TV screens
- When issuing an audio alert on TV indicated by the “beep” then followed by writing on the screen, make sure that whatever is written is also verbally provided so that individuals with visual disabilities will also know what is going on.

# Make a Plan - Professionals

## Planning Must Be Inclusive

- If a police car goes through a neighborhood with a siren they should also use blinking lights.
- If an officer walks door-to-door to let people know about an emergency, they should have something in writing..
- Plans **MUST** be **ACCESSIBLE** to **EVERYONE!** i.e. sheltering, restrooms

## Planning Must Be Inclusive

- Locally, individuals with disabilities know the strengths and weaknesses of current services.
- We know how people with disabilities access transportation, housing and supports in our community.
- We know whether many of the buildings and public places that may be considered for shelters are accessible or we could assist to survey them.
- We can offer suggestions based on our experience in our locality that can help make planning more efficient and thorough.
- We can also help get the word out to other people with disabilities that we may know in our area.

# Make a Plan - Professionals

## Accommodations to Participate in Planning Meetings

- May need communication access, Braille, large print, CART, or a sign language interpreter.
- May need accessible transportation or funds to pay for transportation to attend meetings.
- May need a personal care attendant to assist during meetings (with setting up books, papers, communication device or to assist in restroom, etc.) or funding to pay an attendant.

## Mobility Barriers To Evacuation

- Cost of transportation.
- Ability to get to pick-up points.
- Are evacuation vehicles accessible (including a wheelchair lift and tie downs).
- Traveling together
  - people who use accessible transportation need to ride with their family, friends, or support team . This includes service animals.

# Make a Plan - Professionals

## Issues During Rescue

- People with mobility disabilities often have very individualized ways that we need assistance being carried or transferred to avoid injury.
- When possible, rescue workers should ask what is the best way to assist them.
- Some individuals will not be able to talk, hear or see.

## Make a Plan - Professionals

# What Makes a General Population Shelter Accessible

- All shelters should meet basic A.D.A. standards for accessibility and accommodations.
- There should be an entrance with no steps, and wheelchair accessible restrooms.
- Nothing should protrude into walkways.
- When announcements are made verbally, they should also be posted in writing to accommodate someone with a hearing disability.

## Make a Plan - Professionals

# What Makes a General Population Shelter Accessible

- Be ready to orient someone with a visual disability to where things are in the shelter and to guide them if they need to walk to another building or to transportation.
- Service animals should be welcomed.
- Sometimes an accommodation is as simple as providing an extra pillow so someone who needs to sleep with their head elevated due to a heart condition or sleep apnea can do so.

# Make a Plan - Professionals

## The Next Level of Shelter Support

- Higher cots to make it easier to transfer into from a wheelchair.
- Having a transfer board and Hoyer lift available .
- If phones are available for shelter residents to use, have a TTY available for persons who are deaf.
- A sign language interpreter for shelter announcements.
- A refrigerator for medicines that must be kept cold.
- A generator for individuals who depend on technology that requires electricity i.e. CPAP

# Make a Plan - Professionals

## People with Disabilities at the Planning Table

- People with disabilities are the experts and their needs.
- Our goal in planning will be to maximize and maintain independence during and after the disaster.

# Assemble a “Go-kit”

- Knapsack containing items you need in an emergency
- Light enough to easily “Grab & Go”
- Store it under your desk or where you are!
- Update and keep it fresh

# Assemble a “Go-kit”

## What’s needed

- Contains basic survival item
- Medications (keep up-to-date)
- Disability specific items
- Communication Card
- Service Animal-extra food, water bowl, favorite toy, extra leash, treats
- Cell Phone

# Assemble a “go-kit”

## One Go-kit is Not Enough!

You cannot plan where you will be when disaster strikes.

Have ready:

- Large kit at home with additional food items for prolonged “sheltering in place”
- Small, easy to carry “Go-kit” that you can grab and run or roll with.
- Go-kit for the car.
- Go-kit at work.

# Assemble a “go-kit”

## Bed-Side Kit

Many individuals with mobility limitations require assistance to get in or out of bed. If disaster strikes overnight, you may be stuck in bed until someone can get to you.

- **Bed-side Kit** can be kept velcroed to your bed side. Kit would include:
- Cordless phone or cell phone and charger, water, medicines, food, flashlight, and contact phone numbers.

## Maintain your plan and kit

- Update your plan if your environment changes
- Review your plan every 6 months
- Keep your Go-kit up-to-date
- Swap medications

# Conclusion

- Get to know your companies and communities emergency preparedness plans
- Individuals need to be responsible
- No one knows you better than YOU!
- Plan, Plan and

**SURVIVE!**

# For additional information

Contact:



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