

## Evacuation Planning for Persons with Disabilities and Caregivers

### Your Evacuation Plan

Keep in mind that your usual ways of support and assistance may not be available to you for some time during and after an evacuation. Prepare yourself based on the capabilities and limitations you believe you will have in an emergency situation.



### Prepare an evacuation plan before a disaster happens

- Become familiar with the evacuation plan for your office, school, or any other location where you spend a lot of time. If the current plan does not make arrangements for people with disabilities, make sure the management at these sites knows your needs. Be sure that you are included in the overall plan for safety and evacuation of the building.
- You may need someone's help to evacuate safely, especially down stairwells. In case you need assistance during an emergency and your network is not available, identify helpers in advance and tell them about your requirements. Give them instructions on what you need and how they can help you evacuate.
- Practice using different ways out of a building, especially if you are above the first floor in a building with many stories. Remember, the elevator may not work or should not be used. Decide what type of equipment you may need for assistance during an evacuation. If you cannot use stairs, talk with your network or building management about how you should be evacuated.
- If you need devices for an emergency escape, think about your physical capabilities before making a purchase. Store devices nearby, where you can get to them easily. Make sure batteries, instructions, and other necessities are supplied.
- Advocate for yourself. Practice how to quickly explain to people the best way to guide or move you and your adaptive equipment, safely and rapidly. Be ready to give brief, clear, and specific instructions and directions to rescue personnel, either orally or in writing.
- If you do not drive, talk with your network about how you will leave the area if the authorities advise an evacuation. In some communities, local government agencies offer transportation for persons needing assistance during an evacuation. Ask your local emergency management office or local fire department if these services are available in your area for persons with your disability.
- Choose an alternate place to stay, such as with friends, family, or at a hotel or motel outside your area. You may have enough early warning time to leave before an emergency develops. Record contact numbers in your personal disaster plan.
- Plan for the care of your pets if you have to evacuate your home. Pets, unlike service animals, may not be allowed into emergency shelters. So it is best to decide now where you will take your pet if you must leave. Contact your local Red Cross chapter or

Humane Society for more information.

- Plan for the care of your service animal. Service animals are allowed in hotels or motels and Red Cross shelters. However, these places cannot care for your animal. When you leave your home, remember to take a collar, harness, identification tags, records of vaccinations, medications, and food for your service animal.
- When necessary, ask for an accommodation from disaster response personnel. For example, let a responder or relief worker know if you cannot wait in lines for long periods for items like water, food, and disaster relief assistance. Practice how to explain clearly and briefly why you need this assistance. You may also want to write the explanation down ahead of time.

**Practice your plan.** Identify any problems or obstacles you may experience. Have the members of your network practice how to help you. You will find that as you and your networks practice, all of you will find problems and solutions you have not thought of before.

**Review and revise your plan regularly,** or as your condition changes. Your networks should help in this review as well.

How well you prepare, and how effectively you practice, before a disaster occurs will determine how successfully you respond to and recover from the situation.

**Now, learn more about—**

**Your Personal Support Networks | Your Disaster Supplies Kit | Considerations for Caregivers**



This page was last updated on August 18, 2006.