

# Getting Ready for Emergencies

## For People with Disabilities



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

Emergencies happen. It can be a tornado, house fire, flood, bombing, or many other things. Everyone should take steps to be ready when disaster strikes, but people with disabilities have special needs to plan for to stay safe.

Being ready takes 3 steps:

1. Make a plan.
2. Prepare an emergency kit.
3. Listen for information when an emergency happens.

You know best your abilities and needs during and after an emergency. This guide can also be used by caregivers to plan for someone else.

### 1. Make a plan

You can prepare for emergencies by planning ahead with your family and/or caregiver. As you plan, think about these things:

- Know what kinds of emergencies could happen in your area.
- Know the resources and assistance available in your area.
- Find out how local authorities will warn you of a disaster.
- Include in your plan your needs for:
  - Evacuating your home or workplace, if needed
  - Supplies if you need to stay home for a while (shelter in place)
  - Supplies, equipment, and assistance you will need if you must go to a shelter
  - Transportation
  - Water and power
  - Caring for a service animal
- Assess your personal needs for supplies and assistance before, during, and after an emergency. Use the worksheets on the following pages to help you.



## Identify your support network

Include a minimum of 3 people. Think of roommates, relatives, neighbors, friends, or co-workers.

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Assess your needs

Use the following questions to help you to identify what your needs may be in an emergency. Peoples needs vary, so not all sections may apply to you.

### Personal Care

#### Do you need help with personal care, such as bathing and grooming?

- My abilities today:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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#### Do you use adaptive devices to help you get dressed? To prepare or eat food?

- Adaptive equipment I use today:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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#### What will you do if water service is cut off or if you are unable to heat water?

- My water needs now:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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**Do you use a shower chair, tub transfer bench, or other similar equipment?**

- Equipment I use today:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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**Power Needs**

**How will you use equipment that runs on electricity – such as dialysis machines, electrical lifts, and power chairs – if there is a power outage? Is there an option that doesn't need power?**

- Equipment I use today:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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**Do you have a back-up power supply?**

- Yes \_\_\_\_ or No \_\_\_\_
- If yes, what is it for and how long does it last?

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**Transportation and Evacuation**

**Do you need a specially equipped vehicle or accessible transportation?**

- My transportation needs today:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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**How will you get groceries, medicines, and medical supplies if people can't reach you?**

- How I get these things now:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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**Do you need help to leave your home or workplace?**

- How I am able to leave now:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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**Are there other exits you can use if the elevator in your building is not working?**

- Options for exiting the building other than the elevator:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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**What will you do if the building ramps have been damaged and can't be used?**

- Options if the ramps can't be used:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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## Service Animals

### Will you be able to care for your animal during and after an emergency?

- Care needs my service animal needs:

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- Help or things I may need in an emergency:

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## Putting Your Plan Together

Use the answers to these questions to make a list of things you need to gather, buy, or arrange for. Consider the following as you prepare:

- What supplies or equipment did you identify that you will need? Are there programs in your community that can provide it or help you cover the cost?
- Make a plan for someone to help during an emergency. This person will need to get into your home and know how to provide care.
- If there is a power outage, how will you connect and start a backup supply for essential medical equipment?
- If you use a power wheelchair, consider having a manual wheelchair as a backup.
- Store back-up equipment at a neighbors/friends/family members or at school or work.
- Plan for someone to convey information if you are vision impaired, deaf, or hard of hearing.
- If you use a personal care attendant, see if their agency has special services for emergencies.
- Wear a medical alert tag or bracelet that lists your health care needs.
- For those who need dialysis or other life-sustaining treatment, know the location of more than one facility where you can get care.
- Consider getting a medical alert system to call for help if you can't move.
- Let emergency responders know what your needs are ahead of time. Many Ohio cities and counties have a system to let you register your special needs with local emergency services.

## Caring for Pets and Service Animals

- Make a supply kit for your pet or service animal. It may include food, water, medicine, a carrier, leash, litter (for cats), vet records, and any needed identification. Service dogs often have a special vest, harness or collar.
- Be prepared to bring your pet with you or arrange ahead of time someone to care for or evacuate your pets if you are unable to do so. Service dogs should be allowed at any shelter with their owner, by law.
- Keep your pets' vaccines up to date and keep their tags on their collars.

## 4. Prepare an emergency kit

Keep emergency supplies in a container that you can take with you if you need to leave home, such as a large bag or plastic container. Check your supplies every few months for freshness.

- 3 day supply of non-perishable food
- Manual can opener
- 3 day supply of water: 1 gallon per person per day
- Portable, battery-powered radio, or TV with extra batteries
- Extra battery backup for your cell phone
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Sanitation and hygiene items
- Plastic sheeting and duct-tape
- Matches in waterproof containers
- Extra clothing and blankets
- Copies of important documents, your ID, and credit cards
- Cash and coins
- Special need items: medicine, medical devices, eye glasses, contact lens solution, hearing aid batteries, etc.
- Laminated numbers of who you may need to call for an emergency
- Any special supplies from your plan
- A list of equipment you need to take with you if you need to leave your home

## 5. Listen for information when an emergency happens

Local and state officials have plans to protect the public. Stay calm and listen for reports on the television, radio or Internet. Have a radio with extra 5 batteries in case there is no electricity. If there is limited communication, you may need to decide what is best for you and your family.

### Learn more

#### **Disability Rights Ohio - Resource Center**

[www.disabilityrightsohio.org/resource-center](http://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/resource-center)

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

Emergency Readiness for People with Disabilities

[www.cdc.gov/features/emergencypreparedness](http://www.cdc.gov/features/emergencypreparedness)

#### **Ready.gov - Individuals with Disabilities**

[www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs](http://www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs)

Sources: Ohio Disability and Health Program; Ready Now, Oregon Health and Science University; Federal Emergency Management Agency; Ready.gov.

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**Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.