



# 8 Ways People with Disabilities Can Become More Disaster Resilient

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Everyone has unique needs that require personal planning before disasters. For people with disabilities and those with caregivers, it is crucial to consider everyday needs and individual circumstances that will require heightened attention during disasters.

Here are eight recommended actions that you and other individuals with disabilities can take to prepare for emergencies and disasters:

## 1 - Create a support network.

- **Ensure your preparedness plan is inclusive and factors in the range of needs within your household.** Keep a contact list of people familiar with your situation who can best help you in a disaster, such as medical providers, social workers, alternative caregivers and family members. Store the contact list in a watertight container or sealable plastic bag in your emergency kit or on your electronic devices.

## 2 - Speak with your medical provider in advance.

- **Know how to meet your personal medical needs in the face of uncertainty.** Consult with your physician to find out the best ways to get refills from different locations other than the pharmacy you usually rely on and ensure caregivers are allowed to pick up medications in your name. In addition, talk to your healthcare provider about how to access an emergency supply of medications if you must quickly evacuate from a disaster.
- **Ensure your medical records are accessible.** Keep a list of information about your treatment facility, medications and dosages in your emergency kit. Add pertinent medical information to your electronic devices for quick access by emergency personnel, if necessary. You can also use the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' online tool](#) and other patient-facing sources to locate and access your electronic health records from various sources.

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- **Wear medical alert tags or bracelets.** Wear medical alert tags or bracelets in case you are rendered unconscious.
- **Carry printed cards or store information on your devices.** This helps to inform first responders and others how to communicate with you if you rely on alternative means of communication, such as sign language or visual prompts.
- **Plan for assistive technologies.** Plan how you will evacuate with assistive technologies and determine how you will replace equipment if lost or destroyed.
- **Contact your local emergency management agencies for accessibility needs.** Many cities and county emergency management agencies have registries for people with disabilities. These allow individuals to self-identify and receive targeted assistance during emergencies and disasters. While these registries can be helpful, it's still important for each person to stay alert and prepared in other ways, such as those listed here. Contact your local emergency management office for more information.

## 3 - Plan for power outages.

- **Consider additional power sources and options.** Make sure you have a charger with your electronic devices, with portable or solar-powered chargers being ideal backups during power outages.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider in advance so you know what to do if you lose power.** Power outages can cause problems such as refrigerated insulin going bad and dialysis centers being unable to help people on kidney dialysis. If you're getting life-sustaining medical treatment, know the location and availability of more than one facility that can help you if you use medical equipment that needs electricity. In many locations, utility companies offer priority power restoration services to eligible households.

## 4 - Consider transportation.

- **Plan for accessible transportation in advance.** Some accessible transportation companies need at least 24 hours or more of advanced notice to assist you. With enough advanced notice, you can plan for accessible

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transportation you may need for evacuation or getting around during or after a disaster. Check with local transit providers and your emergency management agency in your area to identify appropriate accessible options.

## 5 - Stay informed.

- **Reach out to local emergency officials.** Contact your local emergency management office to find out if your city or county maintains emergency contact lists for people with disabilities who self-identify to receive targeted assistance such as welfare check-ins and food or water deliveries during emergencies and disasters.
- **Know what [disasters](#) could affect your area.** It's important to know which disasters will require [evacuation](#) and when to [shelter in place](#).
- **Tune in for new information.** Keep a [NOAA Weather Radio](#) broadcasting channel tuned to your local emergency station to monitor TV or radio broadcasts. You can find your local emergency station by visiting [NWR Station Search \(weather.gov\)](#). Follow [mobile alerts](#) and warnings about severe weather in your area.
- **[Download the FEMA App](#).** Get weather alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five different locations anywhere in the United States.

## 6 - Know what to do in new environments.

During a disaster, you may not have control over your environment. Keep these questions in mind when making preparations.

- **What are your daily needs?** It's crucial to plan for your daily needs and know what you would do if they become limited or unavailable.
- **Does anyone in your household have difficulty in unfamiliar or chaotic environments?** Be prepared to educate first responders on these unique needs. Having comfort items like favorite pillows, toys or coloring books can help maintain a calm environment during stressful situations.

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- **Do you have a plan in place for your service or support animal?** You will need to plan for food, water and supplies for your service or support animal. You may have to educate other shelter residents and staff on the important role your animal plays in supporting you.

## 7 - Build an emergency kit.

- Your **emergency kit** should include unique items to meet your needs or a family member's individual needs in various emergencies. Keep the kits stored in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supplies kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers such as plastic bins or a duffel bag in an easily accessible location. Your kit should include items unique to you, such as medicine, backup batteries for your medical devices, what you need to safely transfer, and items required to answer the call of nature.
- **Consider what you will need to manage medical symptoms.** Review these two preparedness resources for more information on what to include: a checklist for caregivers and a checklist for people with disabilities.

## 8 - Protect your life-sustaining benefits and resources.

- **Sign up for electronic delivery.** A disaster can disrupt mail service for days or weeks. If you depend on Social Security or other regular benefits, switching to electronic payments is an easy way to protect yourself financially before disaster strikes. It also eliminates the risk of stolen checks.
- **The U.S. Department of the Treasury recommends two safer ways to get federal benefits:**
  - Direct deposit to a checking or savings account. If you get federal benefits you can sign up by calling 800-333-1795 or [sign up online](#).
  - The Direct Express® prepaid debit card is designed as a safe and easy alternative to paper checks. Call toll-free at 877-212-9991 or [sign up online](#).

If you have a disability or are a caregiver, visit [People with Disabilities on Ready.gov](#) to learn more.