



# If there's an emergency will you **Be Prepared?**

What You Need To Know About Personal Preparedness



# NASA

Know Your Stuff

# Be Prepared



## Special Needs



# Special Needs

## Important Facts

- **54 million people in the United States have special needs.**
- **61 percent of people with disabilities have not made plans to quickly and safely evacuate their homes.**
- **Only 24 percent of people with disabilities made emergency plan preparations specific to their disability.**

*\*Statistics provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.*

### Be Prepared

Do you have an emergency plan in place for a friend or family member with special needs? The first step is to understand the potential threats to your area and the specific needs of the individual. Making the decision to shelter-in-place or evacuate during an emergency will usually depend on personal circumstances. It is important to understand local area plans and what emergency resources are available for people with special needs. Urge the individual to check with their state or local emergency management agency to see if a special needs registry is maintained. If a registry exists, be sure your friends or family members with special needs are added to the list. This will help first responders locate and provide for these individuals during an emergency.

If you currently work at NASA and have permanent or temporary special needs, be sure that you identify yourself as someone who may need assistance during an emergency. Contact the office responsible for diversity and equal opportunity at your Center to discuss setting up an individual evacuation plan tailored to your specific needs. Self identification will allow building emergency management to locate you and provide additional assistance during an emergency.

### Conduct a Needs Assessment

If you, a friend, a family member, or neighbor has special needs then take the time to complete a needs assessment so the resources needed before,

during, and after an emergency can be identified. When completing a needs assessment, consider current capabilities and additional assistance necessary should an emergency occur. Answers to questions like the ones listed below will help in designing a detailed preparedness plan.

- Does the individual need assistance with personal care, such as bathing or getting dressed?
- Does the individual use specialized equipment, such as a wheelchair, shower chair, oxygen, etc.?
- What is the individual's means of transportation? Does the individual use a specially equipped vehicle or other accessible transportation?
- Does the individual need mobility aids such as ramps?
- Are evacuation markings clearly labeled in the individual's home and work place?
- Does the individual need help leaving your home or office?
- Can the individual independently locate and shut off utilities?
- Can the individual independently operate a fire extinguisher?
- Does the individual require the assistance of a service animal?

## Emergency Notification Systems

Find out how state and local authorities will warn individuals with special needs of an emergency and how they will provide information during and after a disaster. With the wide range of technologies available, emergency messages can be delivered through devices like cell phones, pagers, satellite television/radio, landline phones, computers, personal digital assistants, and road signs. These live or prerecorded messages may be sent via audio, video, or text in multiple languages, including American Sign Language and braille. Be sure to check with your state or local emergency management agency to find out what types of emergency notification systems are available in the community.

NASA uses a variety of audio, visual, and other technologies to communicate emergencies to Center personnel. Visit your Center's emergency management Web site or contact Center emergency management personnel for more information.



## Create a Support Network

When planning for someone with special needs, it is important to establish a support network. Reach out to family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers to be part of the support network. Once this group is in place, have a frank discussion about what the specific needs and considerations are for that individual during an emergency. It is important to set the proper expectations from the very beginning to be sure the individuals in your network are willing and able to perform their roles and responsibilities. Identify and arrange for a backup person from their personal support network to check on the individual with special needs in the event of an emergency (in case the primary person you rely on is not available).

## Develop a Plan

When developing a preparedness plan for someone with special needs, be sure to include the basics like understanding the types of emergencies most prevalent in the area, having a pet preparedness plan (especially if a service animal is being used), identifying a primary and alternate out-of-area contact and be sure to have two meeting locations in case the individual has to evacuate. However, it is important to understand that people with special needs often require more detailed planning for emergencies. Depending on the specific needs of the individual, consider things like

- Having a backup power supply for special medical equipment.
- Consider getting a medical alert system that will allow you to call for help if you are immobilized in an emergency.
- Have a manual wheelchair for backup if an electric wheelchair or scooter is used.
- Store backup equipment (mobility, medical, etc.) at a neighbor's home, a school, or your workplace.
- If a personal care attendant is from an agency, check to see if the agency has special provisions for emergencies.
- If the individual lives in an apartment, be sure they identify themselves to building managers and help devise an effective emergency procedure.

# Emergency Supply Kit

Developing a supply kit for someone with special needs should include the basics like food, water, first aid kit, clothing, bedding, tools, supplies, and special items. However, depending on the needs of the individual, there may be some additional items you will want to include as part of the supply kit. Some items may include, but are not limited to

- An extra set of eyeglasses and hearing aids.
- Battery chargers and extra batteries for hearing aids, motorized wheelchairs, or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices.
- Copies of medical prescriptions, doctors' orders, and the style and serial numbers of the support devices.
- Medical alert tags or bracelets or written descriptions of your disability and support needs.
- Supplies for a service animal.
- Medical insurance cards, Medicare/Medicaid cards, physician contact information, list of allergies, and medical history.
- A list of the local nonprofit or community-based organizations that know you or assist people with access and functional needs.
- A list of personal contacts, family, and friends that may need to be contacted in an emergency.
- A laminated personal communication board should you need assistance being understood.
- If possible, extra medicine, oxygen, insulin, catheters, or other medical supplies used regularly.
- If you use a motorized wheelchair, have a lightweight manual wheelchair available for emergencies. Know the size and weight of your wheelchair, in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.
- Consider putting important information onto a portable thumb drive for easy transport in the event of evacuation.

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