

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

This booklet offers emergency preparedness tips for people with a variety of disabilities. These tips are meant to cultivate your thinking about your own preparedness planning and motivate you to act. Adapt these tips for your personal needs. Each tip sheet begins with a checklist which you can use as you complete that major activities described.

These tip sheets have a cross-disability focus. They are written for all people with disabilities including, but not limited to those with visual, hearing, cognitive, developmental, mobility, psychiatric, multiple chemical sensitivities, speech and respiratory disabilities.

- *General Tips*
- *Tips for Creating an Emergency Health Information Card*
- *Tips for Collecting Emergency Documents*

In addition, the other tips sheets written for people with specific disabilities may be helpful to you. If you have multiple disabilities or if you are an older person please be sure and review the tip sheets related to all of your limitations. For example: if you do not see well review *Tips for People with Visual Disabilities*, if you do not hear well review *Tips for People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*, if you have trouble walking or getting around review *Tips for People with Mobility Disabilities*.

This fact sheet is designed to provide a checklist for activities for People with Disabilities to improve your emergency preparedness. It is designed to be used in conjunction with regular American Red Cross preparedness information and Independent Living Resource Center San Francisco's TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH A SPECIFIC DISABILITY (i.e., Mobility, Visual, Communication, Cognitive, Psychiatric, Hearing, etc.), TIPS FOR COLLECTING EMERGENCY DOCUMENTS, and TIPS FOR CREATING AN EMERGENCY HEALTH INFORMATION CARD. Without all four tip sheets, you do not have all the information you need to be prepared. Preparation may seem like a lot of work. It is. Preparing does take time and effort. So do a little at a time, as your energy and budget permit. The important thing is to start preparing. The more you do, the more confident you will be that you can protect yourself, your family, and your belongings.

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PERSONAL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

DATE COMPLETED	ACTIVITY
_____	Establish a Personal Support Network.
_____	Customize an Emergency Health Information Card.
_____	Keep copies in wallet, purse and emergency supply kits.
_____	Complete an Emergency Contact List (see Tips for Collecting Emergency Documents).
_____	Collect Emergency Documents (see Tips For Collecting Emergency Documents).
_____	Store Emergency Documents in emergency supply kits, wallet, safe deposit box and give copies to personal support network and out-of-area contact (see Tips for Collecting Emergency Documents).
_____	Conduct an Ability Self-Assessment.
_____	Collect 'Carry-With-You' Supplies to keep with you at all times.
_____	Collect Disability-Related Supplies for emergency kits.
_____	Maintain a seven day supply of Essential Medications.
_____	Keep important Equipment and Assistive Devices in consistent, convenient and secured place.
_____	Write Out Instructions for items you will need help with in an emergency.
_____	If you use a Service Animal (see Tips for Service Animal and Pet Owners).

See Additional Tip Sheets as appropriate (i.e., People with Visual Disabilities, Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Communication and Speech Related Disabilities, Psychiatric Disabilities, Developmental or Cognitive Disabilities, Mobility Disabilities, Multiple Chemical Sensitivities and People Who Use Life Support Systems).

Establish a Personal Support Network

A personal support network is made up individuals who will check with you in an emergency to ensure you are o.k. and to give assistance if needed. This network can consist of friends, roommates, family members, relatives, personal attendants, co-workers and neighbors.

Some people rely on personal assistance services (attendants). This type of assistance may not be available after a major quake. Therefore it is vital that your personal support network consist of different people than those who are your personal attendants. If you employ a personal attendant or use the services of a home health agency or other type of in home service, discuss with these people a plan for what you will do in case of an emergency. How will you get along in an emergency for as long as 7 days? A critical element to consider in your emergency planning is the establishment of a personal support network.

Even if you do not use a personal attendant, it is important to consider having a personal support network to assist you in coping with an emergency. Do not depend on any one person. Work out support relationships with several individuals. Identify a minimum of three people at each location where you regularly spend a significant part of your week: job, home, school, volunteer site, etc.

In spite of your best planning, sometimes a personal support network must be created on the spot. For example you may find yourself in a shelter and needing to assemble help for immediate assistance. Think about what you will need, how you want it done and what kind of person you would select.

Seven Important Items for Your Personal Support Network:

- *Make arrangements, prior to an emergency, for your support network to immediately check on you after a quake and, if needed, offer assistance.*
- *Exchange important keys.*
- *Show where you keep emergency supplies.*
- *Share copies of your relevant emergency documents, evacuation plans and emergency health information card.*
- *Agree and practice a communications system regarding how to contact each other in an emergency. Do not count on the telephones working.*
- *You and your personal support network should always notify each other when you are going out of town and when you will return.*
- *The relationship should be mutual. Learn about each other's needs and how to help each other in an emergency. You could be responsible for food supplies and preparation, organizing neighborhood watch meetings, interpreting, etc.*

Traveling

When staying in hotels/motels identify yourself to registration desk staff as a person who will need assistance in an emergency and state the type of assistance you may need.

Health Card

- An emergency health information card communicates to rescuers what they need to know about you if they find you unconscious or incoherent, or if they need to quickly help evacuate you.
- An emergency health information card should contain information about medications, equipment you use, allergies and sensitivities, communication difficulties you may have, preferred treatment, treatment-medical providers, and important contact people.
- Make multiple copies of this card to keep in emergency supply kits, car, work, wallet (behind driver's license or primary identification card), wheelchair pack, etc.

Emergency Contact List

- Ask several relatives or friends who live outside your immediate area (approximately 100 miles away) to act as a clearing house for information about you and your family after an earthquake or other emergency. It is often easier to place an out of state long distance call from a disaster area, than to call within the area. All family members should know to call the contact person to report their location and condition. Once contact is made, have the contact person relay messages to your other friends and relatives outside the disaster area. This will help to reduce calling into and out of the affected area once the phones are working. (See attached worksheet.)
- Besides emergency out-of-town contacts, list should include personal support network, equipment vendors, doctors, utility companies, employers, schools, day care centers, for other family or household members.

Emergency Documents

(includes important information typically needed after a disaster).

- Store emergency documents in your home emergency supply kits. Copies of life saving information (i.e., specifications for adaptive equipment or medical devices should be in all of your emergency kits and medication lists should be on your health card) should be stored in all of your emergency kits. Other emergency documents should be kept together with your home emergency pack - family records, wills, deeds, social security number, charge and bank accounts, etc., for access in an emergency. These should be stored in sealed freezer bags with copy sent to out-of-state contacts.

Additional Tip Sheets are available to cover above topics in more detail.

Conduct an "Ability Self-Assessment"

Evaluate your capabilities, limitations and needs, as well as your surroundings to determine what type of help you will need in an emergency.

1. Will you be able to independently shut off the necessary utilities (gas, water, electricity)?

_____ Do you know where shut-off valves are? Can you get to them?

_____ Can you find and use the right wrench to turn those handles?

2. Can you operate a fire extinguisher?

_____ Have you practiced?

_____ Will extended handles make these

_____ items usable for you?

3. Will you be able to carry your evacuation kit?

_____ What do you need to do, in order to carry it; how much can you carry regularly; do you have duplicates at other locations?

4. Have you moved or secured large objects that might block your escape path?

5. Write instructions for the following (keep a copy and share a copy with your personal support network):

_____ How to turn off utilities; color-code or label these for quick identification.

Main gas valve, located next to the meter - blue; Electrical power circuit breaker box - red; and Main water valve - green.

_____ If you have a reduced or limited sense of smell, alert your personal support network to check gas leaks.

_____ How to operate and safely move your essential equipment. Consider attaching simple to read and understand instructions to your equipment.

_____ How to safely transport you if you need to be carried, and include any areas of vulnerability.

_____ How to provide personal assistance services.

_____ Remind anyone who assists you to practice strict cleanliness and keep fingers out of mouth.

With limited water and increased health hazards, the possibility of infection increases. Keep a supply of latex gloves in your emergency supply kit and ask people assisting you with personal hygiene to use them.

_____ List all personal care assistance needs (dressing, bathing, etc.) with instructions on how best to assist you.

_____ Make a map of where to find medications, aids and supplies. Share with your personal support network.

_____ How Will You Evacuate. Be aware of barriers and possible hazards to a clear path of exit. Change what you are able to change (clear obstacles from aisles; secure large, heavy items such as bookcases that may fall to block your path). Plan alternate exit paths.

Communication: Practice Assertiveness Skills

Take charge and practice how to quickly explain to people how to move your mobility aids or how to move you safely and rapidly. Be prepared to give clear, specific and concise instructions and directions to rescue personnel, i.e., "take my oxygen tank," "take my wheelchair," "take my gamma globulin from the freezer," "take my insulin from the refrigerator," "take my communication device from under the bed." Practice giving these instructions with the least amount of words in the least amount of time. For example: the traditional "fire fighter's carry" may be hazardous for some people with some respiratory weakness. You need to be able to give brief instructions regarding how to move you.

Be prepared to request an accommodation from disaster personnel. For example, if you are unable to wait in long lines for extended periods of time, for such items as water, food, and disaster relief applications, practice clearly and concisely explaining why you cannot wait in the line.

Carry-On/Carry-With-You' Supplies

Supplies to Keep with You at All Times

1. Emergency Health Information Card.
2. Instructions on personal assistance needs and how best to provide them.
3. Copy of Emergency Documents.
4. Essential medications/copies of prescriptions (at least a week's supply).
5. Flashlight on key ring.
6. Signaling device (whistle, beeper, bell, screecher).
7. Small battery-operated radio and extra batteries.

Packing/Container suggestions: a fanny pack, back pack or drawstring bag which can be hung from a wheelchair, scooter or other assistive device.

Disability-Related Supplies to Add to Regular Emergency Kits

Store supplies in areas you anticipate will be easy to reach after a quake.

Others may be able to share traditional emergency supplies, but you need these - store on top and in separate labeled bag! If you have to leave something behind, make sure you get these.

Plan for enough disability-related supplies for up to two weeks (medication syringes, colostomy, respiratory, catheter, padding, distilled water, etc.). If you have a respiratory, cardiac or multiple chemical sensitivities condition, store towels, masks, industrial respirators or other supplies you can use to filter your air supply. Do not expect shelters or first aid stations to meet your supply needs. In an emergency supplies will be limited.

If you are unable to afford extra supplies consider contacting one of the many disability-specific organizations such as the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Arthritis Foundation, United Cerebral Palsy Association, etc. These organizations may be able to assist you in gathering extra low cost or no cost emergency supplies or medications.

Medication

It is best to maintain at least a 7 to 14 day supply of essential medications (heart, blood pressure, birth control, diabetic, psychiatric orphan drugs, etc.) and keep this supply with you at all times. If this is not possible, even maintaining a three day supply would be extremely helpful.

Work with your doctor(s) to obtain an extra supply of medications, as well as extra copies of prescriptions. Ask if it would be safe to go without one dosage periodically, until an adequate supply has been accumulated? Make several copies of your prescriptions and put one copy in each of your survival kits, car kit, wallet, with your Emergency Documents and your evacuation plan.

Ask your provider or pharmacist about the shelf life and storage temperature sensitivities of your medication. Ask how often you should rotate stored medication to ensure that the effectiveness of the medication does not weaken due to excess storage time. If you are on medications which are administered to you by a clinic or hospital (such as methadone, or chemo or radiation therapy) ask your provider how you should plan for a 3 - 14 day disruption.

If you are a smoker, be aware that smoking will not be allowed in shelters. If getting to an outside smoking area may be difficult for you, consider stocking your evacuation kit with nicotine gum or patches available by prescriptions.

Life in cramped, unheated shelters can increase the chances of pneumonia, influenza and colds. Therefore, equip your kits with any vitamins or medications you take to guard against getting sick and to cope with being sick.

Equipment and Assistive Devices

Keep important equipment and assistive devices in a consistent, convenient and secured place, so you can quickly and easily locate them after the shaking. Make sure these items such as teeth, hearing aids, prothesis, mobility aid, cane, crutches, walker, respirator, service animal harness, augmentative communication device or electronic communicator, artificial larynx, wheelchair, sanitary aids, batteries, eye glasses, contacts including cleaning solutions, etc., are secured. For example: keep hearing aid, eye glasses, etc, in a container by bedside which is attached to night stand or bed post using string or velcro, oxygen tank attached to the wall, wheelchair locked and close to bed. This helps prevent them from falling, flying or rolling away during a quake.

If you use a laptop computer as a means of communication, consider purchasing a power converter. A power converter allows most laptops (12 volts or less) to run from a cigarette lighter on the dashboard of a vehicle.

Tips for Collecting Emergency Documents

DATE COMPLETED	ACTIVITIES
_____	Complete an Emergency Contact List. (See attached worksheet.)
_____	Collect Emergency Documents.
_____	Store Emergency Contact List and Documents in emergency supply kits, wallet, safe deposit box and give copies to personal support network and out of area contact.
_____	Update Every 6 Months

Emergency Documents (includes important information typically needed after a disaster).

Copies of Emergency Documents Should Include:

- Specifications for adaptive equipment (in case it needs to be replaced)
- Proof of ownership or lease of your residence. (This is important when applying for disaster assistance after an emergency.)*
- Social security numbers of family members.*
- Vehicle, boats, etc. make, identification and license numbers.*
- Charge and bank account numbers.*
- Insurance policy numbers.*
- Securities, deeds and loan numbers including company name, address and telephone numbers.*
- Will/living trust and letter of instructions.*
- Photos or video of all valuables for documentation of insurance claim. (This inventory should be backed up on disk if it is on computer. Consider documenting your inventory by going through your areas with a video or camera and capture all your possessions on film.)*
- Important business documents.*
- Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates).*
- List style and serial numbers of medical devices such as pacemakers.

** Store these documents only in your home emergency supply kit.*

Storage of Emergency Documents

- Store Emergency Contact List and Emergency Documents in a tightly sealed freezer bag in emergency supplies. Send a copy to an out of state contact and keep another copy in safety deposit box.
- Store additional copies of Emergency Contact List and all Emergency Documents (except for those followed by an *):
 - In Emergency Carry With You Supply Kits;
 - In your wallet;
 - With your personal support network.

Update Every Six Months

- Emergency Health Information Card
- Emergency Contact List

An easy way to keep your documents up-to-date is to schedule reviewing and updating your information on the same day clocks are set forward or back for Daylight Savings Time.

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

Out-Of-Town Emergency Contacts

First person reached needs to call others on this list, listed in priority order.

Contact 1:

_____ Contact Name
_____ Home Phone
_____ Work Phone
_____ Pager
_____ Fax
_____ Cellular
_____ E-Mail Address

Contact 2:

_____ Contact Name
_____ Home Phone
_____ Work Phone
_____ Pager
_____ Fax
_____ Cellular
_____ E-Mail Address

Contact 3:

_____ Contact Name
_____ Home Phone
_____ Work Phone
_____ Pager
_____ Fax
_____ Cellular
_____ E-Mail Address

Possible Evacuation/Shelter sites

Outside neighborhood but within local area, listed in priority order.

Site 1:

_____ Address
_____ Telephone
_____ Alternate Phone
_____ Pager
_____ Fax
_____ Cellular
_____ E-Mail Address

Site 2:

_____ Address
_____ Telephone
_____ Alternate Phone
_____ Pager
_____ Fax
_____ Cellular
_____ E-Mail Address

Site 3:

_____ Address
_____ Telephone
_____ Alternate Phone
_____ Pager
_____ Fax
_____ Cellular
_____ E-Mail Address

Other important contacts:

Personal support network

Equipment vendors

Utility companies

Animal Control Center

Veterinarian

Out of home contacts for each household member:

Employer

Children schools, day care centers, etc

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