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# Disaster Preparedness Kit

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The contents of this booklet are all available in the public domain and have been compiled together here for ease of use and wider dissemination in hopes that you will not only read what is contained, but you will act on it as well.

It is our sincere wish that this booklet provides you with a better understanding of how important it is to be prepared before a disaster strikes.

**Special Thanks!** Goes out to The American Red Cross Organization. The Humane Society of the United States, and FEMA which developed the “**Family Disaster Plan**”. They are truly making the world a better place to live for millions worldwide.

The Information in this guide was collected and compiled by Rod Purnell who has faithfully served the United States Navy as an Active Duty Hospital Corpsman for over 15 years.

He is both owner and webmaster of **The Military Entrepreneur** which is dedicated to helping Military Members and their Families discover how they too can develop their own online presence and earn extra income while still serving their country.

We hope you will enjoy reading and learning from this material.

Best Wishes,

*Rod Purnell*



<http://www.militaryentrepreneur.com>

**SPECIAL NOTE:**

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## **Disaster Planning Guide**

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services--water, gas, electricity or telephones--were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away.

# Four Steps to Safety

## Find Out What Could Happen to You

- Contact your local Red Cross chapter or emergency management office before a disaster occurs--be prepared to take notes.
- Ask what types of disasters are most likely to happen. Request information on how to prepare for each.
- Learn about your community's warning signals: what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
- Ask about animal care after a disaster. Animals are not allowed inside emergency shelters because of health regulations.
- Find out how to help elderly or disabled persons, if needed.
- Find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or day care center, and other places where your family spends time.

## Create a Disaster Plan

- Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, severe weather, and earthquakes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.
- Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.
- Pick two places to meet:
  1. Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
  2. Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone must know the address and phone number.

- Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your contact's phone number.
- Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets.

## Complete This Checklist

### Home Hazard Hunt

- In a disaster, ordinary items in the home can cause injury and damage. Anything that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire is a potential hazard.
- Repair defective electrical wiring and leaky gas connections.
- Fasten shelves securely.
- Place large, heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Hang pictures and mirrors away from beds.
- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Secure water heater. Strap to wall studs.
- Repair cracks in ceilings or foundations.
- Store weed killers, pesticides, and flammable products away from heat sources.
- Place oily polishing rags or waste in covered metal cans.
- Clean and repair chimneys, flue pipes, vent connectors, and gas vents.

- Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.).
- Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.
- Show each family member how and when to turn off the utilities (water, gas, and electricity) at the main switches.
- Check if you have adequate insurance coverage.
- Get training from the fire department for each family member on how to use the fire extinguisher (ABC type), and show them where it's kept.
- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms.
- Conduct a home hazard hunt.

- Stock emergency supplies and assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.
- Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room.
- Find the safe places in your home for each type of disaster.

## **Practice and Maintain Your Plan**

- Quiz your kids every six months or so.
- Conduct fire and emergency evacuations.
- Replace stored water and stored food every six months.
- Test and recharge your fire extinguisher(s) according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

## **Neighbors Helping Neighbors**

Working with neighbors can save lives and property. Meet with your neighbors to plan how the neighborhood could work together after a disaster until help arrives. If you're a member of a neighborhood organization, such as a home association or crime watch group, introduce disaster preparedness as a new activity. Know your neighbors' special skills (e.g., medical, technical) and consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as disabled and elderly persons. Make plans for child care in case parents can't get home.

## **If Disaster Strikes**

Remain calm and patient. Put your plan into action.

## **Check for Injuries**

Give first aid and get help for seriously injured people.

## **Listen to Your Battery-Powered Radio for News and Instructions**

### **Check for Damage in Your Home...**

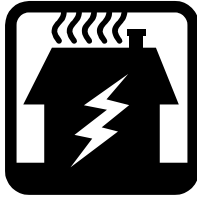
Use flashlights. Do not light matches or turn on electrical switches, if you suspect damage.

Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly. Shut off any other damaged utilities. (You will need a professional to turn gas back on.)

Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline, and other flammable liquids immediately.

### **Remember to...**

- Confine or secure your pets.
- Call your family contact--do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.
- Check on your neighbors, especially elderly or disabled persons.
- Make sure you have an adequate water supply in case service is cut off.
- Stay away from downed power lines.



## Your Disaster Preparedness Kit



There are six basics you should stock for your home: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies, and special items. Keep the items that you would most likely need during an evacuation in an easy-to carry container--suggested items are marked with an asterisk(\*). Possible containers include a large, covered trash container, a camping backpack, or a duffle bag.

### **Water**

Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people will need more.

Store one gallon of water per person per day.

Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for each person in your household for food preparation/sanitation).\*

### **Food**

Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Select food items that are compact and lightweight. Include a selection of the following foods in your Disaster Supplies Kit:

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables
- Canned juices
- Staples (salt, sugar, pepper, spices, etc.)
- High energy foods
- Vitamins
- Food for infants
- Comfort/stress foods

### **First Aid Kit**

Assemble a first aid kit for your home and one for each car.

- (20) adhesive bandages, various sizes.
- 5" x 9" sterile dressing.
- conforming roller gauze bandage.
- triangular bandages.
- 3 x 3 sterile gauze pads.
- 4 x 4 sterile gauze pads.
- roll 3" cohesive bandage.
- germicidal hand wipes or waterless alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- (6) antiseptic wipes.
- pair large medical grade non-latex gloves.
- Adhesive tape, 2" width.
- Anti-bacterial ointment.
- Cold pack.
- Scissors (small, personal).
- Tweezers.

- CPR breathing barrier, such as a face shield.
- Non-Prescription Drugs
- Aspirin or nonaspirin pain reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid (for stomach upset)
- Syrup of Ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center)
- Laxative
- Activated charcoal (use if advised by the Poison Control Center)

### **Tools and Supplies**

- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils\*
- Emergency preparedness manual\*
- Battery-operated radio and extra batteries\*
- Flashlight and extra batteries\*
- Cash or traveler's checks, change\*
- Non-electric can opener, utility knife\*
- Fire extinguisher: small canister ABC type
- Tube tent
- Pliers
- Tape
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Needles, thread
- Medicine dropper
- Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water
- Whistle
- Plastic sheeting

- Map of the area (for locating shelters)
- Sanitation
- Toilet paper, towelettes\*
- Soap, liquid detergent\*
- Feminine supplies\*
- Personal hygiene items\*
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses)
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Disinfectant
- Household chlorine bleach
- Clothing and Bedding
- \*Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person.
- Sturdy shoes or work boots\*
- Rain gear\*
- Blankets or sleeping bags\*
- Hat and gloves
- Thermal underwear
- Sunglasses
- Special Items

Remember family members with special requirements, such as infants and elderly or disabled persons

**For Baby\***

- Formula
- Diapers
- Bottles
- Powdered milk
- Medications

**For Adults\***

- Heart and high blood pressure medication

- Insulin
- Prescription drugs
- Denture needs
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Extra eye glasses
- Entertainment

### **Games and books**

- Important Family Documents
- Keep these records in a waterproof, portable container:
- Will, insurance policies, contracts deeds, stocks and bonds
- Passports, social security cards, immunization records
- Bank account numbers
- Credit card account numbers and companies
- Inventory of valuable household goods, important telephone numbers
- Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)
- Store your kit in a convenient place known to all family members. Keep a smaller version of the supplies kit in the trunk of your car.

Keep items in airtight plastic bags. Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh. Replace your stored food every six months. Re-think your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update clothes, etc.

Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.

## **Children & Disasters**

Disasters may strike quickly and without warning. These events can be frightening for adults, but they are traumatic for children if they don't know what to do.

During a disaster, your family may have to leave your home and daily routine. Children may become anxious, confused, or frightened. It is important to give children guidance that will help them reduce their fears.

### **Children and Their Response to Disaster**

Children depend on daily routines: They wake up, eat breakfast, go to school, play with friends. When emergencies or disasters interrupt this routine, children may become anxious.

In a disaster, they'll look to you and other adults for help. How you react to an emergency gives them clues on how to act. If you react with alarm, a child may become more scared. They see our fear as proof that the danger is real. If you seem overcome with a sense of loss, a child may feel their losses more strongly. Children's fears also may stem from their imagination, and you should take these feelings seriously. A child who feels afraid is afraid. Your words and actions can provide reassurance. When talking with your child, be sure to present a realistic picture that is both honest and manageable.

Feelings of fear are healthy and natural for adults and children. But as an adult, you need to keep control of the situation. When you're sure that danger has passed, concentrate on your child's emotional needs by asking the child what's uppermost in his or her mind. Having children participate in the family's recovery activities will help them feel that their life will return to "normal." Your response during this time may have a lasting impact.

Be aware that after a disaster, children are most afraid that--

- The event will happen again.
- Someone will be injured or killed.
- They will be separated from the family.
- They will be left alone.

## **Advice to Parents:**

### **Prepare for Disaster**

You can create a Family Disaster Plan and practice it so that everyone will remember what to do when a disaster does occur.

Contact your local emergency management or civil defense office, or your local Red Cross chapter for materials that describe how your family can create a disaster plan. Everyone in the household, including children, should play a part in the family's response and recovery efforts.

Teach your child how to recognize danger signals. Make sure your child knows what smoke detectors, fire alarms and local community warning systems (horns, sirens) sound like.

Explain how to call for help. Teach your child how and when to call for help. Check the telephone directory for local emergency phone numbers and post these phone numbers by all telephones. If you live in a 9-1-1 service area, tell your child to call 9-1-1. Even very young children can be taught how and when to call for emergency assistance.

Help your child memorize important family information. Children should memorize their family name, address and phone number. They should also know where to meet in case of an emergency. Some children may not be old enough to memorize the information. They could carry a small index card that lists emergency information to give to an adult or babysitter.

## **After the Disaster: Time for Recovery**

Immediately after the disaster, try to reduce your child's fear and anxiety. Keep the family together. While you look for housing and assistance, you may want to leave your children with relatives or friends. Instead, keep the family together as much as possible and make children a part of what you are doing to get the family back on its feet. Children get anxious, and they'll worry that their parents won't return.

Calmly and firmly explain the situation. As best as you can, tell children what you know about the disaster. Explain what will happen next. For example, say, "Tonight, we will all stay together in the shelter." Get down to the child's eye level and talk to him or her.

Encourage children to talk. Let children talk about the disaster and ask questions as much as they want. Encourage children to describe what they're feeling. Listen to what they say. If possible, include the entire family in the discussion. Include children in recovery activities. Give children chores that are their responsibility. This will help children feel they are part of the recovery. Having a task will help them understand that everything will be all right.

You can help children cope by understanding what causes their anxieties and fears. Reassure them with firmness and love. Your children will realize that life will eventually return to normal. If a child does not respond to the above suggestions, seek help from a mental health specialist or a member of the clergy.

# Special Needs Section People with Disabilities and Senior's

## Introduction

Disasters can happen anytime, anywhere, and sometimes without warning. Your American Red Cross and your local government agencies will respond when a disaster threatens and after a disaster strikes. However, they can't be everywhere at once. Being ready for a disaster is a part of maintaining your independence. Although you may not know when a disaster will strike, if you are prepared ahead of time, you will be better able to cope with the disaster and recover from it more quickly.

When a disaster occurs, the first priority of disaster relief organizations and government agencies is to provide basic needs—food, water, and safe shelter—to everyone who needs them. Your personal needs, such as replacing medications, replacing adaptive equipment, restoring electricity for power-dependent equipment, and restoring your regular ways of support for daily living activities may not happen right away. It is important for everyone to be prepared to meet his or her own basic needs by storing food and water for a minimum of three days or more. You should also be ready to meet your specific disability-related needs by storing sufficient oxygen, medications, battery power, etc., for at least seven days after a disaster.

Knowing about disaster threats and their aftermath and being prepared are critical for staying self-sufficient after a disaster. This booklet covers some issues that people with disabilities may face when a disaster strikes. The booklet also has information about how you can get to a safe place and how you can meet your needs after the disaster.

The best way to cope with a disaster is to learn about the challenges you might face if you could not use your home, office, and personal belongings. You can meet your basic personal needs by preparing beforehand. You also may have to deal with a service animal that is unable to work or is frightened, or pets that need care and assistance.

## Understanding Disasters

To find the best ways to prepare for a disaster, consider the following questions:

- What kinds of disasters may occur in your area?
- How are residents informed of possible disasters?
- What are the effects of disasters on you and your community?

Contact your local American Red Cross chapter, your city/county emergency management office, or your local fire department. You can get information about the kinds of disasters that happen in your area and how often they occur. Check with your insurance agent about whether your insurance policies cover the types of disasters that can happen where you live. For example, regular insurance does not cover floods. You must have a flood insurance policy to cover flood damages.

After a disaster, your environment may be very different. Exits may be blocked, sidewalks may be impassable.

If you are prepared ahead of time, you will be better able to cope with the disaster and recover from it more quickly.



## Know the difference between a "watch" and a "warning"

The National Weather Service gives information to the public about some severe weather events, such as thunderstorms, winter storms, hurricanes, floods, flash floods, and tornadoes. Listen or watch for these terms:

*Watch:* A "watch" means that severe weather is threatening and may occur in your area. Continue to listen to the radio or watch television for information and advice.

*Warning:* A "warning" means that the event is happening *now*; it is imminent or has been seen on weather radar. This is the time to *immediately* protect yourself. Some events happen very quickly, so warnings may not be issued or you may not receive them. Always pay attention to the weather around you. Take action when you think severe weather maybe moving into your area, even if no official warning is given on the radio or television.

## **Know what your environment is likely to look like after the disaster**

Disasters have many effects. Some are predictable and others are not. You should know what can happen and what your environment may be like after the disaster. It is our goal to help you deal with the hardships of a disaster. And you can. But first we must take a realistic look at what can happen during a disaster. Consider the following circumstances:

In a disaster, roads and sidewalks may be covered by mud, water, or debris. You may not be able to tell where roads and sidewalks begin or end.



In disasters that have high winds and during earthquakes, a great deal of shaking may take place. This can break things and scatter debris. Hanging objects, such as plants, mirrors, and pictures, are likely to fall. Books may be flung from bookcases and the bookcases may fall. In your office, file cabinets, computers, and other unsecured items may fall.

Acoustical ceiling tiles and all of the dust behind them may drop. Large and heavy furniture, such as couches, chairs, beds, and dressers, may move and block your pathway completely or in part.

Floods, earthquakes, and winter storms can cause sidewalks and roadways to crack or become impassable. Roads and sidewalks may be covered by mud, water, or debris, so you may not be able to tell where they begin and end. Mud, sand, and other materials maybe left behind for long periods. In floods, the water may be moving very rapidly. This can keep you from leaving an area. There could be so much debris on the streets that it would take weeks to clear it away. This could leave you stranded at home and keep caregivers from reaching you.

Familiar landmarks you use to help guide you may move or be destroyed, both indoors and out.

If you have a service animal, such as a guide dog, hearing dog, or personal-care monkey, the animal may be hurt or too frightened to work after a disaster. Your home may be destroyed or isolated. Or, it could have enough damage to make it unlivable for a long time.

Your usual ways of getting groceries, medications, and medical supplies may be disrupted. It may take several days before stores reopen, so you may not be able to readily replace even basic items related to your disability, like hearing-aid batteries and prescription medications.

You may not be able to carry out your daily activities as you did before the disaster.

You may have a hard time reaching or getting help from police and fire departments, ambulance services, doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, veterinarians, markets, personal assistants, and other home health providers. Utilities like electricity, water, gas, and phone service may be disrupted for a long time.

You may not be able to do the following:

- Cook.
- Cool or heat your home.
- Make or receive phone calls to or from your doctor, fire department, ambulance service, support network, and others. You may not be able to use telephone relay systems and/or teletype equipment because systems may be overloaded or destroyed.
- Light your home. You may have to move or communicate in the dark.
- Receive emergency information from your television or radio.
- Use equipment dependent on power, such as battery chargers, oxygen, suction devices, or home dialysis equipment.
- Access cash through an automatic teller machine (ATM). Also, banks may be closed.
- Fill vehicles with gas since pumps may not be working.

## **Know some other effects of a disaster**

Public transportation may not be working. Routes and schedules may be changed. Public and private wheelchair transport services or paratransits may not be operating.

Roads may be damaged or blocked. Road signs may be down. Traffic lights and walking signals used to cross the street may not be working properly, or at all. This can disrupt cues used to cross the street. Travel time may be longer because of detours and added traffic.

Noisy surroundings, like a shelter, may interfere with how well your hearing aid functions. Also, the vibratory cues you are used to may be disturbed. A noisy environment can be very disorienting for people with visual impairments, as well.

You may need temporary housing for pets.

## **Know how disaster-related stress may affect your disability**

Experiencing a disaster can be overwhelming. Stress makes many medical conditions worse. Everyone affected by a disaster may experience one or several of the following symptoms:

### **Psychological and Emotional**

- Anxiety
- Irritability, restlessness, over excitability
- Depression, moodiness, crying
- Anger, blaming
- Feelings of apathy, diminished interest in usual activities
- Feelings of isolation, detachment, estrangement
- Feelings of guilt about surviving
- Denial or constriction of feelings
- Flashbacks or unwelcome memories of the disaster
- An exaggerated reaction to being startled
- Recurrent nightmares about the disaster or about other traumatic events
- Inability to fall or stay asleep
- Sleeping excessively

### **Thought**

- Poor concentration
- Mental confusion
- Slowness of thought
- Inability to express yourself verbally or in writing
- Forgetfulness
- Inability to make judgments and decisions
- Loss of ability to think of alternatives or prioritize tasks

### **Physical**

- Headaches
- Weakness

- Nausea, upset stomach, other gastrointestinal problems
- Muscle soreness
- Hot or cold spells; sweating or chills
- Numbness or tingling in body parts
- Heavy feeling in arms and/or legs
- Feeling a "lump" in your throat
- Chest pains
- Trouble catching your breath; rapid breathing
- Tremors
- Fatigue
- Increase in allergies, colds, or flu
- Heart palpitations

### **Behavior**

- Hyperactivity
- Outbursts of anger or frequent arguments
- Loss of objectivity
- Withdrawal, social isolation, distancing yourself from others
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
- Avoidance of activities or places that remind you of the disaster
- Family problems

If any of these symptoms affect your ability to function, seek medical attention from your doctor or a mental health provider familiar with the effects of disasters. Some people may never have any action. Others may have delayed reactions that can show up days, weeks, or even months after the disaster happens. Not everyone has reactions right away. These symptoms may go and then come back again when something makes you think about the disaster. After a disaster, be sure to talk to someone about how you are feeling: a member of the clergy, a counselor, or someone in the Employee Assistance Program provided by your employer. Also, the Red Cross has disaster mental health professionals who can help you deal with the stress related to your disaster experience.

Remember that service animals may also suffer emotional trauma. Get their daily routine back to normal as soon as possible. This will make it easier for them to serve you as before.

## **Know how a disaster may affect your independence**

You are used to being in a certain environment. However, a disaster can change your ability to deal with this environment. It is important that you anticipate for your lowest level of functioning for your personal disaster plan. Your condition may become worse because of physical or emotional reactions to stress. For example, people who do not need the aid of devices on a daily basis may need a wheelchair after a disaster.

After a disaster, you may need to ask for help to do things you usually would have done independently. Understandably, this may make you feel especially vulnerable. You may need help putting your home back in order, filling out forms, or providing documentation and information to disaster relief agencies. This can add to the stress you may be feeling. A personal support network that knows your needs may anticipate some of them and make your recovery easier and less stressful.

## **Know how to reduce the impact of a disaster on you**

Now that you know what may happen, what can you do to reduce the effects of the disaster and to develop a personal disaster plan?

Start by considering the following actions:

### **Creating a Personal Support Network**

A personal support network (sometimes called a self-help team, but referred to only as a "network" in this booklet) can help you prepare for a disaster. They can

do this by helping you identify and get the resources you need to cope effectively with a disaster. Your network can help you practice vital activities, like evaluating your home or workplace. Network members can also assist you after a disaster happens. You should put together your network before you assess what your needs will be during and after a disaster. First consider the ways to develop your personal support network, then go to [Completing a Personal Assessment](#) for suggestions on how you can prepare for a disaster.

Organize a network for your home, school, workplace, volunteer site and any other place where you spend a lot of time.

Organize a network for your home, school, workplace, volunteer site, and any other place where you spend a lot of time. Members of your network can be roommates, relatives, neighbors, friends, and co-workers. They should be people you trust and who could check to see if you need assistance. They should know your capabilities and needs, and offer help within minutes. Do not depend on only one person. Include a minimum of three people in your network for each location where you regularly spend a lot of time during the week.



Think of what your needs would be during a disaster and discuss these with each of your networks. Complete a written assessment of your needs with your network in the space provided in the following section. This can help your network members learn the best ways to assist you and offer additional ideas for you to think about.

Give your network members copies of your emergency information list, medical information list, disability-related supplies and special equipment list, evacuation plans, relevant emergency documents, and personal disaster plan when you complete them.

Your network should know your capabilities and needs and offer help within minutes.

Arrange with your network to check on you immediately if local officials give an evacuation order or if a disaster occurs. Do this before an emergency happens so that your network members can help you when you need them. Also, ask your network to notify you of an emergency you may not know about. For example, if a siren or loud speaker system notifies a neighborhood of a disaster and you are Deaf or have hearing loss, be sure that your network knows to give you this information. Ask them to give you any other disaster-related information that is not already in writing, such as radio information about the disaster or the location of shelters.



Agree on how you and your network will contact each other during an emergency. Do not count on the telephones working. Also, choose a signal for help that you both understand. Signals can be shouting, knocking on the wall, or using a whistle, bell, or high-pitched noisemaker. Visual signals could include hanging a sheet outside your window.

Give the members of your network all the necessary keys they may need to get into your home, car, etc.

Show your network how to operate and safely move the equipment you use for your disability, if necessary. Ask them to "practice" with any of your special equipment. This will help them feel more comfortable when using it during an emergency.

Make sure your service animal knows the people in your network. This will make it easier for the animal to accept care from someone other than yourself. Explain to your network any assistance for personal care that you may need. Give them written instructions on how best to assist you and your animals.

Label your equipment and attach instruction cards on how to use and move each item. Laminate the instruction cards for added durability.

Inform your network about any areas on your body where you have reduced feeling. Have them check these areas for injuries after a disaster if you cannot check them yourself.

Practice your plan. Based on your knowledge of the disasters in your area, simulate any problems or obstacles you may experience. Have the members of your network practice how to help you, and familiarize them with any adaptive equipment you may need.

Choose an emergency meeting place you are familiar with where you and others can reunite after exiting a building. You should select a meeting place for each area where you spend a lot of time.

Select with your network a signal that you can use to let them know you are okay and have left the site.

Give your network your travel dates if you will be traveling.

Review and revise your personal assessment and disaster plan regularly, or as your condition changes. Your network should help in this review as well. You will also find that as you and your network practice, all of you will find problems and solutions you have not thought of before.

The trusting relationship you develop with the members of your network should be mutual. Learn about each other's needs and how to assist each other during an emergency.

## **Completing a Personal Assessment**

You should decide what you will be able to do for yourself and what assistance you may need before, during, and after a disaster. This will be based on the environment after the disaster, your capabilities, and your limitations. To complete a personal assessment, make a list of your personal needs and your

resources for meeting them in a disaster environment. Consider the following information as you make your personal assessment.

Think about the following questions and note your answers in writing or record them on a tape cassette that you will share with your network. These answers should describe both your physical capabilities right now and the assistance you will need during the time that the disaster disrupts your normal routine. Base your plan on your lowest anticipated level of functioning.

Daily Living

## **Personal Care**

Do you need assistance with personal care, such as bathing and grooming? Do you use adaptive equipment to help you get dressed?

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

## **Water Service**

What will you do if water service is cut off for several days, or if you are unable to heat water?

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

## **Personal Care Equipment**

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

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

## **Adaptive Feeding Devices**

Do you use special utensils that help you prepare or eat food independently?

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

## **Electricity-Dependent Equipment**

How will you continue to use equipment that runs on electricity, such as dialysis, electrical lifts, etc.?

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Getting Around

## **Disaster Debris**

How will you cope with the debris in your home following the disaster?

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

## **Transportation**

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

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

## **Errands**

Do you need to get groceries, medications, and medical supplies? Think about what you will do if you depend on only one person to shop or run errands for

you. What if your assistant cannot reach you because roads are blocked or because the disaster has affected him or her as well?

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

Evacuating

### **Building Evacuation**

Do you need help to leave your home or office?

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

### **Building Exits**

If the elevator is not working or cannot be used, are there other exits? (Include using a window as an alternate escape.)

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

### **Getting Help**

How will you call for the help you will need to leave the building?

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

### **Mobility Aids**

What will you do if you cannot find your mobility aids, or cannot find or use equipment necessary for your service animal?

- My Capabilities Today:

- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

### **Ramp Access**

What will you do if your ramps are shaken loose or become separated from the building?

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

### **Service Animals/Pets**

Will you be able to care for your animal (provide food, shelter, veterinary attention, etc.) during and after a disaster? Do you have another caregiver for your animal if you are unable to meet its needs?

- My Capabilities Today:
- Assistance I Need Because of Disaster:

## **Personal Disaster Preparation**

How well you prepare and how much you practice before a disaster occurs will determine how successfully you deal with and recover from disasters. Your personal disaster preparation is a continuing process. It helps you and your network identify, get, develop, manage, and maintain the information and resources you will need to deal with a disaster when it happens.

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

Make a personal disaster plan. This will help you organize information you will need and activities you will do during and after a disaster. Key items in a personal disaster plan are described below. Keep copies of your disaster plan in

your disaster supplies kit, car, wallet (behind driver's license or primary identification card), wheelchair pack or at work, etc. Also, share your disaster plan with your network.

## **Emergency Information List**

Make an emergency information list that you and your network can use. This list will let others know whom to call if they find you unconscious, unable to speak, or if they need to help you evacuate quickly. Besides emergency out-of-town contacts, your list should include the names and numbers of everyone in your network.

Ask a relative or friend who lives more than 100 miles away from you to be your "contact person. " Keep in mind that a caller is more likely to connect with a long-distance number outside the disaster area than with a local number within it. In fact, all family members in a disaster area should call the contact person and give their location and condition. Once this is done, have the contact person give messages to your other friends and relatives who live outside the disaster area. This will help reduce calling into and out of the affected area once the phones are working.

If you have a communication disability, make sure your emergency information list notes the best way to communicate with you. This may be by writing notes, pointing to letters, words, or pictures, or finding a quiet place.

## **Medical Information List**

Complete a medical information list that you and your network can use. The list should have information about your medical providers. Also include the names of medications you take and their dosages, when you take a medication, the condition for which you take a medication, the name of the doctor who prescribed it, and the doctor's phone number. It is important to record any adaptive equipment you use, your allergies and sensitivities, and communication

or cognitive difficulties you may have. Keep this list attached to your emergency information list (described above).

Attach copies of health insurance cards and related information to the medical information list. Keep at least a seven-day supply of essential medications with you at all times. Work with your doctor(s) to get extra supplies of medications and extra copies of prescriptions. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about what you should do if you do not have enough medicine after a disaster and cannot immediately get what you need. Be sure you ask about the shelf life of your medications and the temperatures at which they should be stored.

Determine how often you should replace stored medication. This helps ensure that a medicine's effectiveness does not weaken because of long storage time.

**Note:** If you take medications (such as methadone, chemotherapy, or radiation therapy) administered to you by a clinic or hospital, ask your provider how you should prepare for a disruption caused by a disaster.

## What You Can Do to Prepare for a Disaster



If you are in a wheelchair when the earthquake begins, lock your wheels.

Identify safe places to go to during a disaster.

During an earthquake, get under a desk or table or cover your head and neck with a sturdy object.



*Earthquake:* Identify a sturdy table or desk to get under in each room. This is important because while the earth is shaking, the movement of the ground will probably make it difficult or impossible for you to move any distance. If you cannot safely get under a desk or table, move near an inside wall of the building and cover your head and neck as best you can. Decide how you will get there when the earthquake begins. Lock your wheels if you are in a wheelchair. In bed, pull the sheets and blankets over you and use your pillow to cover and protect your head and neck.

*Tornado:* The lowest floor or below-ground area of your home or workplace is safest. If there is no basement or you cannot get there, choose a room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet. Identify where this safe place is and how you would get there.

*Hurricane or flood:* If local officials have not told you to leave the area, stay upstairs and in the middle of the building, away from windows. Avoid going to the lowest floor because hurricanes often cause flooding. If you are Blind or visually impaired, use a long cane in areas where debris may have fallen or furniture may have shifted. This is recommended even if you do not usually use a cane indoors.

For information about how to prepare for disasters that are specific to your area, contact your local Red Cross chapter.

Keep your service animals with you in a safe place at home, or take them with you to a shelter.

Install at least one smoke detector on each level of your home, outside sleeping areas. If you are Deaf or have hearing loss, install a system that has flashing strobe lights to get your attention. If you have battery-operated detectors, replace batteries at least once a year, such as on your birthday, New Year's Day, etc. Test smoke detectors once a month by pushing the test button.

Find the location of main utility cutoff valves and switches in your home. Learn how and when to disconnect them during an emergency. Try to do this yourself (do not practice shutting off the gas). If you cannot practice alone, arrange for

your network to help. Turnoff utilities only if local officials tell you to do so or if you believe there is an immediate threat to life. For example, if you smell gas, see or hear sparking wires, or see water gushing from broken pipes, you should turn off utilities immediately. If you turn gas off, only a professional should turn it back on. If you cannot use the proper tools to turn utilities off at the main valves or switches, turn off the valves under sinks and by the stove. Also turn off all electrical switches in every room. Be sure that the members of your network know the following information:

- Where to find each utility shutoff valve.
- How to turn off each utility.
- Whether you have the proper tools and where they are located, or if your network members need to bring tools with them.

Identify as many exits as possible from each room and from the building you are in. Be sure to include the windows as exits.

Make a floor plan of your home. You may want your network to assist you with it. Include your primary escape routes. On the floor plan, mark the rooms where you spend a lot of time. Also, mark where your disaster supplies kit is located. Give a copy of the floor plan to your network. This will help them find you and your supplies, if necessary.

When traveling, know the types of disasters that threaten the area you will be visiting. Let the hotel or motel front desk know of your possible needs in case of an emergency. Describe the type of help you may need. Remember to let your network members know your travel plans: when you will leave and when you will return.

Prepare an evacuation plan before a disaster happens.

If you have to leave your home or workplace, you may need someone's help to evacuate safely, especially down stairwells. If you need assistance during an emergency and your network is not available, find helpers and tell them about your condition. 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 about how you should be evacuated. They may want to take the Red Cross First Responder course or other training. This can teach them the proper and safe way to lift and carry you without injuring you or themselves.

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. This may mean having more than one emergency escape device available.

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. For example, say or write these instructions:

"Please take my-- Oxygen tank ,Wheelchair, Gamma globulin from the freezer, Insulin from the refrigerator, Communication device from under the bed. "

"Please do not straighten my knees. They are fused in a bent position. "

"I have had a brain injury. Please write down all important instructions and information. "

"I am Blind/visually impaired. Please let me grasp your arm firmly. "

"I am Deaf. Please write things down for me. "

When needed, 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.

Keep your automobile fuel tank more than half full at all times. Also, stock your vehicle with a small disaster supplies kit. 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 if these services are available in your area for persons with your disability.

Become familiar with the emergency or disaster/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.

Choose an alternate place to stay, such as with friends, family, or at a hotel or motel outside your area if you have been told to leave your home. You may have enough early warning time (as with a slow-rising flood or hurricane) to leave before the disaster occurs. This is especially important if you live in a mobile home or trailer. Find out if there are predesignated shelters in your area and where they are.

Have a care plan for your pet. Plan for the care of your pets if you have to evacuate your home. Pets, unlike service animals, will 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.

Have a care plan for 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 with you.

### Summary Checklist for Personal Disaster Preparation

There are many parts to a personal disaster plan. Fortunately, they do not have to be completed all at once. As you finish each part of your preparation, note the date in the space provided below. Review and update this plan regularly.

## Date Completed

\_\_\_\_ Make an emergency information list.

Include--

- Medical and emergency contact information.
- Emergency out-of-town contacts.
- Names and numbers of everyone in your network.
- Name and number of a relative or friend who lives more than 100 miles away from you.
- If you have a communication disability, make sure your emergency information list notes the best way to communicate with you.

\_\_\_\_ Fill out a medical information list.

Include information about--

- Medical providers.
- Medications you use.
- Adaptive equipment and/or body system support equipment you use.
- Allergies and sensitivities.
- Communication or cognitive difficulties.

\_\_\_\_ Attach copies of health insurance cards and related information to your medical information list.

\_\_\_\_ Keep at least a seven-day supply of essential medications with you at all times.

\_\_\_\_ Have extra copies of prescriptions.

\_\_\_ Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about what you should do if you do not have enough medicine after a disaster. Also, find out the shelf life of your medication and the storage temperature it needs.

Determine how often you should replace stored medication

\_\_\_ Identify safe places to go to during an--

- Earthquake.
- Tornado.
- Hurricane.
- Flood.
- Fire.

\_\_\_ Install at least one smoke detector on each level of your home, outside sleeping areas.

\_\_\_ Find the location of utility cutoff valves and switches. Become familiar with how to operate them.

\_\_\_ Identify as many exits as possible (but at least two) from each room and from the building you are in.

\_\_\_ Make a floor plan of your home. You may want your network to help you do this. Include your primary escape routes.

\_\_\_ Practice using different ways out of a building, especially if you are above the first floor in a building with many stories.

\_\_\_ Decide what type of equipment you will need for assistance during an evacuation.

\_\_\_ Be ready to give brief, clear, specific instructions and directions to rescue personnel.

\_\_\_ If you do not drive, talk with your network about how you will leave the area if authorities advise an evacuation.

\_\_\_\_ Ask your local emergency management office if transportation services are available to persons with your disability during an emergency evacuation. Find out how to arrange to get this service.

\_\_\_\_ Become familiar with the emergency or disaster evacuation plan for your office, school, or any other location where you spend a lot of time.

\_\_\_\_ Choose an alternate place to stay.

\_\_\_\_ Have a care plan for your pet.

\_\_\_\_ Have a care plan for your service animal.

## Disaster Supplies

A disaster supplies kit contains food, water, tools, and other things you and your service animal will need immediately after a disaster strikes. Your kit should have enough food and water supplies to sustain you and those you live with for at least three days, preferably seven days or more.

Gather your basic disaster supplies and store them somewhere that is easy for you to get to.

**Note:** You do not need to collect all the items for your disaster supplies kit all at once. First, pick out the supplies you already have and put them in your kit. Next, as you plan your weekly or monthly budget, try to include a few items for your kit. For a suggested weekly shopping list. Talk with your personal physician about how you can collect and store a seven-day supply of necessary prescription medications.



There are different types of disaster supplies kits you should assemble. Combine the following kits as you need them, and store them somewhere that is easy for you to get to.

- Basic disaster supplies kit (includes a first aid kit)
- Portable disaster supplies kit
- Disaster supplies kit for your car
- Disability-related supplies and special equipment
- Service animal and pet supplies

## **Basic Disaster Supplies Kit**

Make a disaster supplies kit that contains your basic disaster supplies for home and your disability related supplies. You should keep enough basic supplies to maintain you in your home for at least three days, preferably seven or more. Supplies you need related to your disability should last a minimum of seven days. Remember any special dietary needs you may have when planning your disaster food supplies. Refer to, for a list of basic disaster supplies.

### **First Aid Kit:**

Put together a first aid kit. This will go in your basic disaster supplies kit. Include an American Red Cross first aid textbook. Enclose sanitary supplies, extra glasses (an old pair) and a case, and solution for contact lenses, if you wear them. For a list of items to include in your first aid kit.

### **Disability-Related Supplies and Special Equipment**

Your disability-related supplies can be part of both your basic and your portable disaster supplies kit. List the special supplies and equipment you may need. Be sure to note the places where they are stored.



Refer to Appendix A, for a list of disability-related

supplies and special equipment. This list is extensive and you may use only a few of the items listed here.

Keep mobility aids near you at all times. If you have extra aids (such as a cane), have them available in several locations.

Disability-related supplies can be part of both your basic and your portable disaster supplies kits. If you must leave your home for any reason, your disability-related supplies will be available to take with you. If you are confined to your home, these supplies will be available along with your basic disaster supplies kit.

### **Portable Disaster Supplies Kit**

Keep your portable disaster supplies kit within easy reach at all times.



Get a drawstring bag, a pouch with lots of pockets, a fanny pack, or a small backpack and keep it within reach, by or on your chair, wheelchair, scooter, or other assistive device.

Your portable disaster supplies kit should include a copy of your emergency information list and other lists; a small flashlight; a whistle or noisemaker; water; extra medication and copies of prescriptions; an extra pair of glasses; a hearing aid; sanitary supplies; a pad and pencil or other writing device; and a pair of heavy work gloves for wheeling over glass and debris.

At night, keep these portable supplies either next to or under your bed.

### **Disaster Supplies for Your Car**

Store basic disaster supplies and other emergency items in your car.

Beside the basic disaster supplies listed in



Appendix A, you should also carry other disaster supplies in your car. Store several blankets; an extra set of mittens or gloves, wool socks, and a wool cap; jumper cables and instructions; a small sack of sand or kitty litter for traction; a small shovel; a set of tire chains or traction mats; a red cloth to use as a flag; and a CB radio or cellular telephone in any vehicle you use regularly.

## **Service Animal and Pet Supplies**

Like your disability-related supplies kit, the service animal and pet supplies can be part of your basic disaster supplies kit or your portable disaster supplies. This will depend on whether you evacuate or are confined to your home.

Your service animal and pet supplies should include food; water; a leash or harness; a collar; and identification tags. Dogs and cats should wear a collar and tags. Dogs should be led with a leash or harness; cats should be moved in a pet carrier. Keep an extra harness with your disaster supplies for each animal. Ask your veterinarian for first aid information and a list of supplies you will need for your animals.

Make sure that identification tags, licenses, and vaccinations are current for your service animal or pet. Identification tags should list both your home telephone number and that of your primary out-of-town contact person.

## **Power-Dependent Equipment**

Some people may use a fuel-operated generator to produce electricity if power will be out for a long time. If appropriate and feasible, get a generator listed by Underwriters Laboratories (the generator will carry a label with the letters "UL" circled on it).

Some generators can be connected to the existing wiring systems of a house. But contact your utility company before you connect a generator to house wiring. Connecting a generator is specifically prohibited by law in some areas, so you must check with your local utility or fire department first. To run generators in an emergency, fuel must be safely stored. Generators need to be operated

outdoors to guarantee good ventilation. If you get a generator, be sure your network is familiar with how to operate it.

If you use a battery-operated wheelchair, life-support system, or other power-dependent equipment, discuss with your power company the type of backup power you plan to use. Some utility companies offer a "priority reconnection service" for people with disabilities who use power-dependent equipment. Many utility companies keep a list and map of the locations of power-dependent customers in case of an emergency. Contact the customer service department of your local utility company(ies) to learn if this service is available in your community. Some utility companies may require a referral from your physician to qualify you for this service. However, even with this "priority reconnection service, " your power could still be out for a long time following a disaster. Providing alternatives for your power-dependent equipment is still essential.

## **Additional Information on Equipment and Supplies**

### **If you use a wheelchair or scooter--**

Keep a patch kit and can of seal-in-air product in your portable disaster supplies kit to repair flat tires, unless these are puncture-proof. Also, keep an extra supply of inner tubes.

Keep a pair of heavy gloves in your portable disaster supplies kit to use while wheeling or making your way over glass and debris.

In areas prone to earthquakes, keep the wheelchair wheels locked and the wheelchair close to your bed at night to be sure it does not move or fall over.

### **If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter--**

Have an extra battery. A car battery also can be used with a wheelchair but will not last as long as a wheelchair's deep-cycle battery.

Check with your vendor to know if you can charge your battery by either connecting jumper cables to a vehicle battery or connecting batteries to a converter that plugs into a vehicle's cigarette lighter. Caution: Charge only one battery at a time.

If available, store a lightweight manual wheelchair for backup.

**If you are Blind or have a visual disability--**

Store a talking or braille clock or large-print timepiece with extra batteries. Have at least one extra white cane.

Mark your disaster supplies items with fluorescent tape, large print, or braille. Mark your gas, water, and electric shutoff valves with fluorescent tape, large print, or braille.

- Store extra magnifiers.
- Have an extra pair of glasses if you wear them.
- Make photocopies of your information lists from this booklet.

**If you are Deaf or have a hearing loss--**

Consider getting a small portable battery-operated television set. Emergency broadcasts may give information in American Sign Language (ASL) or open captioning.

Keep pads and pencils in your home disaster supplies kit and with your car disaster supplies. Keep them with you at all times for communication.

Keep a flashlight, whistle or other noisemaker, and pad and pencil by your bed.

Keep a card in the disaster supplies kits (in your home and car), and with you at all times that indicates that you are Deaf. Include any other appropriate communication information such as, "I do (or do not) know American Sign Language (ASL)," or, "My service animal may legally remain with me."

**If you have a speech-related or communication disability--**

Consider buying a power converter if you use a laptop computer to communicate. A power converter allows most laptops (12 volts or less) to be operated from the cigarette lighter on the dashboard of a vehicle.

Be sure to have pencil and paper with you as a backup communication resource.

If you use an augmentative communication device (such as an electronic communicator or artificial larynx) that allows you to communicate by voice, be sure to keep it close to you at night in a safe place.

Store copies of a word or letter board and preprinted key phrases you would use in case of an emergency in all of your disaster supplies kits, your wallet, purse, etc.

### **If you use self-administered medical treatments--**

Keep in mind that traffic delays and/or severe weather hazards can happen when you do not expect them. Be sure to carry the equipment and fluids (temperature controlled) you will need when traveling.

### **If you have a cognitive disability--**

Keep a copy of any instructions or information you think you will need. Also, keep a copy of this information in the disaster supplies kits you keep both at home and in your car. Prepare this information in a way that is easy for you to understand. You may want to break down the information into a step-by-step outline. This format will help you remember what to do during the confusion of a disaster.

Have a pencil and paper ready to keep track of any new instructions or information you may receive.

## **Storing Supplies**

Store emergency documents in sealed plastic freezer bags in your basic disaster supplies kit. Copies of lifesaving information (i. e., specifications for adaptive equipment or medical devices) should be stored in your basic disaster supplies kits and with your disability-related supplies, portable supplies kit, car supplies, and supplies you keep at work.

Keep other emergency documents in your disaster supplies kit for home so you can get to them in an emergency. (Important Family Documents.) If you get benefits from Social Security (SSI or SSD), put a copy of your most recent award letter with these documents as well. (**Note:** financial assistance from the American Red Cross and other disaster recovery resources will not cause a reduction in your monthly grant. ) Be sure to send copies of these documents to your out-of-town contact person (seal and mark them "open in an emergency for [name] only").

Store your disaster supplies kit in a safe, dry place that is easy for you to get to. This place should also be easy for your network, or anyone who comes to assist you, to identify. If you are going to put the kit on a shelf, be sure to secure it so that it does not fall and become inaccessible when you need it.

Replace your supply of food and water every six months. Also, check the expiration dates of stored prescription medications. Replace items in your supplies kit that are old or outdated. Remember to do this by putting new purchases in the kit and using the old kit items you purchased earlier. However, do not borrow items from the kit with the intention of replacing them later. You may forget to do so.

Summary Checklist for Disaster Supplies

## **Date Completed**

\_\_\_\_ Put together a basic disaster supplies kit for your home. It should have food, water, and other essential items you would need for at least three, but preferably seven days.

- Obtain a first aid kit and put it with your basic disaster supplies kit for home.
- Collect items for a disaster supplies kit containing items you need that are related to your disability.
- Put together a portable disaster supplies kit in a drawstring bag or pouch to carry with you at all times.
- Assemble a disaster supplies kit for your car or van.
- Assemble disaster supplies for your service animal and pet(s).
- Obtain a UL-listed generator if you have equipment that runs on electricity and needs backup power.
- Ask your utility company if a priority reconnection service is available in your area.
- Get a patch kit and canned air for wheelchair tires.
- Put heavy gloves in your portable disaster supplies kit if you use a wheelchair. Wear these gloves when wheeling over debris.
- Keep an extra battery available for a motorized wheelchair

## **Making Your Home or Office Safer**

One of the best ways to reduce the damages from a disaster and avoid possible injuries is to prepare for disasters ahead of time. This will mitigate, or lessen, the effects of a disaster. Here are some suggestions on how you can make your home or office safer before a disaster strikes.

Check hallways, stairwells, doorways, windows, and other areas for hazards that may keep you from safely leaving a building during an emergency. Secure or remove furniture and other items that may block your path. This will allow you to have several unblocked passages to travel after a disaster.

Keep emergency lights plugged into electrical wall outlets. These lights automatically turn on if there is a power outage and may help light your escape paths for you or your network. Emergency lights will remain lit for four to six hours; however, you can turn them off by hand during the daytime to save their battery charge.

### **In the event of an earthquake--**

Bolt pictures, mirrors, curio cabinets, and other heavy objects to wall studs using the appropriate hardware.

Bolt bookcases to wall studs. Use bungee cords or a strip of wood nailed to the edge of the shelf to keep books from falling off.

Strap your water heater and other large appliances to wall studs using strap iron (sometimes called plumber's tape).

Use latches on cabinets so that their contents do not fall out when the building shakes.

Use hook-and-loop fasteners (such as Velcro<sup>®</sup>) to secure typewriters, computers, oxygen equipment, and other heavy items to sturdier objects.

## **Glossary**

**Adaptive Equipment: Equipment that helps a person move, groom, or eat independently, such as mobility aids, grooming aids, feeding aids, and similar devices used to offset functional limits.**

**Augmentative Communication Device: A device used to help a person communicate by voice.**

**Blindness/Visual Disability: A visual condition that interferes with a person's ability to see or results in the absence of all sight.**

**Cognitive Impairment: A medical condition or injury that affects a person's ability to understand spoken or written information.**

**Communication Disability: A medical condition or injury that interferes with a person's ability to communicate by using one's voice.**

**Deafness/Hearing Disability: A medical condition or injury that interferes with a person's ability to hear sounds.**

**Evacuation Assistive Equipment: Equipment or devices used to help people leave a building in an emergency.**

**Mobility Disability: A medical condition or injury that impedes a person's ability to walk or move.**

**Personal Assessment: A written list of your needs and your resources for meeting these needs in an environment affected by a disaster.**

**Personal Care Assistance: The help you accept from someone to meet your daily personal needs (bathing, dressing, grooming, cooking, feeding).**

**Personal Support Network/Self-Help Team: A group of people who will help you at your home, school, workplace, volunteer site, or any other location in which you spend a lot of time. Members of your support network can include roommates, relatives, neighbors, friends, and co-workers you trust. Your network must be able to check if you need assistance, know your capabilities and needs, and be able to help you within minutes.**

**Power-Dependent Equipment: Equipment that requires electricity to operate.**

**Service Animal: A specially-trained animal used by a person with a disability to help with daily living. These animals are allowed by law to accompany their owners anywhere.**

**Warning: A "warning" means that the event is happening now, is going to happen, or has been observed on weather radar. You must act immediately to protect yourself.**

**Watch: A "watch" means that severe weather is threatening and may occur in your area. Listen to the radio or watch television for information and advice.**

# Considerations for Pets and Pet Owners

## Pets and Disaster: Be Prepared

Our pets enrich our lives in more ways than we can count. In turn, they depend on us for their safety and well-being. Here's how you can be prepared to protect your pets when disaster strikes.

### **Be Prepared with a Disaster Plan**

The best way to protect your family from the effects of a disaster is to have a disaster plan. If you are a pet owner, that plan must include your pets. Being prepared can save their lives.

Different disasters require different responses. But whether the disaster is a hurricane or a hazardous spill, you may have to evacuate your home.

*In the event of a disaster, if you must evacuate, the most important thing you can do to protect your pets is to evacuate them, too.* Leaving pets behind, even if you try to create a safe place for them, is likely to result in their being injured, lost, or worse. So prepare now for the day when you and your pets may have to leave your home.

## **Have a Safe Place To Take Your Pets**

Red Cross disaster shelters **cannot accept pets** because of states' health and safety regulations and other considerations. Service animals who assist people with disabilities are the **only** animals allowed in Red Cross shelters. It may be difficult, if not impossible, to find shelter for your animals in the midst of a disaster, so plan ahead. Do not wait until disaster strikes to do your research.

Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets and restrictions on number, size, and species. Ask if "no pet" policies could be waived in an emergency. Keep a list of "pet friendly" places, including phone numbers, with other disaster information and supplies. If you have notice of an impending disaster, call ahead for reservations.

Ask friends, relatives, or others outside the affected area whether they could shelter your animals. If you have more than one pet, they may be more comfortable if kept together, but be prepared to house them separately.

Prepare a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter animals in an emergency; include 24-hour phone numbers.

Ask local animal shelters if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets in a disaster. Animal shelters may be overburdened caring for the animals they already have as well as those displaced by a disaster, so this should be your last resort.

## **Assemble a Portable Pet Disaster Supplies Kit**

Whether you are away from home for a day or a week, you'll need essential supplies. Keep items in an accessible place and store them in sturdy containers that can be carried easily (duffle bags, covered trash containers, etc.). Your pet disaster supplies kit should include:

Medications and medical records (stored in a waterproof container) and a first aid kit.

Sturdy leashes, harnesses, and/or carriers to transport pets safely and ensure that your animals can't escape.

Current photos of your pets in case they get lost.

Food, potable water, bowls, cat litter/pan, and can opener.

Information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems, and the name and number of your veterinarian in case you have to foster or board your pets.

Pet beds and toys, if easily transportable.

## **Know What To Do As a Disaster Approaches**

Often, warnings are issued hours, even days, in advance. At the first hint of disaster, act to protect your pet.

Call ahead to confirm emergency shelter arrangements for you and your pets. Check to be sure your pet disaster supplies are ready to take at a moment's notice.

Bring all pets into the house so that you won't have to search for them if you have to leave in a hurry.

Make sure all dogs and cats are wearing collars and securely fastened, up-to-date identification. Attach the phone number and address of your temporary shelter, if you know it, or of a friend or relative outside the disaster area. You can buy temporary tags or put adhesive tape on the back of your pet's ID tag, adding information with an indelible pen.

You may not be home when the evacuation order comes. Find out if a trusted neighbor would be willing to take your pets and meet you at a prearranged location. This person should be comfortable with your pets, know where your animals are likely to be, know where your pet disaster supplies kit is kept, and have a key to your home. If you use a petsitting service, they may be available to help, but discuss the possibility well in advance.

Planning and preparation will enable you to evacuate with your pets quickly and safely. But bear in mind that animals react differently under stress. Outside your home and in the car, keep dogs securely leashed. Transport cats in carriers. Don't

leave animals unattended anywhere they can run off. The most trustworthy pets may panic, hide, try to escape, or even bite or scratch. And, when you return home, give your pets time to settle back into their routines. Consult your veterinarian if any behavior problems persist.

### **Caring for Birds in an Emergency**

Birds should be transported in a secure travel cage or carrier. In cold weather, wrap a blanket over the carrier and warm up the car before placing birds inside. During warm weather, carry a plant mister to mist the birds' feathers periodically. Do not put water inside the carrier during transport. Provide a few slices of fresh fruits and vegetables with high water content. Have a photo for identification and leg bands. If the carrier does not have a perch, line it with paper towels and change them frequently. Try to keep the carrier in a quiet area. Do not let the birds out of the cage or carrier.

#### About Other Pets

### **Reptiles**

Snakes can be transported in a pillowcase but they must be transferred to more secure housing when they reach the evacuation site. If your snakes require frequent feedings, carry food with you. Take a water bowl large enough for soaking as well as a heating pad. When transporting house lizards, follow the same directions as for birds.

### **Pocket Pets**

Small mammals (hamsters, gerbils, etc.) should be transported in secure carriers suitable for maintaining the animals while sheltered. Take bedding materials, food bowls, and water bottles.

### **A Final Word**

If you must evacuate, do not leave your animals behind. Evacuate them to a prearranged safe location if they cannot stay with you during the evacuation.

period. (remember, pets are not allowed in Red Cross shelters.) If there is a possibility that disaster may strike while you are out of the house, there are precautions you can take to increase your pets' chances of survival, but they are not a substitute for evacuating with your pets.

# Your Quick Click Reference Guide

Dear Reader,

The following links are provided as additional educational resources only. Please take time to visit them and become better informed.

## **Organizations:**

[The American Red Cross](#)

[The International Red Cross](#)

[The Humane Society of the United States](#)

[FEMA “Federal Emergency Management Agency”](#)

[The U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#)

[NOAA “ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association”](#)

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)