

# Emergency Preparedness Guidelines For People With Disabilities & Special Needs



In the time of a disaster, whether natural or manmade, many of us are not prepared to meet our most basic needs. In this guide are suggestions you may want to use to help prepare yourself in the case of an emergency. These guidelines are not intended to be, and should not be considered as, legal, medical, technical or other professional advice, nor a substitute for any such advice.

Salt Lake City Emergency Management

# Emergency Response

For the millions of Americans with mobility problems and special needs, emergencies such as earthquakes, fires, floods or man-made disasters, present a special challenge. Protecting yourself and your family when disaster strikes requires planning ahead. During this time, the emphasis is to prevent death and injury, and to protect property by:

- Preparing an individual or family 72 hour emergency kit of food and clothing, water, first aid supplies, medications needed by family members or any other special needs items, and blankets.
- Preparing a home evacuation plan for yourself and family.
- Preparing a first aid kit and keeping it adequately supplied.
- Knowing proper water purification and sanitation recommendations.
- Knowing when and how to turn off gas and electricity after a disaster or assigning a family member or neighbor to do so.
- Preparing an automobile emergency kit for yourself or a family members automobile.
- Teaching preparedness in your home.



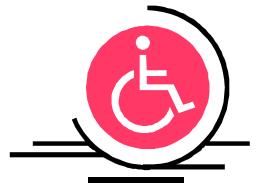
# Those With Mobility Problems

During an emergency, your mobility may be affected and you may not be able to seek shelter under furniture. Debris may block your exit and elevators may not work.

## **Before an emergency:**

Plan ahead by letting neighbors and colleagues know you may need their assistance in vacating your home or workplace. Work out alternative exit routes.

If you use a wheelchair, make more than one exit from your home wheelchair accessible in case the primary exit is blocked in a disaster.



Develop an escape plan by drawing a floor plan of your home. Show the location of doors, windows, stairways, large furniture, your evacuation kit and utility shut-off points. Indicate at least two escape routes from each room and mark a place outside the home where family members should meet.

**Secure objects** (particularly large furniture items) that might fall and block your path.

If you use supplies such as catheters or bladder pads, keep extra supplies. Toilets may not work after a disaster.

Teach those who may need to assist you in an emergency how to operate the necessary equipment, such as lifts or scooters.

## **During an emergency:**

In an earthquake or tornado, if you are in a wheelchair, stay in it, move away from windows, high furniture and other dangers and seek cover in a doorway. Be careful about the door swinging back onto you. Otherwise, position yourself away from outside walls, at a point where walls intersect, or in a washroom or closet. Lock the wheels of the wheelchair once you are in a safe and protected position. Cover your head with your hands.

**In my home, the safest location would be:**

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In an earthquake do not enter or exit a building. If you are outdoors, move to a clear area away from trees, signs, buildings, or overhead wires.

If you are in bed or out of your wheelchair, seek cover during the emergency under the bed, a table or desk. If there is a space between your bed and interior wall, try to get down to the floor there.

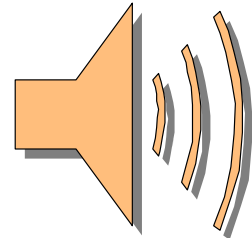
**After an emergency:**

If you are trapped, do anything to attract attention. If you have previously asked your neighbors to check on you, they will be looking for you.

Use a whistle or flashlight to signal to others, and call for help if you need it.

**Fill in the following:**

Listen to your emergency radio for information. Tune to:



**KSL 1160 am**

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Our emergency radio is located:

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Extra batteries are located:

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# Emergency Planning For The Deaf And Hard Of Hearing

The deaf and head of hearing must take special precautions in emergency situations. You will have a much more difficult time communicating. Telephone services and TTY may be out and consequently telecommunications devices for the deaf may not work. If the electricity is also out, your means of communication may be your flashlight. In addition, people may not realize that you cannot hear evacuation warnings and instructions and consequently could leave you behind. Here's what you should do in order to be ready to face emergencies:

## **Before an emergency:**

Remind neighbors and colleagues that you may not hear an evacuation order, and ask for help.

Ask a neighbor or colleagues to be your source of emergency information, as it becomes available.

Make sure you have a flashlight with good batteries in every room. Light sticks are also recommended. These are sold at sporting goods, camping stores, and safety equipment suppliers, and offer light for up to 12 hours without generating any heat or flame. In addition, they do not deteriorate when stored.

Keep a pad and pencil next to your bed and another in a room at the other end of your home.

Store extra hearing aid batteries at home and at work.

## **During an emergency:**

Watch for falling debris as well as seeking cover and protecting your head with your hands.

# Emergency Checklist

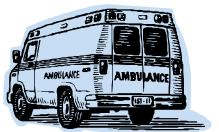
## **Ask Questions:**

Call your local emergency management office or Red Cross chapter.

- What are the most common disasters that occur in your area.
- Ask how you would be warned of an emergency.
- Ask about special assistance that may be available to you in an emergency. Many communities ask people with a disability to register, usually with the local fire department or emergency management office, so needed help can be provided quickly in an emergency.
- Ask your supervisor about emergency plans at your workplace.
- Ask your children's teachers and caregivers about emergency plans for schools and day-care centers.
- If you currently use a personal care attendant obtained from an agency, check to see if the agency has special provisions for emergencies (e.g., providing services at another location should an evacuation be ordered).

## **Create a plan:**

- Meet with household members or your personal care attendant. Discuss the dangers of fire, severe weather, earthquakes and other emergencies that might occur in your community.
- Determine what you will need to do for each type of emergency. For example, most people head for a basement when there is a tornado warning, but most basements are not wheelchair-accessible. Determine in advance what your alternative shelter will be and how you will get there.
- Post emergency telephone numbers near telephones and teach your children how and when to call for help.
- Learn what to do in case of power outages and personal injuries. Know how to connect or start a back-up power supply for essential medical equipment.
- If you or someone in your household uses a wheelchair, make more than one exit from your home wheelchair-accessible in case the primary exit is blocked in a disaster.



- ❑ Teach those who may need to assist you in an emergency how to operate necessary equipment.
- ❑ Arrange for a relative or neighbor to check on you in an emergency.
- ❑ Learn how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at main valves or switches.
- ❑ Plan and practice how to escape from your home in an emergency.
- ❑ Consider getting a medical alert system that will allow you to call for help if you are immobilized in an emergency.
- ❑ If you live in an apartment, ask the management to identify and mark accessible exits.
- ❑ Learn your community's evacuation routes.
- ❑ Listen to a battery-operated radio for emergency information.
- ❑ Pick one out-of-state and one local friend or relative for family members to call if separated by disaster.
- ❑ Pick two meeting places:
  - 1) A place near your home in case of fire.
  - 2) A place outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home after a disaster.
- ❑ Keep family records in a watertight, fire-proof container.



### **Prepare a disaster supplies kit:**

Assemble supplies you might need in an evacuation. Store them in an easy-to-carry container such as a backpack or duffle bag.

*Include:*

- ❑ A battery-powered radio, flashlight, and plenty of extra batteries for them.
- ❑ A first aid kit, prescription medicines, and an extra pair glasses.
- ❑ A supply of water (one gallon per person per day). Store water in sealed, unbreakable containers. Identify the storage date and replace every six months.
- ❑ If you have a baby, include diapers and other infant care items.
- ❑ Extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, medication, catheters, food for guide or service dogs, or other special equipment you might need.
- ❑ A change of clothing, rain gear, and sturdy shoes.
- ❑ Blankets or sleeping bags.
- ❑ A list of family physicians and the relative or friend who should be notified if you are injured.



- A list of the style and serial numbers of medical devices such as pacemakers.
- An extra set of car keys.
- Store back-up equipment, such as a manual wheelchair, at your neighbors home, school, or workplace.

### **Home hazard hunt:**

- Repair defective electrical wiring. Smell for leaky gas connections. If you smell gas, turn the gas off and call a professional to repair it.
- Keep the shut-off switch for oxygen equipment near your bed or chair, so you can get to it quickly if there is a fire.
- Fasten shelves securely to the wall. Place large, heavy objects on lower shelves or the floor.
- Hang pictures and mirrors away from beds. Bolt large pictures or mirrors to the wall.
- Secure water heater by strapping it to a nearby wall.
- Repair cracks in ceilings or foundations. Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Store weed killers, pesticides and flammable products away from heat sources.
- Have chimneys, flue pipes, vent connectors, and gas vents cleaned and repaired by a professional.

### **If you need to evacuate:**

- Listen to a battery-powered radio for the location of emergency shelters. Know in advance the location of wheelchair-accessible shelters. Follow instructions of local officials.
- Wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Take your Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Lock your house.
- Use travel routes specified or special assistance provided by local officials.



*If you are sure you have time....*

- Shut off water, gas electricity *if* instructed to do so.
- Let others know when you left and where you are going.
- Make arrangements for pets. Animals other than service animals may not be allowed in public shelters.

**Prepare a car kit:**

*Include:*

- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, extra batteries, and maps.
- Blanket and first aid kit.
- Shovel.
- Tire repair kit, booster cables, pump and flares.
- Bottled water and non-perishable foods such as granola bars, raisins, and cookies.
- Fire extinguisher (5 lb., A-B-C type).

**Fire safety:**

- Plan two escape routes out of each room. If you cannot use the stairways, make special arrangements for help in advance. Never use elevators.
- Install smoke detectors. Clean and test smoke detectors once a month. Change batteries at least once a year.
- Consider installing home sprinklers.
- If there is a fire, do not try to fight the fire. Get out fast. Do not stop for pets or possessions. Call the fire department after you are outside. Never go back into a burning building.
- Feel the bottom of the door with the palm of your hand. If it is hot, find another way out.



# Emergency Plan

## Out-of-State Contact

Name \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (evening) \_\_\_\_\_

## Local Contact

Name \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (evening) \_\_\_\_\_

## Family Work Numbers

Father \_\_\_\_\_ Mother \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Emergency Telephone Numbers

**In a life threatening emergency, dial 911 or the local emergency medical services system number.**

Police Department \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Department \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital \_\_\_\_\_

## Family Physicians

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Post emergency number's and make a list of important contact names.