



Individuals with Special Needs

Preparing and Planning

- People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs
- Additional Resources

If you or someone close to you has a disability or a special need, you may have to take additional steps to protect yourself and your family in an emergency.

Disability/Special Need	Additional Steps
Visually impaired	May be extremely reluctant to leave familiar surroundings when the request for evacuation comes from a stranger. A guide dog could become confused or disoriented in a disaster. People who are blind or partially sighted may have to depend on others to lead them, as well as their dog, to safety during a disaster.
Hearing impaired	May need to make special arrangements to receive warnings.
Mobility impaired	May need special assistance to get to a shelter.
Single working parent	May need help to plan for disasters and emergencies.
Non-English speaking persons	May need assistance planning for and responding to emergencies. Community and cultural groups may be able to help keep people informed.
People without vehicles	May need to make arrangements for transportation.
People with special dietary needs	Should take special precautions to have an adequate emergency food supply.
People with medical conditions	Should know the location and availability of more than one facility if dependent on a dialysis machine or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.
People with mental retardation	May need help responding to emergencies and getting to a shelter.
People with dementia	Should be registered in the Alzheimer's Association Safe Return Program

If you have special needs: Find out about special assistance that may be available in your community. Register with the office of emergency services or the local fire department for assistance so needed help can be provided.

Check for hazards in the home

During and right after a disaster, ordinary items in the home can cause injury or damage. Anything that can move, fall, break or cause fire is a home hazard. Check for items such as bookcases, hanging

pictures, or overhead lights that could fall in an earthquake or a flood and block an escape path.

Be ready to evacuate

Have a plan for getting out of your home or building (ask your family or friends for assistance, if necessary). Also, plan two evacuation routes because some roads may be closed or blocked in a disaster.

- Create a network of neighbors, relatives, friends, and coworkers to aid you in an emergency. Discuss your needs and make sure everyone knows how to operate necessary equipment.
- Discuss your needs with your employer.
- If you are mobility impaired and live or work in a high-rise building, have an escape chair.
- If you live in an apartment building, ask the management to mark accessible exits clearly and to make arrangements to help you leave the building.
- Keep specialized items ready, including extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, prescriptions, food for service animals, and any other items you might need.
- Be sure to make provisions for medications that require refrigeration.
- Keep a list of the type and model numbers of the medical devices you require.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your disability.
- Know the location and availability of more than one facility if you are dependent on a dialysis machine or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.

Additional Resources

Section 689 Reference Guide

Guidelines for use by those who serve individuals with disabilities in emergency preparedness and disaster relief.

Settlement Agreement in "Brou v. FEMA", No. 06-838 (E.D. La.) (PDF 3MB, TXT 114KB)

Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and other Special Needs (FEMA 476)

Available in Spanish (PDF 601KB, TXT 32KB)

Provides disaster preparedness information specific to people with disabilities and other special needs, including the elderly.

Emergency preparedness information from DisabilityInfo.gov

Find links to additional preparedness information, grants, assistance, government policies, initiatives and much more.