

# PREPARING FOR AN EMERGENCY: A CHECKLIST FOR PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY PROBLEMS

Emergencies like fires and floods can present a special challenge to everyone. The challenge of protecting oneself requires planning and oftentimes, assistance from others. This holds true for the millions of people with mobility problems as well. Protecting yourself and your family when disaster strikes requires planning ahead. This checklist will help you get started...

1. First of all, get the appropriate information. Call your local American Red Cross chapter or County Emergency Management Office to find out which disasters occur in your area and how to prepare for each. Ask about special aid that may be available to you. Many communities ask people with a disability to register, usually with the County Emergency Management Office so that help can be provided quickly.
2. Ask your supervisor about emergency plans at your workplace and what provisions have been made to assist you to evacuate if needed.
3. If you currently have a personal care attendant obtained from an agency, check to see if the agency has a plan for emergencies.
4. Create a plan. Meet with household members and/or your personal care attendant to discuss what measures you might have to take.
5. 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. Plan and practice how to escape from your home.
6. Consider getting a medical alert system that will allow you to call for help if you are immobilized.
7. Keep emergency telephone numbers posted near phones and teach your children how and when to call for help.
8. If you live in an apartment, ask the management to identify and mark accessible exits and know in advance where they are located.
9. No disaster plan is complete without preparing a Disaster Supplies Kit. These supplies should be stored in an easy to carry container, such as a backpack or duffel bag.

## **Your kit should include...**

1. Battery-powered radio, flashlight, and plenty of extra batteries
2. First aid kit, any prescription medicines you take (along with copies of written prescription), and an extra pair of eye glasses
3. Extra hearing aid batteries

4. Supply of water (one gallon per person per day), stored in sealed, unbreakable containers, marked with storage date (replace every 6 months)
5. Supply of nonperishable food and a manual can opener
6. Infant necessities
7. Extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, medication, catheters, food for guide or service dogs or other specialty equipment you might need
8. Change of clothing, rain gear and sturdy shoes
9. Blankets/sleeping bags
10. List of family physicians to be notified if injured
11. List of the style and serial numbers of medical devices, such as pacemakers
12. Extra set of car keys
13. Cash
14. Personal identification and proof of residency

You should be aware of what hazards exist in your home and how they can be corrected. Repair defective electrical wiring, secure large objects, repair cracks in ceilings or foundations, and have vents cleaned by a professional. Basically, you want to be aware of and correct any potential hazards -- anything that can move, fall, break, cause a fire or impede your mobility.

If you do need to evacuate to a shelter, confirm upon arrival that the shelter can meet any special care needs that you may require. If your shelter cannot, consider seeking an alternative shelter that can meet your needs if the situation allows.

Discuss these ideas with your family, friends, and/or a person care attendant.