



HOW TO PREPARE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

How might a disaster affect me? What are my personal needs during a disaster? By evaluating your own individual needs and making an emergency plan that fits those needs, you and your loved ones can be better prepared. Here are some tips from FEMA and Ready Georgia:

Be informed

- Make sure you know how to respond to the different types of disasters that could affect your area. Know which disasters may require you to evacuate and when it's best to shelter in place.
- You can find additional American Sign Language preparedness videos with tips for specific natural and man-made disasters at the following links:
 - Earthquakes
 - Flooding
 - Heat Related Safety
 - Hurricanes
 - Tornadoes/Thunderstorms
 - Terrorism
 - Winter Storms
- The [Georgia Emergency Preparedness Coalition for Individuals with Disabilities and Older Adults](#) is a key component in statewide preparedness efforts:
 - Learn about the Coalition in this [sign language video](#).
 - See what the coalition has to [offer](#).
 - Get a brochure about the Coalition from the [State ADA Coordinator's website](#).
- General emergency preparedness documents are also available in the following braille formats:
 - .BRL
 - .BFM
 - .ABT
 - .BML

Learn more safety information at GwinnettSafety411.com

Make a plan

- How might a disaster affect you? Could you make it on your own for three days? After a disaster, you may not have access to a medical facility or even a drugstore, so it's crucial to plan for the resources you use regularly, and what you would do if those resources are limited or not available. Additional planning steps should include:
- Create a support network. Keep a contact list in a watertight container in your Ready kit.
- Inventory what you use every day to maintain your health, safety, and independence. Identify essential items you and your family will need to survive for three days or longer, if emergency responders or other people cannot get to you following an emergency or disaster and if you have needs that are not easily accommodated, even when you aren't on your own.
- Inform your network of where you keep your emergency supplies and give one member a key to your house or apartment.
- Contact your city or county government's emergency information management office. Many local offices keep lists of people with disabilities so they can be helped quickly in a sudden emergency.
- If you are dependent on dialysis or other life-sustaining treatment, know the location and availability of more than one facility.
- Show others how to operate your wheelchair. Know the size and weight of your wheelchair, in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.
- If you use medical equipment in your home that requires electricity, talk to your doctor or health care provider about how you can prepare for its use during a power outage.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets.
- If you have a communication disability, make sure your emergency information notes the best way to communicate with you.
- Plan for children with disabilities and people who may have difficulty in unfamiliar or chaotic environments. This may include handheld electronic devices loaded with movies and games (and spare chargers), sheets and twine or a small pop-up tent to decrease visual stimulation in a busy room or to provide instant privacy, headphones to decrease auditory distractions, and comfort snacks and toys that meet needs for stimulation.

Deaf or hard of hearing

- Extra batteries and a spare charger for hearing aids, cochlear implant and/or personal assistive listening device. Keep records of where you got your hearing aids and exact types of batteries.
- Consider how to receive emergency information if you are unable to use a TV, radio or computer, such as social media or through your mobile device.
- Use a NOAA Weather Radio for Deaf and Hard of Hearing that has an adaptive weather alert system.
- Many new cell phones and smart phones have an alerting capability that includes specific sounds and vibrations that can be set to signal users of an emergency. Download the FEMA app to receive safety tips and weather alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations across the nation, maps of open shelters and disaster recovery centers, information in Spanish, and to apply for assistance.
- Keep a TTY or other analog-based amplified or captioned phone as part of your emergency supply kit.

Blind or low vision

- Keep Braille/text communication cards, if used, for 2-way communication.
- Mark emergency supplies with Braille labels or large print. Keep a list of your emergency supplies on a portable flash drive, or make an audio file that is kept in a safe place where you can access it.
- Keep a Braille, or Deaf-Blind communications device as part of your emergency supply kit.
- If you use assistive technology devices, such as white canes, CCTV, text-to-speech software, keep information about model numbers and where you purchased the equipment, etc.

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Speech disability

- If you use an augmentative communications device or other assistive technologies, plan how you will evacuate with the devices or how you will replace equipment if lost or destroyed. Keep model information, where the equipment came from (Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, etc.).
- Plan how you will communicate with others if your equipment is not working, including laminated cards with phrases and/or pictograms.

Mobility disability

- If you use a power wheelchair, if possible, have a lightweight manual chair available as a backup. Know the size and weight of your wheelchair in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.
- Purchase an extra battery for a power wheelchair or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices. If you are unable to purchase an extra battery, find out what agencies, organizations, or local charitable groups can help you with the purchase. Keep extra batteries on a trickle charger at all times.
- Consider keeping a patch kit or can of sealant for flat tires and/or extra inner tube if wheelchair or scooter is not puncture proof (from *Nusura/CalEMA*).
- Keep an extra mobility device such as a cane or walker, if you use one.
- If you use a seat cushion to protect your skin or maintain your balance, and you must evacuate without your wheelchair, take your cushion with you.

Service animals

- Make plans in advance for your service animal's health and safety whether you both stay at home, or throughout evacuation.
- Stock food, water, portable water dish, potty pads and bags, and medications. Have identification, licenses, leash, harness and a favorite toy for your service animal.
- Consider paw protection. You may be evacuating over sharp objects such as debris and broken glass.
- If you go to a public shelter, by law all service dogs and miniature horses (but no other animals) are allowed inside and must be allowed to remain with you in all areas of the shelter. You do not need to show any proof but you may be asked to answer two questions that service animal owners are taught to anticipate. Some shelters will accommodate other service animals. Know what to expect before you need sheltering.
- Plan for someone else to take care of your service animal if you are not able to following a disaster.

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