



Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities: Building a Personal Support Network

Are you ready for a disaster while at home, work or in your car?

Preparing for disaster may seem like a lot of work. But, if you do a little at a time, you will soon feel confident that you can protect yourself during a disaster.

One way to get ready is to build a personal support network. This network is made up of people who will check on you and help you if needed. You might ask friends, roommates, family, personal attendants, co-workers or neighbors to be in this network. Do not depend on only one person. Try to include at least three people in your network for each place you often spend time at during the week.



Many people with disabilities have a personal attendant to help them with daily activities. While it is okay to have your attendant as part of your network, remember that they may not be able to help you during a disaster.

What can I do now to plan for my needs during a disaster?

Decide what you will be able to do for yourself and what help you may need from your network. Know that your environment can change quickly both during and after a disaster, so it is important to think about what your needs might be during these times of stress. Do the personal assessment on the following page to help you decide what your needs are. Note your answers and share them with your network. Describe your physical abilities right now and the help you might need if a disaster disrupts your normal routine.

How do I get members of my network ready?

- Make sure members of your support network know to check on you after a disaster and offer help if you need it
- Exchange important keys like those to your house or car
- Show them where you keep equipment and supplies that you will need to have with you in a disaster
- Share copies of your emergency documents, evacuation plan and emergency health information

- Agree ahead of time how you will keep in touch during a disaster. Do not rely on telephones because they may be too busy. You might want to ask a long-distance friend or family member to be the out-of-town contact for your network.
- Practice your evacuation plan and make sure that all members of your network know how to use any medical equipment that you need.

It is important that you and your network talk about what you expect of each other before a disaster. What if network members' families need their help too? Making expectations clear now will make it less confusing in a crisis.

What are your needs?

Answer the questions below to assess your disaster-related needs:

- **Personal Care:** Do you need help with personal care, like bathing and grooming? Do you use adaptive equipment to help you get dressed?
- **Personal Care Equipment:** Do you use a shower chair or tub-transfer bench?
- **Adaptive Feeding Devices:** Do you use special utensils that help you prepare or eat food?
- **Electricity-Dependent Equipment:** How will you continue to use equipment that runs on electricity, such as dialysis units, electrical lifts, etc.?
- **Transportation:** Do you need a specially equipped vehicle or accessible transportation?
- **Building Evacuation:** Do you need help to leave your home or office?
- **Service Animals/Pets:** Will you be able to care for your animal (give them food, shelter, etc.) during and after a disaster? Can someone else care for your animal if you are unable to?

To learn more:

- Visit the National Disabilities Organization's Preparedness site: <http://www.nod.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=1564>
- Visit the Disability.gov Preparedness site: <http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/digov-public/public/DisplayPage.do?parentFolderId=213>



YALE CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS

2 Church Street South, Suite 314

New Haven, CT 06519

Phone: 203-764-9713

E-mail: cphp@yale.edu

<http://publichealth.yale.edu/ycphp>

<http://blogs.yale.edu/roller/page/prepare>

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