

# Special Needs Require Special Preparation

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Do you or a family member have a disability? Will you be responsible for the care of an elderly adult in case of an emergency or disaster? Do you have small children that will need extra supplies and care in the event of a disaster? If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," then you should consider now what extra steps to take in your disaster plan.

Residents should be mindful that disaster preparedness is not a "one size fits all" concept. Those with special needs require special preparations.

General considerations for those with family members with disabilities:

- Make prior arrangements with your physician or check with your oxygen supplier about emergency plans for those on respirators or other electric-powered medical equipment. Be sure to have electrical back up for any medical equipment.
- Maintain a two week supply of such items as dressings, nasal cannulas and suction catheters.
- Maintain a two week supply of medications, both prescription and non-prescription.
- Keep copies of your medical records.
- Keep copies of prescriptions for medical equipment, supplies and medications.
- Keep extra contact lenses and supplies, extra eyeglasses and extra batteries for hearing aids.
- Make plans now to have accessible transportation in case of evacuation.
- Shelters may be limited in accommodations to meet some of the needs of those with disabilities. Prepare ahead of time to ensure that you will have what you need.

Considerations for those with small children:

- Assemble extra items in your disaster supply kit such as diapers, baby formula, medications, favorite books, crayons and paper, puzzles, favorite toys, a favorite blanket or pillow, pictures of family and pets and any other items that will comfort your children.
- Remember that children's fears often can stem from their imagination - fears they may be separated from family, someone will be injured or killed, or that they will be left alone. Communication is very important in maintaining your children's mental well-being in times of crisis.
- Also, keep a copy of your children's immunization records, including the date of their last tetanus-diphtheria shot.

Considerations for those who are responsible for the care of senior citizens:

- Remember to help seniors who live alone. They may need help evacuating from their home, preparing for a storm and dealing with the aftermath of a disaster.

- If an older adult lives in an assisted living facility or nursing home, you should contact the administrator to learn about the disaster plan for that facility.

Other considerations:

- Hearing Impaired - make special arrangements to receive warnings.
- Mobility Impaired - plan for special assistance to get to a shelter.
- Single Working Parent - may need help to plan for disasters or emergencies.
- Non-English Speaking - may need assistance planning for and responding to emergencies.
- People without vehicles - make arrangements for accessible transportation.
- Special Dietary Needs - take steps to ensure you maintain an adequate emergency food supply.

Additionally, people with special needs should create a network of neighbors, relatives, friends and coworkers to aid them in an emergency. Discuss needs and make sure everyone knows how to operate necessary equipment.

More information regarding disaster plans and planning for special needs can be found at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) and [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).