

TEN THINGS
FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
SHOULD KNOW AND DO

TO BE SAFE IN A DISASTER



Prepared by:

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1. PLAN



Make plans for what you should do for each type of emergency.

Think about:

- Where in your house is safe if a **tornado** is coming?
- What should you do when there is a **flood** warning?
- How will people get out of their bedrooms if there is a house **fire**?
- What supplies would your family need if there were a three day **ice storm**?
- How will you find out about **bad weather** and **emergencies**?
- What **legal papers** do you need to take with you if you have to leave your home during an emergency?

Get to a safe place as soon as you can.

- Get to safety quickly and take what you need with you.
- If emergency officials announce that leaving home may be necessary, do it quickly. It's best to leave quickly and get to a safer place while you have choices. If you wait too long to leave, roads may be closed or the weather may be too dangerous to be travelling on the roads.
- Shelters are **not** good places for children with disabilities. They are crowded, noisy, and uncomfortable.
- Instead, you must plan way ahead of time for places to go to that are outside the disaster area, that you can get to easily, and that have the right environment for your child. For example, a child with autism needs a quiet, predictable environment (not your sister's house with seven noisy children 😊).

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Who will help your child if you are away from home?

Think about whom you can really depend on. Think about how long it might take this person to get from their home or work to your child during an emergency situation.

Always have at least five different people lined up since one person might be sick or out of town when you need them. Talk to each of these people and decide with them the best way of communicating during an emergency. Also, keep their phone numbers written down in a convenient place.

Ask your child to help you decide on the right people to assist him or her. Teach your child how to contact these people.



Practice with your child what to do in all of the emergencies that could occur in your community.

Regular practice and discussion makes emergency planning less frightening.

You may believe that you will always be available to assist your child in an emergency, but you could be injured or away from home or on an errand. Your child needs to know some basic safety steps.

Write down plans for all these events. Review your plans regularly, and make changes if needed.

2. CASH \$\$\$



Have some extra cash available.

When a large disaster happens, no one can use credit cards or get money from the bank. A little cash can help you get to safety.

- If you just put aside \$5-\$10 a month in a secret place, within a year you will have enough to help buy gas and eat a few meals out.

3. EXTRA MEDICINE

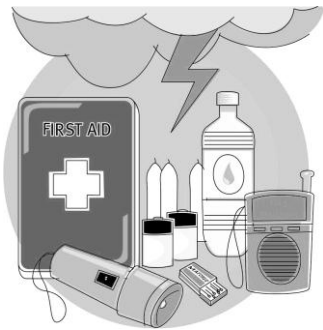


Keep some extra medication in case you can't get a prescription filled during an emergency.

With health insurance and Medicaid/Medicare rules, you can probably only save one or two pills from each prescription per month. After three or four months of saving pills, you would have enough for most emergencies.

- Remember: don't keep pills longer than one year.
- Keep your emergency pills in their original bottles.

4. EMERGENCY ITEMS



Pet Owners: Keep all service animal and pet vaccinations up to date. Most animal friendly shelters will require this.

For Wheelchair Users: Know how to convert a power chair to a manual chair.

Keep emergency items together in a convenient place.

Emergency Items:

- Flashlight & extra batteries
- Whistle (to make noise for help)
- First aid supplies (bandages, antibiotic cream, gauze pads, alcohol, etc.)
- Extra medicines and a list of each family member's medicines with their dosages.
- Radio and Weather Radio that run on batteries
- Bottled water and food such as cereal bars, peanut butter, crackers, cans of fruit, a non-electric can opener, etc.
- Other things specifically important for your child's particular disability (ex: a person who is blind should keep a folding cane for someone who is blind; extra batteries for hearing aids; important toys or comfort items such as a special blanket, radio headset, special book, etc.)

Important Documents:

- Medical records related to your child's disability
- Insurance Policies (life, health, dental, homeowners, etc.)
- Deeds
- Wills
- Powers of Attorney
- Birth Certificates
- Social Security Cards
- List of your credit cards and their numbers

You can keep all of these documents in a small fireproof lock box at home. Keep them in one place so you can easily find the documents to take with you in case of emergency.

5. WEATHER RADIO



Buy a weather radio that alerts you when there is dangerous weather or another type of emergency.

Be sure the weather radio you buy uses electricity and has a battery backup.

Weather radios are available in most stores where radios are sold and start at a cost of about \$30.

For people with hearing problems, special weather radios are available that warn you with a flashing light and a written message. These weather radios cost approximately \$140. (Midland Alert Weather Radio with Strobe – To order, call: TTY 1-800-281-3555)

6. YOUR COUNTY



Know what is going on in your county.

Make an appointment to meet with your County Emergency Manager to make sure he or she understands what people with your child's disability need. If there is an Emergency Committee in your county, make sure there is a person with your child's disability on it.

Know about the emergency plans such as where people can get transportation to a safer place, how you will be alerted in case of a severe storm, etc. Your County Commissioners make the decision about evacuations.



Many people watch weather channels in other cities. Stay aware of what is happening in your own county. Use your weather radio. Listen to **local** radio stations and stay tuned to the TV station nearest you.

Sign up for cell phone notifications for weather reports in your county.

Since people with disabilities need to get out early, it is very important that you know what is happening in your own community.

7. YOUR NEIGHBORS



Get to know your neighbors.

Even though you may assume that you will be with your child during an emergency, you may be away or injured during an emergency.

Visit with your neighbors if possible so that they understand your child's specific needs and could assist him or her if necessary. Also, get to know your neighbors' schedules so that you know when they are home and could assist you.

Of course this is not the only reason to get to know your neighbors. Think about ways that you can help your neighbors too. Give and take relationships are always the best kind.

8. SAFE PLACE



Make sure you have a good map and can safely get to the safe home.

Find a person and/or place you can go to in case of an emergency that requires evacuation.

If you can make friends with a person who has the same disability as your child in a nearby city, you could go to their home if necessary.

Finding another person with a disability like your child's means that they know the service providers you might need and perhaps have equipment or an environment that would benefit your child. (For example: Suppose your child is a wheelchair user. If your cousin is a polio survivor and has an accessible home, talk with her about evacuating there.)

Make sure this person is far enough away to be in a safe place.

Staying with supportive friends or families is much better than staying in a hotel.

Of course you need to make these arrangements way before the emergency happens.

9. CONTACT PERSON



Select someone you know outside of the state where you live who you and your family can contact in case you get separated.

Make sure everyone in your family knows this person's name and phone number. Tell your friends and family that this is the person you will contact, and that they should also contact this person to know where you and your family are and that you are all safe.

By doing this you will also have a way of finding out how other friends and family members are doing who were also required to evacuate.

After hurricane Katrina, family members were separated and had no idea if their loved ones were safe.

10. DISABILITY GROUP



Become an active member in some disability group in your community.

Being part of a group of other parents or adults who have the same disability as your child helps you get to know others with the same concerns and interests. You can feel more confident since you are working together with others on problems that affect your family.

These advocacy groups can form committees to inform members about various important issues such as emergencies. Advocacy groups can work within a local community to make sure officials are doing everything possible to help your family stay safe.

If there is no advocacy group in your community, contact the Disability Resource Group, and we can help you start a group.

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For more information:

Ready.Georgia --- www.ready.ga.gov

www.ready.ga.gov/Get-Involved/Online-Toolkit Go to this website and click on “Ready Kids Materials” to access two emergency planning and preparation **comic strips**.

Disability.Gov --- www.disability.gov

Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (ODIC) --- www.fema.gov/about

Disability Resource Group --- www.disabilityresourcegroup.org