



Disabilities and Special Needs

Creating a disaster preparedness plan that includes people with disabilities or special needs is not as complicated as you might think. If you carefully think out the answers to the questions below, you'll help people with special needs successfully navigate an emergency.

Who will be responsible for assisting the person with special needs? When a disaster strikes, you'll have a lot of responsibility as the plan leader. If possible, designate someone else to be in charge of caring for, assisting and monitoring the person with special needs in your group.

What mobility needs do you need to consider? Is there any chance you'll have to evacuate to a shelter, another city or even out-of-state? You need to consider this possibility when you're making your emergency preparations. Plan for the mobility needs of the special needs person you're caring for. Is your primary vehicle the right choice to transport everyone—including the person with special needs—should you have to leave home?

Will transportation assistance be needed to evacuate in advance of a hurricane? In a number of states, there is a special assistance registry for people who are unable to evacuate on their own. Dial 2-1-1 to find out if your state has this service. To arrange for transportation for yourself or a family member, call 2-1-1. **It's important to remember that 2-1-1 is not an emergency number**

2·1·1 to call during a storm – you must pre-register for evacuation transportation.

Does a plan member have special medication needs? People with special needs may require routine medications as part of their daily treatment. Do you have a complete list of medications, dosages and times they should be taken? Do you have copies of prescriptions to show emergency/rescue personnel? Is there someone in your family or group who will monitor a dosage schedule and administer medications?

Are you prepared for a prolonged stay away from home? In a serious emergency, you might find your time away from home extended by weeks or even months, so you have to consider how you'll handle a prolonged evacuation period for a person with special needs. Where

will you go? Are you aware of medical professionals in the area who can provide the special services required? Do you know where you'll fill prescriptions or restock the special supplies you might need? If you need dialysis treatments, do you know where facilities are located?

Pets

For many people, their pets are like members of the family. Yet, too often, family pets are overlooked during disaster planning. Here's what you need to consider to protect your pets during a disaster.

How many pets do you need to plan for? Some families have more than one pet; others have an assortment of animals. When you're making your emergency preparations, you'll need to take into account the type of pet(s) you're planning for. How big are they? Do your pets get along with one another?

Are there any special needs you need to consider for your pet(s)? Just like their owners, pets have special needs that must be addressed when you create your preparedness plan. Do they need any special medications or foods?

How will you transport your pet(s)? Emergency situations often require families to leave home and relocate to shelters, other cities, or even out of state. Your disaster preparedness plans need to include how you will move your animals with your family. Do you have enough cages to contain your pets comfortably? Do you have enough food and water in your travel supplies? Is there enough room in your vehicle for your family, your pets, their cages and your supplies?

Have you completed your pre-planning for your pet preparations? Making an emergency plan that includes your pet's needs means doing a little homework ahead of time. Before you can commit to a plan, you have to make sure all the pieces are in place. Do you have a list of hotels/motels that accept pets? Do you have proof that you registered and vaccinated your pet in case you need to go to a shelter?

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