

Tips for People with Access and Functional Needs

Now is the time to plan ahead for what you may need to stay safe, healthy, informed, mobile and independent during a disaster. Remember that a disaster may require shelter-in-place at home or evacuating to an emergency shelter or other form of temporary housing. Plan to maintain your independence before an emergency strikes:

Before an Emergency

- Evaluate your capabilities, limitation needs and surroundings to determine what type of support will be needed in an emergency.
- Create a support network and a disaster plan. Consider family, neighbors, friends, doctors, faith-based and community groups in helping to develop.
- Contact your City or County government's emergency management office and work with them to use their emergency planning resources.
- Maintain a list of medications, allergies, special equipment, names and numbers of doctors, pharmacists and family members with you at all times.
- Have medical alert tags, bracelets and written descriptions of your disability and support needs, in case you are unable to describe the situation in an emergency.
- Show others how to operate wheelchair or other assistive devices.
- Put a security light in each room, these lights light up immediately if there is a loss of power.
- If you are dependent on electricity for your wheelchair, breathing machine or other life sustaining device, plan for a loss of power.
- If you have a service animal, make sure that it is registered for a service tag.

During and After a Disaster

- Remain calm and patient. Staying calm and rational will help you move safely and avoid delays or accidents caused by irrational behavior.
- Put your plan into action. Having specific steps to take will keep you working toward you and your family's safety. Be calm.
- Listen to local radio or television for news and instructions. Local authorities will provide the most appropriate advice for your particular situation. Cooperate fully with public safety officials and instructions.
- If you evacuate your home, leave a message at your home telling family members and others where you can be found.
- Prepare to be self-sufficient for at least three days.
- If returning home from an evacuation and your power is out, unplug all small and sensitive items to prevent electrical damage.
- Check or have a certified technician check your water heater and appliances for damage. Do your checking with a flashlight only, *not matches or candles*.
- If you smell gas, open windows and turn off at main valve. Don't turn on lights and appliances until the gas has dissipated and the system has been check by a certified technician.