



Preparing for Emergencies

A Checklist for People with Mobility Challenges

For the millions of Americans with mobility problems, emergencies such as fires and floods present a special challenge. Protecting yourself and your family when disaster strikes, requires planning ahead. This checklist will help you get started. Discuss these ideas with your family, friends or a personal care attendant and prepare an emergency plan. Post the plan where everyone will see it.

Emergency Checklist

Create a Plan

- Meet with household members or your personal care attendant. Discuss the dangers of fire, severe weather, earthquakes and other emergencies that might occur in your community.
- Determine what you will need to do for each type of emergency. For example, most people head for a basement when there is a tornado warning but most basements are not wheelchair accessible. Determine in advance your alternative shelter and how to get there.
- Post emergency telephone numbers near telephones and teach your children how and when to call for help.
- Learn what to do in case of power outages and personal injuries. Know how to connect or start a back-up power supply for essential medical equipment.
- If you or someone in your household uses a wheelchair, make more than one exit from your home wheelchair-accessible in case the primary exit is blocked in a disaster.
- Teach those who may need to assist you in an emergency how to operate necessary equipment.
- Arrange for a relative or neighbor to check on you in an emergency.
- Learn how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at main valves or switches.
- Plan and practice how to escape from your home in an emergency.
- Consider getting a medical alert system that will allow you to call for help if you are immobilized in an emergency.
- If you live in an apartment, ask the management to identify and mark accessible exits.
- Learn your community's evacuation routes.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio for emergency information.
- Pick one out-of-state and one local friend or relative for family members to call if separated by disaster.
- Pick two meeting places:
 1. A place near your home in case of fire.
 2. A place outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home after a disaster.
- Keep family records in a watertight, fire-proof container.

Prepare a Disaster Supplies Kit

Assemble supplies you might need in an evacuation. Store them in an easy to carry container such as a backpack or duffle bag. Include:

- A battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries for them.
- A first aid kit, prescription medicines and an extra pair of glasses.
- A supply of water (one gallon per person per day). Store water in sealed, unbreakable containers. Identify the storage date and replace every six months.
- A supply of non-perishable food and a non-electric can opener plus any special foods you require.
- If you have a baby, include extra diapers and other infant care items.
- Extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, medication, catheters, food for guide or service dogs or other special equipment you might need.
- A change of clothing, rain gear and sturdy shoes.
- Blankets or sleeping bags.
- A list of family physicians and the relative or friend who should be notified if you are injured.
- A list of the style and serial numbers of medical devices such as pacemakers.
- An extra set of car keys.

Home Hazard Hunt

In a disaster, anything that can move, fall, break or cause a fire is a potential hazard.

- Repair defective electrical wiring. Smell for leaky gas connections. If you smell gas, turn the gas off and call a professional to repair it.
- Keep the shut-off switch for oxygen equipment near your bed or chair so you can get to it quickly if there is a fire.
- Fasten shelves securely to the wall. Place large, heavy objects on lower shelves or the floor.
- Hang pictures and mirrors away from beds. Bolt large pictures or mirrors to the wall.
- Secure water heater by strapping it to a nearby wall.
- Repair cracks in ceilings or foundations. Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Store weed killers, pesticides and flammable products away from heat sources.
- Have chimneys, flue pipes, vents connectors and gas vents cleaned and repaired by a professional.

If You Need to Evacuate

- Listen to a battery-powered radio for the location of emergency shelters. Know in advance the location of wheelchair accessible shelters. Follow instructions of local officials.
- Wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Take your Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Lock your house.
- Use travel routes specified or special assistance provided by local officials.
- If you are sure you have time
 - Let others know when you left and where you are going.
 - Make arrangements for pets. Animals other than service animals may not be allowed in public shelters.

Car Kit

Include...

- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, extra batteries and maps.
- Blanket and first aid kit.
- Shovel.
- Tire repair kit, booster cables, air pump and flares.
- Fire extinguisher (5 lb., A-B-C type).
- Bottled water and nonperishable foods such as granola bars, raisins and cookies.

Fire Safety

- Plan two escape routes out of each room. If you cannot use the stairways, make special arrangements for help in advance. Never use the elevators.
- Install smoke detectors. Clean and test smoke detectors once a month. Change batteries at least once a year.
- If there is a fire, do not try to fight the fire. Get out fast. Do not stop for pets or possessions. Call the fire department after you are outside. Never go back into a burning building.
- Feel the bottom of the door with the palm of your hand. If it is hot, find another way out.

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