



HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS GUIDE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

BEFORE THE DISASTER

There are several important things that can be done in order to reduce the effects of a disaster:

1. Make sure you have a support system in place.
2. Complete your personal individual assessment and prepare your individual disaster plan.
3. Gather the supplies you will need before, during, and after a disaster. Make sure the supplies are specific to your disability.
4. Make sure your residence is as safe as possible in the event of an emergency.

REMEMBER PREPAREDNESS MUST BEGIN WITH YOU. SUPPORT SYSTEM

A support system, sometimes called the "buddy system," can help you prepare for a disaster as well as during and after a disaster. Members of your support system, or "buddies," can be roommates, relatives, neighbors, friends and co-workers. They should be people you trust to determine if you need assistance. Your support system members should know your capabilities and needs, and be able to help in a matter of minutes.

1. Have your "buddies" assist you in preparing a written personal assessment.
2. Give your support system copies of your emergency information list, medical information list, disability related supplies and special equipment list, evacuation plans, any emergency documents and your personal disaster plan.
3. Arrange for your support system to check on you immediately if local officials announce a recommendation to evacuate or if a disaster occurs.
4. Agree on the methods of communication to be used during a disaster.
5. Give your "buddies" any keys they need for your place of residence or vehicle.
6. Make sure your support system knows how to operate and transport any equipment specific to your disability. Make sure it is labeled and laminated instruction cards are attached.
7. If you have a service animal, ensure that the animal is familiar with your support system members and have written instructions on any care the animal may require.



8. Review and update your personal assessment and disaster plan with your support system on a regular basis.

PRACTICE YOUR PLAN **PERSONAL ASSESSMENT**

The assistance you will need before, during, and after a disaster will be determined by the nature of the disaster itself and your individual capabilities. The answers to the following questions should be written or recorded and distributed to all members of your support system:

PERSONAL CARE:

- Do you need assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing and grooming?
- Do you use adaptive equipment to help you get dressed?

WATER SERVICE:

- What will you do if there is no water for several days?
- What will you do if you are unable to heat water?

PERSONAL CARE EQUIPMENT:

- Do you use a shower chair, tub-transfer bench or other similar equipment?

ADAPTIVE FEEDING DEVICES:

- Do you use special utensils that help you prepare or eat food independently?

ELECTRICITY DEPENDENT EQUIPMENT:

- What equipment do you have that runs on electricity and how will you operate it if electrical service is disrupted?

TRANSPORTATION:

- Do you need a specially equipped vehicle or accessible transportation?

NECESSITIES:

- Who will get groceries, medication, and medical supplies?
- How will this be accomplished if the roads are blocked because of the disaster?



EVACUATING:

- Do you need assistance if you are requested to evacuate?

EXITS

- Who will you call if you need help exiting your residence?
- What available alternate exits are in your residence?

SERVICE ANIMALS:

- Who will care for your animal(s) in case of an emergency?

PERSONAL DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

REMEMBER PREPAREDNESS MUST BEGIN WITH YOU

Preparation, which includes practice, is the key to success in dealing with a disaster. Preparation is an ongoing process. Keep in mind that the usual means of support and assistance may not be available during an evacuation and after the disaster. Prepare a personal disaster plan.

Included in this guide is information for the plan and a disaster plan checklist for you to follow. Keep several copies at different accessible locations, and remember, share the plan with your support system.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION LIST:

An emergency information list is to let others know the people that should be called if you are found unconscious, unable to speak or need assistance to evacuate. Include emergency out-of-town contacts as well as all names and numbers of your support system. Have a relative or friend who lives from 50-100 miles away from you as your "contact person". This is advisable because normally someone outside a disaster area is more able to be contacted. Ask your "contact person" to relay information to others; this will help reduce phone calls into and out of the affected area. Be sure your emergency information list states the best way to communicate with you.

MEDICAL INFORMATION LIST:

A medical information list should contain information about your medical providers, the name, dosage, and prescribing physician of medications, your medical condition and physician's phone number. List any adaptive equipment you use, your allergies and sensitivities, and communications or cognitive difficulties you may have. Attach copies of health insurance cards. Make arrangements to have additional medication, enough to last a minimum of 14 days, in case of a disaster. Have additional copies of prescriptions.



GENERAL PREPARATION INFORMATION:

Install adequate smoke detectors. If you are hearing impaired, install a system that utilizes strobe lights. Test your detectors monthly, and replace the batteries at least twice a year.

Write down the location of the utility cutoff valves and how they are turned off, if directed by City Officials. Have the proper tools available and provide this information to your support system members. Remember, if it is necessary to turn off the gas, it should only be turned back on by a professional.

Have a floor plan of your residence. Note your primary and alternate escape routes. Practice using different ways out of your residence. Note the position of your disaster supply kit.

Make arrangements for your pets in case of a disaster. Emergency shelters will only accept service animals.

Prepare an evacuation plan. Make arrangements for evacuation and transportation assistance if necessary. Make arrangements for a place to stay outside of your area in case of an evacuation. Keep your vehicle's fuel tank full during hurricane season.

Practice how to explain specific needs to others, such as how to move you and your adaptive equipment. Practice giving brief, clear, specific instructions or have them written down.

DISASTER PLAN CHECKLIST

As you complete each section of your personal disaster plan, mark the date completed on the checklist below:

Review and update your plan on a regular basis

Make an Emergency Information List. Include the following:

Medical and emergency contact information
Emergency out-of-town contacts
Names and numbers of your support system
Name and number of a "contact" person who lives 50-100 miles from you.
Means of communication if you have a communication disability.

Make a Medical Information List. Include the following:

- Medical providers
- Medications you use
- Adaptive equipment, body support equipment
- Allergies and sensitivities
- Communications or cognitive difficulties
- Attach copies of health insurance cards



- Have an additional 14 day supply of medication available.
- Have extra copies of prescriptions.
- Identify a specific evacuation location if an evacuation is recommended.
- Write down your means of transportation in case of an evacuation.
- Install smoke detectors in your residence.

Have a floor plan of your residence.

Identify primary and secondary exits
Practice using different ways out of your residence

List any equipment you will need for assistance.

Practice or write down brief, clear, specific instructions or directions.

Write down plans for your pets and/or service animal.

DISASTER SUPPLY KIT

The following list contains your basic disaster supplies for your residence and your disability related supplies:

You should keep enough basic supplies to maintain you in your home for at least three days, preferably seven or more

A supply of water for drinking and cooking (one gallon per person per day) Store in sealed, unbreakable containers.

A supply of non-perishable packaged food or canned food and a non-electric can opener.

A change of clothing, shoes, and raingear.

Blankets or sleeping bags (one per person).

A first aid kit and additional prescription medications.

Extra eyeglasses or contact lens supplies.

A battery powered radio, flashlight and extra batteries.

Credit cards and cash in a water proof container.

Extra keys.

Books, magazines, cards, toys, and games.

Important documents in water proof containers (will, insurance policies, deeds, etc.).

Photographs or videotapes of personal property and up-to-date inventory.

Hygiene and sanitary supplies, grooming supplies.

Tools (hammer, screwdriver, wrench, etc.).

Fire extinguisher



Food, leash, harness and other items for service animals and/or pets.

Eating utensils.

Dressing, writing or hearing devices.

Source of oxygen with flow regulator.

Suction equipment.

Dialysis equipment

Urinary supplies

Osmotic supplies.

Wheelchair, walker, crutches, cane.

Dentures.

Monitors.

FIRST AID KIT

**A first aid kit is a part of your disaster supply kit.
The following items are suggested as a minimum:**

- Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- Scissors, tweezers, needle
- 2 inch and 3 inch sterile gauze pads
- Safety razor blade
- Hypoallergenic adhesive tape
- Bar of soap
- 2 inch and 3 inch sterile roll bandages
- Moistened towelettes
- Tongue blades and wooden applicator sticks
- Tube petroleum jelly or other lubricant
- Antiseptic spray
- Safety pins in assorted sizes
- Thermometer
- Cleansing agent/soap
- Latex gloves
- Sunscreen, insect repellent
- Aspirin, antidiarrheal medication, antacid, laxative, and other nonprescription drugs



MAKING YOUR RESIDENCE SAFER

One of the best ways to reduce damages from a disaster as well as avoid possible injuries is to prepare your residence before the disaster.

The following is a list of suggestions to help make your residence safer:

- Check the hallways, stairways, doorways, windows, and other areas for any hazards that may keep you from leaving your residence.
- Secure or remove furniture and other items that may block your escape route.
- Keep a battery powered emergency light to provide illumination in case of a power outage.
- Bring indoors any outdoor items which may be blown around.

DURING THE DISASTER

Watches and Warnings

The National Weather Service gives severe weather information to the public. These include thunderstorms, freezes, floods, and tornadoes. Listen for the following terms:

"Watch"

Means that severe weather is threatening and may occur in your area. Continue to listen to the radio or watch television for information and advice.

"Warning"

Means that the event is happening now; it is imminent or has been seen on weather radar. This is the time to immediately protect yourself.

Some events happen quickly and there may not be time to issue warnings. The time to take action is when severe weather may be moving into your area, even if no official watch or warning has been issued.

HURRICANES

If you have not been advised to evacuate the area, stay in the middle of your residence, away from windows. If you are visually impaired, use a long cane in areas where debris may have fallen or furniture may have shifted. This is recommended even if you do not usually use a cane



indoors. Watch your television or listen to your NOAA weather radio for updates. Stay in close contact with your support system "buddies" and be prepared to evacuate if recommended.

FLOODS

Flooding can not only accompany hurricanes but torrential rains can also cause serious flooding in the Houston area. In case of flooding, evacuate immediately if recommended. Avoid areas subject to flooding. Do not attempt to cross or drive over a flooded road. The roadbed may be washed out and you could be stranded. If you have a two story residence, move to the second floor.

TORNADOES

Hurricanes also spawn tornadoes. A tornado warning means a tornado has been sighted; take shelter immediately. Stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls. Protect yourself from falling objects or flying debris. Go to an interior part of the structure on the lowest level (closet, interior hallway). If at all possible get under something sturdy, such as a heavy table, and stay there until the danger has passed.

AFTER THE DISASTER

Disasters have many effects. Some are predictable and others are not. You should know what can happen and what your environment may be like after the disaster.

HURRICANES

Do not return to your residence until local officials have informed you that it is safe. Keep tuned to the radio and television for instructions. Drive carefully along debris filled roads. Roads could be undermined and collapse under the weight of a vehicle. Avoid loose or dangling wires and report them immediately to your power company or to the police or fire department. Report broken sewer or water mains. Avoid using open flames. Because of decreased water pressure, fire fighting becomes difficult. Check refrigerated food for spoilage if power has been off during the storm. When you arrive home, have your "buddy" assist you in checking for visible structural damage before you go inside.

FLOODS

Roads and sidewalks may be covered with mud, water, or debris, so you may not be able to tell where they begin or end. If fresh food has come in contact with flood waters, throw it out. Local authorities may issue a boil water order. Boil drinking water before using if pressure is low or the water is cloudy. Electrical equipment should be checked and dried before using. Use flashlights, not lanterns, torches, candles, or matches. Report broken utility lines.



TORNADOES

Homes and buildings may be totally destroyed or left isolated. Your residence could be damaged so that it is unlivable for a long time. Streets may be filled with debris. Power lines may be down, sewer and water mains may be broken. Tornadoes are nature's most violent and erratic storms. A tornado can travel for miles along the ground, lift and suddenly change direction and strike again.

AFTER THE DISASTER

Your usual way of getting groceries, medications and medical supplies may be disrupted. It may take several days before stores reopen, so you may not be able to readily replace even basic items related to your disability, i.e. hearing aid batteries and prescription medications.

You may not be able to carry out your daily activities as you did before the disaster.

You may have difficulty reaching the police, fire department, EMS, doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, veterinarians, or home health providers.

Utilities may be disrupted for a long time.

You may not be able to cook, cool or heat your home, use the telephone, watch television, use medical equipment dependent on electricity, use banks or ATM machines, or fill your vehicle with gas.

Public transportation may not be operating. Routes and schedules may be changed. METRO lift system may not be operating.

Roads may be damaged or blocked. Road signs may be down. Traffic lights may not be operating. Travel time may be longer because of obstacles, detours, and additional traffic.

You may need temporary housing for your pets.

DISASTER RELATED STRESS

Experiencing a disaster can be overwhelming. Stress may make many medical conditions worse. If you experience any symptoms that affect your ability to function, seek medical attention. Some people may never have a reaction. Others may have delayed reactions that can appear days, weeks, or even months after a disaster.

After a disaster, be sure to talk to someone about how you are feeling, i.e. a friend, a member of the clergy, a counselor, or seek the assistance of a mental health professional who can help you deal with the stress related to your disaster experience.

You are accustomed to being in a certain environment. A disaster can change your ability to deal with that environment. It is important that you anticipate for the lowest level of functioning for your individual disaster plan. Your condition may become worse because of physical or emotional

reaction stress. For example, people who do not need the aid of devices on a daily basis may need a wheelchair after a disaster.

After a disaster, you may need to ask for help to do things you usually would have done independently. This may make you feel especially vulnerable. You may need assistance putting your home back in order, filling out forms, or providing documentation and information to disaster relief agencies. This can add to the stress you may be feeling. A personal network that knows your needs may anticipate some of them and make your recovery easier and less stressful.

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