

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS FOR THE DISABLED

If you have a disability or a mobility problem, you should consider adding the following steps to the usual preparations:

- **Create a network of relatives, friends, or co-workers to assist in an emergency.** If you think you may need assistance in a disaster, discuss your disability with relatives, friends, or co-workers and ask for their help.

For example, if you need help moving or help getting necessary prescriptions, food, or other essentials, or if you require special arrangements to receive emergency messages, make a plan with friends or helpers. Make sure they know where you keep your Disaster Supplies Kit. Give a key to a neighbor or friend who may be able to assist you in a disaster.

- **Maintain a list of important items and store the list with your Disaster Supplies Kit.** Give a copy to another member of your household and a friend or neighbor. Important items might include:

- Special equipment and supplies, for example, hearing aid batteries.

- Current prescription names, sources, and dosages.

- Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of doctors and pharmacists.

If you get prescriptions by mail, confirm where you will be able to get them locally in an emergency.

- Detailed information about the specifications of your medication or medical regimen, including a list of



things incompatible with medication you use, for example, aspirin.

- **Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your disability** in case of an emergency. These may save your life if you are in need of medical attention and unable to communicate.

- **Know the location and availability of more than one facility if you are dependent on a dialysis machine or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.** There may be other people requiring equipment, or facilities may have been affected by the disaster.

- **If you have a severe speech, language, or hearing disability:**

- When you dial 9-1-1, tap the space bar to indicate a TDD call.

- Store a writing pad and pencils to communicate with others.

- Keep a flashlight handy to signal your whereabouts to other people and for illumination to aid in communication.

- Remind friends that you cannot completely hear warnings or emergency instructions. Ask them to be your source of emergency information as it comes over the radio. Another option is to use a NOAA Weather Radio with an alert feature connected to a light. If a watch or warning is

issued for your area, the light would alert you to potential danger.

• **If you have a service animal-**Be aware that the animal may become confused or disoriented in an emergency. Disasters may often mask or confuse scent markers that are part of your service animal's normal means of navigation.

-If you are blind or visually impaired, keep extra canes placed around your home and office, even if you use a guide dog.

-If you have a guide dog, train the dog to know one or two alternate routes out of your home or office. A guide dog familiar with the building may help you and others find a way out when no one else can see.

-Be sure your service animal has identification and your phone numbers attached to its collar, including emergency contact information through a national pet locator service.

-Have a complete pet disaster kit with food and water, medical records and identification, bowls, extra leash, a favorite toy, and a pet first aid kit.

-Trained service animals should be allowed to stay in emergency shelters with their owners.

• **What about other than service animal care after a disaster?** Pets usually are not permitted in public shelters or other places where food is served. Where could you take your pets if you had to go to a public shelter? Contact your local emergency management agency to find out about emergency animal

shelters in your community, in the event that you have nowhere else to go and need to go to public shelter with your animals.

• **If you use a wheelchair:**

-Show friends how to operate your wheelchair or help you transfer out of your chair so they can move you quickly if necessary.

-If you use a power wheelchair, make sure friends know the size of your wheelchair, in case it has to be transported, and know where to get a battery if needed.

-Inquire about emergency equipment that would make it easier for others to help you get out if you live or work in a high-rise building and might have to evacuate via a stairwell. Make arrangements with others to be carried out, if necessary, and practice doing that.

• **Listen to the advice of local officials.**

People with disabilities have the same choices as other community residents about whether to evacuate their homes and where to go when an emergency threatens. Decide whether it is better to leave the area, stay with a friend, or go to a public shelter. Each of these decisions requires planning and preparation.

• **Find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or day care center, and other places where members of your family**

For general preparedness, every household should create and practice a Family Disaster Plan and assemble and maintain a Disaster Supplies Kit. In addition, every household should take precautions specific to the types of disasters that could affect the local community and plan for and practice what to do if these disasters occur.