



PREPARING FOR AN EMERGENCY: A CHECKLIST FOR PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY CHALLENGES

Emergencies like fires and floods can present a challenge to everyone. The challenge of protecting oneself requires planning and oftentimes, assistance from others. This holds true for the millions of people with mobility problems as well. Protecting yourself and your family when a disaster strikes requires planning. This checklist from the American Red Cross will help you get started.

- First of all, get the appropriate information. Call your local American Red Cross chapter or County Emergency Management Office to find out which disasters occur in your area and how to prepare for each. Some communities ask people with a disability to register, usually with the County Emergency Management Office so that help can be provided quickly. Remember to update your information if you are already registered.
- Determine in advance where to go in case you must leave your home. Check with your community Emergency Management Office to see what resources are available for your specific needs during emergency situations.
- Transportation arrangements should be pre-arranged. If you need a van, wheelchair van or ambulance for transportation, pre-confirm arrangements. Be aware of alternate travel routes in case roads are closed.
- If you are traveling, establish a daily communication contact.
- Ask your supervisor about emergency plans at your workplace and what provisions have been made to assist you to evacuate if needed.
- If you have a personal care attendant obtained from an agency, check to see if the agency has a plan for emergencies.
- Create a family disaster plan. Meet with family, household members and/or your personal care attendant to discuss what measures you might have to take.
- 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. Plan and practice how to escape from your home.
- Consider getting a medical alert system that will allow you to call for help if you are immobilized.
- Keep emergency telephone numbers posted near phones and teach your children how and when to call for help.
- If you live in an apartment, ask the management to identify and mark accessible exits and know in advance where they are located.
- Update your health insurance information. Review your policy for coverage such as medical evacuation.

Your kit should include the following additional items:

- extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, medication, catheters, food for guide or service dogs or other specialty equipment you might need
 - list of family physicians, with phone numbers, to be notified if you are injured
 - carry a card with medical information such as blood type, medications and allergies
 - list of the style and serial numbers of medical devices, such as pacemakers
 - alternative mobility equipment if battery or electricity dependent, such as crutches or walkers
- You should be aware of what hazards exist in your home and how they can be corrected. Repair defective electrical wiring, secure large objects, repair cracks in ceilings or foundations, and have vents cleaned by a professional. Basically, you want to be aware of and correct any potential hazards -- anything that can move, fall, break, cause a fire or impede your mobility.
- If you do need to evacuate to a shelter, confirm the shelter can meet your particular needs. If the shelter cannot meet your needs, consider seeking an alternative shelter that can meet your needs if the situation allows.
- Discuss these ideas with your family, friends, and/or a person care attendant.

**For more information contact the American Red Cross Alabama Gulf Coast Chapter
(251)438-2571**

www.redcrossalcoast.org