



Health Information and Education Center

Disaster Planning for Families of Children with Special Health Care Needs

Adapted with permission from Florida Institute for Family Involvement

Coping with an emergency or disaster is difficult for most families, but if you have members of your family with special needs, the ability to manage can become more difficult. Families living with special needs should take extra precautions to ensure that they are prepared to meet the needs of their entire family, including the individual with special needs. Whether it is a tornado, blizzard, flood, fire or the possibility of bioterrorism, families need to be ready and prepared. Below are a few tips gathered from the American Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with an added emphasis on meeting the special needs of the family.

Special Note

Families with special needs must carefully assess their options. They should ask themselves the following questions:

- Can we manage the entire needs of our family for three days with little or no outside assistance?
- Can we meet any crisis or emergency on our own for that period of time?
- Can we make decisions concerning our special needs without consultation or help for three days?
- Do we have the supplies and equipment to meet our special needs for three days?

If you must answer "no" to any of the above, you should seriously consider evacuation. If you have an individual with special needs in your home you should make plans in advance of any disaster for where and how you will evacuate. Many areas have "special needs shelters" that are equipped with medical staff and specialized equipment for individuals with special needs. You should check the shelters in your area and become familiar with their location, procedures, and policies concerning how many members of the family can accompany the person with special needs. For more information on shelters call your local Red Cross.

Preparation

Preparation is the key to surviving a disaster and managing the chaos that occurs afterwards. There are many tips for preparing for a disaster that is applicable to all families. In addition, families with special needs must be prepared to manage their needs under undesirable conditions. One way to prepare is by making a Disaster Supplies Kit. When a disaster hits, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. But if you've gathered supplies in advance, your family can handle an evacuation or home confinement.

Create a Disaster Plan

Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, severe weather, and earthquakes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.

Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. As a family discuss how this can affect all family members and how you will address the special needs of persons with a disability. Explain what to do in each case.

- Pick two places to meet in the event you are separated such as right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire. or outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone must know the address and phone number of the "meeting place".
- Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your contact's phone number.
- Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.).
- Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.
- Show each family member how and when to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at the main switches.
- Determine the best evacuation routes from your home.

If You Are Staying at Home or Other Non-Shelter Location

There are six basics you should stock for your home: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies, and special items. These items will be for use in the event you are confined to your home. If you are evacuating to a location other than a shelter and are unsure of the supplies that will be available to you, you will need to pack all of the following and take it with you.

Water

Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers, and many persons with special needs will need more.

Store one gallon of water per person per day.

Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for each person in your household for food preparation/sanitation).

Food

Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Select food items that are compact and lightweight.

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables
- Canned juices
- Staples (salt, sugar, pepper, spices, etc.)
- Food for infants
- Comfort/stress foods
- Food that meets diets of individuals with
- High-energy foods
- Pedialyte
- Vitamins

Keep items in airtight plastic bags. Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh. Replace your stored food every six months. Re-think your kit and family needs at least once a year



First Aid Kit

Assemble a first aid kit for your home and one for each car.

A first aid kit should include:

- ♥ Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- ♥ Assorted sizes of safety pins
- ♥ Cleansing agent/soap
- ♥ Latex gloves (2 pairs)
- ♥ Moistened towelettes
- ♥ Sunscreen
- ♥ 2-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- ♥ 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- ♥ Triangular bandages (3)
- ♥ Non-prescription drugs
- ♥ 2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- ♥ 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- ♥ Scissors
- ♥ Tweezers
- ♥ Needle
- ♥ Antiseptic
- ♥ Thermometer
- ♥ Tongue blades (2)
- ♥ Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant

Non-Prescription Drugs:

- ♥ Aspirin or nonaspirin pain reliever
- ♥ Anti-diarrhea medication Antacid (for stomach upset)
- ♥ Syrup of Ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center)
- ♥ Laxative Activated charcoal (use if advised by the Poison Control Center)



Supplies for Special Needs

Two weeks supply of all disposable supplies

- ♥ Copies of prescriptions for medical equipment, supplies, and medications such as dressing, nasal cannulas, suction catheters etc.
- ♥ Two-week supply of all medications, prescription and non-prescription
- ♥ Extra eyeglasses
- ♥ Contact lenses and supplies
- ♥ Electrical backup for a medical equipment
- ♥ Extra batteries for hearing aids, communication devices

Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.

For Infants and children

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Formula | <input type="checkbox"/> Medications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diapers | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacifiers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bottles | <input type="checkbox"/> Favorite blanket or toy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Powdered milk | |

Tools and Supplies

- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils
- Emergency preparedness manual
- Battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Non-electric can opener, utility knife
- Fire extinguisher: small canister ABC type
- Tube tent
- Pliers
- Tape
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Needles, thread
- Medicine dropper
- Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas/water
- Whistle
- Plastic sheeting
- Map of the area (for locating shelters)
- Blankets or sleeping bags

- Hat and gloves
- Sunglasses

Sanitation

- ♥ Toilet paper
- ♥ towelettes
- ♥ Plastic garbage bags, ties
- ♥ Plastic bucket with tight lid
- ♥ Disinfectant or household chlorine bleach

For personal sanitation uses

- Soap, liquid detergent
- Feminine supplies
- Personal hygiene items

Clothing and Bedding

- Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person.
- Sturdy shoes or work boots
- Rain gear

Entertainment

- Games (card or board games)
- Books for all ages of the family

Important Family Documents

Keep these records in a waterproof, portable container:

- ♥ Will
- ♥ Insurance policies
- ♥ Contracts & deeds
- ♥ Stocks and bonds
- ♥ Passports
- ♥ Social security cards
- ♥ Immunization records
- ♥ Bank account numbers
- ♥ Credit card account numbers and companies
- ♥ Inventory of valuable household goods
- ♥ Important telephone numbers
- ♥ Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)

In the Event that You Must Leave Home

Keep all of the items that you will most likely need during an evacuation in an easy-to carry container—such as a backpack or duffle bag. Keep the bag in an easy to reach place near the exit you most often use at your home.

Many of the items listed above are also things you should prepare to take with you in the event of an emergency.

A helpful tip is to leave important documents in the freezer in a zip lock bag to easily locate.

To contact FVND call 888-522-9654, www.geocities.com/ndfv/ or write PO Box 163
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