

# Emergency Preparedness

## Personal Planning for the Future

### General tips for disaster or emergency preparation

It is everyone's responsibility to prepare themselves as much as possible for the unexpected. You can take out some of the stress that comes with living through and surviving a disaster by planning and preparing. This way, you will be ready to meet your own personal needs.

### Basic items

- Have at least three days worth of food, medications, water, clothes and whatever else you need to meet your needs.
- Base what your emergency supplies are and how much you need on what you use during your hardest days, e.g. an extra dose of medication.
- Have extra batteries that are charged and are the right size, or a generator, for any durable medical equipment, communication devices, and augmentative devices. Common examples include hearing aids, breathing and oxygen machines, or implants.
- Put your name and contact information on an ID tag on your emergency supplies and any bags you will take with you. This way they can be returned to you if they get lost or separated from you.
- Mark emergency supplies in large, brightly colored lettering.

### Preparing your home for an emergency

- Know which rooms in your home are the safest for each type of expected disaster in your area, e.g. in the case of a tornado, an interior room with few windows.
- Have a clear walkway in each room to exit your home quickly and safely.
- Put in security or back-up lights in general areas of your house that will turn on automatically when the power goes out.
- Have an alternate power source, such as a generator, if possible.
- Know how to shut off your gas, water and electric. You may be told to do so in a state of emergency.
- Keep an emergency contact list by your phone.
- Lock your home behind you if you are evacuated.



## Preparing yourself for an emergency

- Carry an emergency health information card at all times and keep one with your emergency supplies.
- If you have a trusted neighbor or family member nearby, it may be a good idea to give this person a key to your home. This way, he/she can check in with you in an emergency.
- Have an emergency contact that is out-of-town. It is often easier to call out-of-town or long distance during a disaster than it is to make a local call.
- Keep a list of your medications and doses with you at all times.
- If you have trouble hearing or are deaf, keep paper and pens with your emergency supplies to make communication easier. You may want to keep pre-printed messages with your supplies to save time. These messages could say that you have trouble hearing or tell emergency responders to write everything down.
- Have an emergency kit ready for your service dog. You may want your service dog's emergency kit to be in a pack he/she can carry.
- Keep a manual version of any durable medical equipment you use in case you can no longer power your electric one, e.g. a manual wheelchair.
- Keep an extra backpack of emergency supplies on your wheelchair, walker or scooter in case you are in an emergency while you are away from home.

- If you do not always use your durable medical equipment/mobility device, keep it stored in the same place at all times so you or someone else knows right where it is.



- Have a patch kit in your emergency kit so you can repair a tire on a motorized scooter or wheelchair.
- Keep an extra charged battery for each piece of durable medical equipment you have.
- Keep instruction cards on how to work your home health equipment with your emergency supplies in case someone who is not familiar with your device has to work it.
- Carry instructions explaining how to carry you safely in case you must be evacuated or if your mobility device has to be left behind.
- Make sure different people, other than your usual home health aide, know your needs.

## Life Support Systems


- Make arrangements or create a Memo of Understanding (MOU) before an emergency happens with medical providers and suppliers to keep your life support system going in case your home system fails.
- Talk to your healthcare provider to find out if you are able to use a lower amount of oxygen in emergencies than you normally would use. This may help make your oxygen last longer if you are not able to get more for a few days.

- Let your electric company know you use a life support system. You will be put on a utility registry for people who have priority in getting their power turned back on.

## Cognitive Disabilities

- Practice an escape route out of your home or workplace many times and often. The easier an escape route is, the more likely a person will remember it.
- Talk to your loved one about what could happen in the aftermath of a disaster. This could include sleeping in an unfamiliar place and not getting the same kinds of food he/she is used to.

## Emergency Supplies

- Water: you should have one gallon of water for every person in your household for each day. The general rule of thumb is to be prepared to wait out a disaster or emergency for three days.
  - Food: you should have at least a three day supply for each person in your household of non-perishable food that does not have to be refrigerated. Examples include beef jerky, peanut butter, granola bars, canned fruit, dried fruit, nuts, tuna and dry cereal.
  - Manual can opener: many non-perishable foods come in cans. Keeping a can opener with your emergency food supply makes it a lot easier to get into your food. You may also want to keep cups, plates, utensils and paper towels with your supplies.
  - Battery powered or hand-crank radio: any radio that gets stations is good to help keep you up-to-date in an emergency. However, a weather radio may be especially helpful when in a natural disaster.
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- Flashlight(s) and enough extra batteries for all equipment.
  - First aid kit: make sure your first aid kit meets your medical needs. For example, if you take insulin, your kit should have extra insulin and needles.
  - Plastic sheeting with duct tape: can be used to cover your home's windows and doors in case outdoor air is full of debris or chemicals. The plastic sheeting will make a barrier between you and the harmful air outside.
  - Moist towelettes and garbage bags with plastic ties: for sanitation and hygiene purposes in case sewage and water systems no longer work.
  - Household bleach and medicine dropper: in case you do not have safe drinking water, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. You can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe, or bleaches with added cleaners.

## Other Useful Items

- Wrench or pliers
- Local map
- Cell phone and charger
- List of your prescriptions and dosage instructions
- Whistle
- Extra pair of eye glasses with up-to-date prescription
- Infant formula and diapers (if needed)
- Pet food and water supply for your pet
- Cash or travelers checks
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person in your household

- Fire extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Personal hygiene items
- Change of clothes
- Paper and pencil to communicate.



## Resources

The West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness coordinate emergency services. They help to protect the lives of West Virginians and their property during disasters and state emergencies. Their website is full of information and resources you can use to prepare yourself, your family, and home for emergencies. Visit [www.dhsem.wv.gov](http://www.dhsem.wv.gov).

The West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (WVSILC) provides support and assistance to Centers for Independent Living across West Virginia in developing advocacy skills and interests of West Virginians with disabilities. Contact WVSILC to find the Center for Independent Living that services your local area by calling **800-642-8207** or visit [www.wvsilc.org](http://www.wvsilc.org).

The American Red Cross delivers relief services to victims of disaster. The Red Cross also provides trainings to help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies. To find your local office, call **304-340-3650** or visit [www.redcrosswv.org](http://www.redcrosswv.org).

The Arc of the Mid Ohio Valley advocates for and serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. The Arc educates individuals with disabilities, first responders, businesses and organizations who serve individuals with disabilities on considerations that need to be explored for emergency planning for vulnerable populations. Other services include direct support, disability awareness, adult living skills, socialization and recreation programs, and Birth to Three. Find out more by calling **304-422-3151** or email [christina.smith@arcwd.org](mailto:christina.smith@arcwd.org).