

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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Disasters can happen anytime, anywhere and sometimes without any warning. Your American Red Cross and local government agencies will respond when a disaster threatens and after a disaster strikes. However, they can't be everywhere at once. Being ready for a disaster is a part of maintaining your independence. Although you may not know when a disaster will strike, if you are prepared ahead of time, you will be better able to cope with the disaster and recover from it more quickly.

When a disaster occurs, the first priority of disaster relief organizations and government agencies is to provide basic needs food, water and safe shelter to everyone who needs them. Your personal needs, such as replacing medications, replacing adaptive equipment, restoring electricity for power dependent equipment and restoring your regular ways of support for daily living activities may not happen right away. It is important for everyone to be prepared to meet his or her own basic needs by storing food and water for a minimum of three days or more. You should also be ready to meet your specific disability related needs by storing sufficient oxygen, medications, battery power etc. for at least seven days after a disaster.

Knowing about disaster threats and their aftermath and being prepared are critical for staying self-sufficient after a disaster. A booklet prepared by the American Red Cross entitled "Disaster Preparedness For People With Disabilities" covers issues that people with disabilities may face when a disaster strikes. The booklet also has information about how you can get to a safe place and how you can meet your needs after a disaster.

The best way to cope with a disaster is to learn about the challenges you might face if you could not use your home, office and personal belongings. You can meet your basic personal needs by preparing beforehand. You also may have to deal with a service animal that is unable to work or is frightened, or pets that need care and assistance.

The information contained in the "Disaster Preparedness For People With Disabilities" booklet will help you discover what you need to do to prepare for a disaster so that you will be ready when one strikes. Self-confidence based on knowledge, preparation and practice will give you, your family, and your community the best chances for recovery from a disaster.