



This brochure is designed to help people with mobility disabilities begin to plan. The term "mobility disabilities" refers primarily to persons who have little or no use of their legs or arms. They generally use wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, canes, and other devices as aids to movement.

Be sure to use the additional resources listed on the back, including NOD's general brochure, "Prepare Yourself: Disaster Readiness Tips for People with Disabilities." Identify your resources, make a plan, and create a "ready kit" and a "go bag." **Start today to become better prepared, safer and more secure.**

Where to find more information

Many of these agencies provide materials in large font, audio or video cassette formats, and different languages.

American Red Cross

www.redcross.org • call your local chapter

Easter Seals (s.a.f.e.t.y. First program)

www.easter-seals.org • (800)221-6827 (voice) • (312)726-4258 (TTY)

Federal Emergency Management Agency

<http://www.fema.gov/plan/> • (800)480-2520 (voice)

Humane Society of the U.S. (Disaster Center)

www.hsus.org/hsus_field/hsus_disaster_center/ • (202)452-1100 (voice)

National Spinal Cord Research Association Resource Center on Emergency Preparedness

www.spinalcord.org • (800) 962-9629 (voice)

NOAA Weather Radio

www.weather.gov/nwr/special_needs.htm

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

www.ready.gov • (800)BE READY (voice) • (800)464-6161 (TTY)

United Spinal Association

www.unitedspinal.org • (800) 404-2898 (voice)

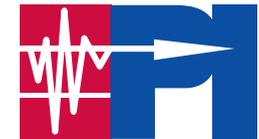
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10/07

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON
DISABILITY



EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS
INITIATIVE

Prepare Yourself

*Disaster Readiness Tips
for People with*

MOBILITY DISABILITIES

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To be better prepared as a nation, we all must do our part to plan for disasters. Individuals, with or without disabilities, can decrease the impact of a disaster by taking steps to prepare **BEFORE** an event occurs. Results from focus groups conducted by the National Organization on Disability's Emergency Preparedness Initiative (EPI), indicate that people with disabilities need to be more self reliant in emergencies.

You are in the best position to know your abilities and needs before, during, and after a disaster. There are many sample planning templates and checklists available to guide you. However, **your plans must fit your own unique circumstances.**

PREPAREDNESS

Assessment

Learn about hazards that may impact your community (blizzards, earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, floods, etc.) You can get information from your State and local Emergency Management Agency (EMA) or Homeland Security Office by visiting their website. If you don't have computer access, you can obtain much of this information through brochures from these offices.

Personal Support Network

Create a network of trusted individuals, such as family, friends, co-workers, personal attendants, etc. who can assist you during an emergency. Set up this network at important locations (e.g. home, work, school) making sure you have at least three people at each place. These individuals should take part in your planning and be familiar with your functional abilities and limitations. Establishing a solid relationship with other people is one of the most effective means of surviving a disaster.

EVACUATION

If you believe the weather or other hazard directly threatens you, leave your home or workplace. If officials order a mandatory evacuation, you must leave. Remaining in the face of a known hazard puts you in danger.

Ready Kit and Go Bag

A Ready Kit is a comprehensive supply of items that you will need if you should have to shelter in place, or rely on your own resources for a few days. A Go Bag has fewer items, but they are most essential to take if you must evacuate quickly.

See the N.O.D. guide, *"Prepare Yourself: Disaster Readiness Tips for People with Disabilities,"* for a list of suggested supplies. The American Red Cross also has a comprehensive checklist of supplies. Here are a few items of particular interest to people with mobility disabilities:

Don't expect rescue at the height of an emergency: first responders cannot risk their own lives driving into a chemical cloud or against hurricane-force winds.

Long before the evacuation order, set aside money and supplies. It's tough to do on a tight budget, but your life is at stake.

Tip: Plan with your support network for a quick evacuation.

Fire – the Deadliest Threat

No disaster is more frequent or deadly than fire for a person with a mobility disability. Contact your fire department for help in evacuation planning, but make sure the advice fits your needs. Besides the usual advice about home fire safety, such as buying and maintaining smoke alarms and fire extinguishers, follow these tips for people with mobility disabilities:

- Buy clothing, linens, and blankets made of fire-resistant material
- Arrange furniture so it does not obstruct a quick exit
- Attach a small go-bag to wheelchair or walker
- Contact support network members to help you if you must evacuate a building by stairway
- Memorize a few critical phrases to quickly explain your situation to first responders or write it down
- Practice your plan regularly

- Pair of heavy gloves to use while wheeling or making your way over glass and debris
- Extra battery for your motorized wheelchair or scooter
- Jumper cables or specific recharging device to be connected to an automobile's cigarette lighter
- Patch kit or can of "seal-in-air product" to repair flat tires
- Spare cane or walker
- Food, medicine, favorite toy, and other care items for your service animal
- Plastic bags, disposable gloves, and other items for the animal's care

Multi-Story Buildings

The tragedy of September 11, 2001, focused the attention of people with disabilities on the potential for fire in and evacuation from skyscrapers. However, the threat is just as real, when the fire alarm rings and the elevators stop in a smaller, multi-story building. Evacuation plans must be in place for small and large multi-story buildings.

Evacuation Devices

Several companies make products to assist evacuation of wheelchair users or others with severe mobility disabilities. The best-known are lightweight chairs used to carry a person down a stairway. A man with quadriplegia safely evacuated the World Trade Center using such a device with the help of several co-workers.

Cautions and Concerns About Evacuation Devices

If your building has not purchased evacuation devices, take responsibility to educate the facility's manager. Using these devices requires training and can not be left for the last minute. Finally, an evacuation device is **NOT** a substitute for a wheelchair, so plan how to get along if you must abandon your wheelchair.

Evacuation devices are not universally accepted by all fire service and emergency management leaders. There is still a need to raise the awareness of emergency professionals about the benefits of these devices.

Areas of Refuge

Many fire chiefs do support the concept of an area of refuge, a temporary shelter-in-place area in an office or public building. It can be as simple as a stairwell, where wheelchair users and others gather to await rescue. Many modern buildings include a refuge area protected by flame retardants and equipped with two-way communication. Since September 11th, many people with disabilities have expressed reluctance to depend on areas of refuge, wanting to evacuate with everyone else. This may not always be possible, so learn the location of your building's designated refuge areas.

SHELTERING

Sheltering in Place

If you're home when a sudden disaster occurs, you may take shelter there, where all is familiar and resources are close. It is important to keep a battery-operated radio and/or TV with you so that you can listen and follow directions from officials about steps to take. Contact members of your personal support network and keep them informed of your actions and any changes in your condition. If possible, go to an above-ground, interior room without windows.

General and "Special Needs/Medical" Shelters

Unless you have other severe disabilities, you should have little difficulty as a person with a mobility disability staying in a public shelter for a short time. People with more serious needs might have to use the nearest "special needs" shelter, where medical issues can receive appropriate attention. Conditions in a shelter (usually a school building or an auditorium) are crowded, noisy, and boring. But these facilities, in most cases operated by the local American Red Cross chapters or faith-based agencies, can save your life.

Persons with mobility disabilities have a right under the Americans with Disabilities Act to use general public shelters. However, the reality is that many shelters are still inaccessible to people with mobility disabilities, so try to determine the status of the facility before you arrive. Wheelchair and scooter users may need assistance in transferring to and from a sleeping cot. People who use walkers or crutches might require aid navigating through a tightly-packed shelter. Staff in a general public shelter can assist you with these tasks, but cannot perform more complex, medically related procedures or activities of daily living.

Service Animals

Some persons with mobility disabilities use a service animal, usually a dog, to help them with everyday activities. Federal regulations allow you to take your service animal into the shelter. Be prepared to explain this to the staff, because pets are not permitted. You have the responsibility to care for your companion animal while the two of you are in shelter.