

Fact Sheet



Preparedness Tips for Older Pennsylvanians and Individuals with Disabilities

Special populations can include anyone that may face challenges or have difficulties if an emergency strikes. Many people may not feel comfortable or are unable to safely use standard resources available during a disaster and recovery. This may include, but is not limited to, people who have: any type of physical disability; mental illness or developmental disability; limited English skills or are non-English speaking; service animals and/or pets; or those who are older, children or those with special needs.

People with special needs may face certain challenges when an emergency strikes. If they learn about these challenges in advance of an emergency, they can be prepared ahead of time and will be better able to cope with the disaster and recover from it more quickly.

Establish a Personal Support Network

The best way to prepare is to establish a personal support network. A personal support network is made up of individuals who will check with you in an emergency to ensure you are fine and to give assistance if needed. This network can consist of friends, roommates, family members, relatives, personal attendants, co-workers and neighbors. You and your personal support network should notify each other when you are going out of town and when you will return, and learn about each other's needs and how to help each other in an emergency. You could be responsible for food supplies and preparation, organizing neighborhood watch meetings, interpreting, etc.

Medical Emergency Supplies

For your safety and comfort, you need to have emergency supplies packed and ready in one place before disaster hits. You should assemble enough supplies to last for at least three days.

- ✓ Assemble the supplies you need in an evacuation, both medical and general supplies, including prescription medication (check expiration dates) and other items for your unique needs such as eyeglasses, an extra wheelchair battery, hearing aids and hearing aid batteries.
- ✓ Store them in an easy-to-carry container, such as a backpack or duffel bag.
- ✓ Be sure your bag has an ID tag.
- ✓ Label any equipment, such as wheelchairs, canes or walkers that you would need.

Traveling

When staying in hotels/motels, identify yourself to registration desk staff as a person who will need assistance in an emergency, and state the type of assistance you may need.

Health Card or Medic Alert Tag

- ✓ An emergency health information card communicates to rescuers what they need to know about you if they find you unconscious or incoherent or if they need to quickly help evacuate you.
- ✓ An emergency health information card should contain information about medications, equipment you use, allergies and sensitivities, communication difficulties you may have, preferred treatment, treatment-medical providers, and important contact people.
- ✓ Make multiple copies of this card to keep in emergency supply kits, car, work, wallet (behind driver's license or primary identification card), wheelchair pack, etc.
- ✓ If you have a cell phone, don't forget to put ICE in your contact list. ICE stands for "In Case of an Emergency" and is being used worldwide for individuals to show who should be contacted in an emergency. First responders may look through a contact list but not know who to call. ICE followed by a name and phone number will give them the information they need. ICETEXT followed by a name and phone number will let responders know they need to send a text message to that contact.

Create an Emergency Contact List

Ask several relatives or friends who live outside your immediate area to act as a hub for information about you and your family after a disaster. It is often easier to place an out-of-state long distance call from a disaster area than to call within the area. All family members should know to call the contact person to report their location and condition. Once contact is made, have the contact person relay messages to your other friends and relatives outside the disaster area. This will help to reduce calling into and out of the affected area once the phones are working.

For more information, visit: www.ready.pa.org

Additional resources: www.pema.state.pa.us, www.homelandsecurity.state.pa.us,
www.ready.gov or www.health.state.pa.us