

AT & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina and acts of



terrorism like 9/11 have shown that people with disabilities, who are self-sufficient under normal circumstances, may need to rely on the help of others in a disaster. Being ready for a disaster is part of maintaining independence and is an individual responsibility. Meeting individual needs such as replacing medications, providing assistive technology, restoring electricity for power dependent equipment, evacuation, and/or supplying daily living supports may not happen right away. To increase the chance of surviving a disaster, everyone should be prepared to sustain themselves for up to 72 hours following the event.

Here are some strategies adapted from materials published by the American Red Cross and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that can help individuals with

disabilities to prepare for emergencies.

- 1) Identify 1 person who lives at least 100 miles away to serve as a contact point. This person needs to know and can explain: a) your needs to an unfamiliar party; b) how to operate necessary equipment or devices; c) time-table for needed medications and dosages; d) medical providers roles, names, and numbers; and e) health insurance specifics and related information.
- 2) Make a list of the type and model numbers of the assistive technology devices you require. Label the devices, and have a laminated instruction sheet available on how to use and care for each device.
- 3) Keep at least a 7 day supply of essential medications with you at all times; make copies of current prescriptions. Make sure to check and update regularly so your supply of medications and prescriptions have not expired.
- 4) Prepare brief, clear, and specific written instructions to give to rescue personnel and have it laminated. For example: *Please take my oxygen, wheelchair, and communication device from under the bed; or, Please don't straighten my knees, they have been surgically fused in a bent position.*
- 5) Identify use of a service animal, and have a 3 to 7 day supply of food and water, leash or harness, collar, identification tags, and vaccination records ready to go.
- 6) Having your service or companion dog micro-chipped for identification ensures that your information and the contact that you identified above in bullet #1 is on file with the chip tracking organization. This will enable them to contact you in the event you and the animal are separated.
- 7) Make sure you have transportation for evacuation. Know the location and availability of more than one refuge or shelter if you are dependent on life-sustaining equipment or treatment.
- 8) Obtain a first aid kit, add to it the supplies needed that are disability specific, keep it in a dry, convenient place.

For further information go to <http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov/index.htm>, or call your local Red Cross office <http://www.redcross.org/where/where.html>.

Next Steps: Emergencies can happen at a moment's notice. Individuals with disabilities can decrease the impact of a disaster by taking

