



Mobility Impairments

Emergency Planning for Individuals with Mobility Impairments

- **Listen to the advice of local officials.** People with disabilities have the same choices as other community residents about whether to evacuate their homes and where to go when an emergency threatens. Decide whether it is better to leave the area, stay with a friend, or go to a public shelter.
- **Contact your local emergency management office now.** Many local emergency management offices maintain registers of people with disabilities and their needs so they can be located and assisted quickly in a disaster. Some communities in the Capitol region have "Special Needs Registries" that streamline this process.
- **Create a support network of relatives, friends, or co-workers who can assist you in an emergency.** Consider family, neighbors, friends, people who provide services to you, and faith-based and community groups. Make sure they know where you keep your Disaster Supply Kit. Give at least one member of your support network a key to your home.
- **Keep contact information for local independent living centers and other disability services organizations in a safe and easily accessible location.** If you provide any organizations or service providers with information about your functional needs and what you may require in an emergency, keep that data up to date.
- **Maintain a list of important items and keep the list with your Disaster Supply Kit.** Give a copy to another member of your household and a friend or neighbor. Important items might include:
 - Special equipment and supplies, such as hearing aid batteries.
 - Current prescription names, sources, and dosages.
 - Contact information for doctors and pharmacists. If you get prescriptions by mail, confirm where you will be able to get them locally in an emergency.
 - Detailed information about the specifications of your medication or medical regimen, including a list of things incompatible with medication you use.
- **Keep a supply of important items and organize key information, including:**
 - Contact information for local non-profit or community-based organizations that know you or assist people with access and functional needs similar to yours.
 - Contact information for people (family, friends, and others) that you may need to contact in an emergency.
 - Extra medicine, oxygen, and medical equipment you use regularly.
 - A pair of heavy gloves to use while wheeling or moving over glass and debris.
 - If your wheelchair does not have puncture-proof tires, a patch kit or can of "seal-in-air" to repair flat tires and an extra supply of inner tubes.



- Consider keeping key information on a portable thumb drive for easy transport in case of an evacuation.
- ❑ **Plan and practice alternate evacuation methods** if you spend time above the first floor of an elevator building. If needed, enlist the help of your personal support network.
- ❑ **Wear medical alert tags or bracelets** to identify any disabilities or medical conditions.
- ❑ **Know the location and availability of alternate medical care facilities in case yours are impacted**, especially if you require dialysis or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.

If you use a wheelchair:

- ❑ Arrange and secure furniture and other items to create barrier-free passages in your home and office.
- ❑ Show friends how to operate your wheelchair or help you transfer out of your chair so they can move you quickly if necessary.
- ❑ Inquire about emergency equipment that would make it easier for others to help you get out if you live or work in a high-rise building and might have to evacuate via a stairwell. Make arrangements with others to be carried out, if necessary, and practice doing that.
- ❑ Ensure that you have access to a vehicle that can accommodate your wheelchair if an evacuation order is issued or you must travel to a shelter.
- ❑ Work with local transportation and disability services (e.g., Paratransit, Independent Living Centers) to plan ahead for accessible transportation.
- ❑ There will be instances where wheelchair users will have to leave their chairs behind in order to evacuate safely. If you cannot use stairs, familiarize yourself with lifting and carrying techniques that will work for you. Alert rescue personnel to any areas of vulnerability (e.g., the "fire fighter's carry" may be hazardous for people with respiratory weakness.) You need to be able to give brief instructions regarding how to move you.

If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter:

- ❑ Make sure friends know the size of your wheelchair, how to transport it, and where to get a battery in case it has to be transported.
- ❑ Consider alternate non-motorized means of getting around, or identify alternate ways to access power.
- ❑ Consider having an extra battery available. A car battery can be substituted but will not last as long as a wheelchair's deep-cycle battery. Ask your vendor if you can recharge your



batteries (in the event of a power outage) by connecting jumper cables to a vehicle battery or using a special converter that plugs into a vehicle's cigarette lighter.

If you have a service animal:

- Be aware that the animal may become disoriented in an emergency. Disasters often mask or confuse scent markers that are part of your service animal's normal means of navigation. Keep them confined or securely leashed or harnessed. A leash (or harness) is an important tool for managing a nervous or upset animal. Be prepared to use alternative methods to negotiate your environment.
- Trained service animals will be allowed to stay in emergency shelters with their owners. Check with your local emergency management office or American Red Cross officials for more information about what you may need to support the animal.
- If you have a guide dog, train the dog to know one or two alternate routes out of your home or office. A guide dog familiar with the building may help you and others find a way out when no one else can see.
- Be sure your service animal has identification and your phone numbers attached to its collar, including emergency contact information through a national pet locator service.
- Have a complete Pet Emergency Kit with food and water, medical records and identification, bowls, extra leash, a favorite toy, and a pet first aid kit.