

Brain Injury and Emergency Preparedness

For people with brain injury and their families and caregivers, responding to emergency situations caused by natural disasters, weather, and power/water outages is challenging. It's important to plan ahead so that you are ready and can stay safe during an emergency. Take time to make a plan that includes an emergency support team that knows how to help you when needed.

Here are some tips to help you create your emergency preparedness plan.

Identify Your Emergency Support Team

- Identify emergency contacts: Make a list of family, friends, and caregivers who are willing and able to help in an emergency. Include phone numbers and emails.
- Communicate your needs ahead of time: Talk to your emergency support team about what you need, such as help with transportation or getting resources, so they are ready to assist you when needed.
- Tell neighbors about your needs: Let helpful neighbors know that you may need help in an emergency. Share your emergency contacts and how to assist you.

Keep Important Contacts, Documents and Items Handy

- Keep a phone with emergency contacts: Make sure your cell phone has your emergency support team and other important phone numbers stored in it.
- Keep a backup emergency contact list in an easy-to-find place: Put your list in a folder or on a refrigerator that is easily accessed.
- Important documents and items: keep documents and items such as your ID, insurance card(s), debit cards, checkbooks, and keys handy and be prepared to carry them with you.

Stay Informed Early on Potential Emergency Situations

- Get weather alerts: Listen to the news or use apps to get weather updates or warnings.
- Track local emergencies: Track local emergencies through radio or local news websites.
- Sign-up for emergency alerts: Sign up for emergency alerts in your area.

Maintain Communication Access

- Keep your phone charged: Have your phone charging at all times when not carrying it.
- Purchase a portable charger: Have a portable phone power supply in case the power is out and your phone runs out of charge.
- Have a backup communication contact: Get a neighbor, family member or friend who lives close to agree to check in on you if phone lines or power are down.

Prepare A Medical Emergency Kit with Enough of Each Item to Last 3 Days

- Medications: have enough extra medication for 3 or more days
- Bowel or Bladder: include supplies for all bowel or bladder needs, e.g., catheters, ostomy bags, briefs, etc.; keep extra supplies if needed
- Assistive Devices: Pack mobility aids, e.g., a wheelchair, cane, or walker. If available, have extra electric wheelchair batteries, or a manual wheelchair for back up. Bring your transfer aids; a large blanket can be used for transfers if your usual tools are not available – you may want to practice this type of transfer ahead of time.

Keep Important Supplies Handy at All times

- Backup power supplies: Keep items such as batteries, flashlight(s), and extra chargers; test them every couple of months to make sure they still work.
- Backup water supplies: Keep two cases of drinking water on hand for a water outage; fill a clean tub with water when a large storm increases the risk of power and water outages.
- Backup food supplies: Keep three days of canned and/or packaged food items on hand that do not require refrigeration or cooking when there is a risk of power outages. If you are keeping canned food, make sure you have a can opener

Know How to Get Medical and Transportation Help

- List medical conditions: Write down your medical conditions, allergies, and treatment plans.
- Emergency numbers: Keep a list of emergency medical services
- Accessible transportation: Know how to contact wheelchair-accessible transport services in your area.

Evacuation and Shelter Plan

- Know your evacuation routes: Plan how to leave your home quickly. Make sure your wheelchair or mobility device can fit through doorways and hallways.
- Identify places to go: Identify family, safe places or nearby shelters you can go to in an emergency.
- Identify shelters that are wheelchair accessible: Call ahead to find local emergency shelters that can accommodate people with disabilities.