

ARE YOU READY FOR EMERGENCIES?

Checklist for People with Special Health Care Needs

BE PREPARED

- Keep a paper summary of your medical care plan. Include: current medical problems, medicines, past medical problems, allergies, medical equipment needs, insurance information and pharmacy information.
- Be able to stay home (shelter-in-place) for up to five to seven days if necessary.
 - Have enough food, water, medicines and medical supplies for at least one week.
- Make a “go-kit” of basic and medical supplies to bring with you if you need to leave your home during a disaster:
 - Take your medicines (bring a cold pack if they need to be refrigerated).
 - Have a copy of your medical care plan and important papers.
 - Take any medical equipment: wheelchair (have a lightweight manual chair available if you use a motorized wheelchair); extra batteries for your wheelchair; hearing aid or other devices; oxygen and extra tanks; cans of tube feedings; needles and syringes.
 - Have bottled water, food, battery-operated radio, flashlight, first-aid kit, extra child supplies (diapers, formula) and cash.
 - Make sure everything is labeled with your name and contact information.
 - Plan to bring your service animal or pet with you; bring pet food, supplies, veterinary and registration records.
- Plan for a power failure. Have extra batteries for equipment or a generator.
- Make a fire safety plan for home, work and school:
 - Have smoke alarms on every floor – with flashing lights indoors and outdoors.
 - Plan your escape – have two exits from each room; doorways and ramps for a wheelchair.

BE IN TOUCH

- Create a support system of caregivers, family and friends who will help you in a disaster. Make sure they understand your medical needs. Contact them

before and during emergencies to see who may be available if you need them.

- Make a contact list of family, friends and caregivers who can help you in emergencies and who others can call if something happens to you.
- If you have a cell phone, put one or more ICE (“In Case of Emergency”) contacts in your contact list.
- Contact your local emergency management agency to see what’s available for you in your community.
- Sign up for utility (power) company priority lists, enhanced 911 services and “special needs registries.” Let them know about your special needs.
- Sign up for emergency management updates and early warnings.
- Have a corded landline telephone that doesn’t rely on electricity that you can use if you lose power. A cell phone can be used but will need to be recharged.

IF YOU DEPEND ON ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

- Keep back-up batteries (including a charger you can use in your car) at home. Test back-ups regularly and charge batteries.
- Ask your equipment supplier about replacement equipment and back-up power sources that can last for up to one week.
- Show your personal support network how to use and move your equipment.
- Label equipment; attach laminated instructions and photographs of you using Assistive Technology (AT).
- Register your AT with the company that makes it and record all AT serial numbers.
- If you use a generator, test monthly. Only use it outdoors, far from windows. Safely store back-up gas in case you run out. Get a kit that will help you get gas from your car if you need it.
- Identify one person who lives out of your area who can serve as a contact point. This person needs to know and be able to explain your needs to an unfamiliar person, how to operate your equipment and devices, and contact information for your medical providers.

IF YOU HAVE COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

- Figure out how you will communicate with emergency personnel if you don't have your communication devices.
- Keep writing materials with you, or carry printed copies of key information for first responders, such as "I speak American Sign Language."
- Make sure emergency health information includes the best way to communicate with you.
- If you use a hearing aid or implant, keep extra batteries on hand. Maintain extra batteries for your Text Telephone and light phone signaler. Store your hearing aid in the same place so you can find it easily and keep it in a water-proof container.

IF YOU HAVE MOBILITY DIFFICULTIES

- If you use a motorized wheelchair, keep a manual chair as back-up. If you live in a high-rise building, consider keeping one on the ground floor in case you are evacuated without the power wheelchair.
- Store emergency supplies in a pack attached to your walker, wheelchair or scooter.
- Make plans for evacuation at home, work or school, especially if you spend time above the ground floor of a building. Practice them regularly.
- If you have visual impairment and use a cane, keep extra canes in the same location at your job, home, school, etc., to assist you. Keep an extra cane in your emergency kit.
- Make sure the furniture in your home or office does not block your exit.

IF YOU RELY ON RESPIRATORY SUPPORT DEVICES OR OXYGEN

- Make sure you have a plan for a back-up power source and test back-ups often.
- Plan to bring extra oxygen supplies to a shelter or other location if you need to evacuate.

IF YOU HAVE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

- Keep a written emergency plan with you and keep copies in several locations. Make sure the plan is easy to read.
- Practice what to do during a disaster, including leaving places where you spend time, until you are sure you know what to do and where to go.

- Think through what a rescuer would need to know about you. Practice saying it or keep a written copy that says something like: "I cannot read" or "I may have difficulty understanding you. Please speak slowly and use simple language."

IF YOU HAVE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

- Make sure your local emergency management agency and neighbors know that you have mental health care needs and what they are.
- Make a personal support network of at least three family members, friends or neighbors who will check on you in an emergency.
- Consider signing up for electronic payments of federal benefits, like Social Security, because disasters can interrupt mail delivery.

GET MORE INFORMATION FROM THESE AGENCIES

- Pennsylvania Emergency Management (PEMA): Readypa.org
- Pennsylvania Department of Health: http://www.portal.health.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/public_health_preparedness/11605
- FEMA: Individuals with Disabilities or Access and Functional needs: <http://www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs>
- American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family/disabilities>
- Special needs registries in Southeast Pennsylvania: www.specialneedspa.org
- Speak Unlimited: www.papremisealert.com
- Temple University Institute on Disabilities: <http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs/eprep/>
- National Organization on Disability: http://nod.org/disability_resources/emergency_preparedness_for_persons_with_disabilities/
- Inclusive Preparedness Center: <http://www.inclusivepreparedness.org/DisasterReadiness.html>
- US Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication: <http://www.ussaac.org/emergency-preparedness.cfm>
- Patient Provider Communication: www.patientprovidercommunication.org