



Preparing for emergencies

If you or someone close to you has a disability and other access and functional needs, you may have to take additional steps in an emergency.

It is important to recognize special needs and make advance preparation *before* an emergency occurs.



**Disaster can strike
anywhere, anytime.**

***Do you know what to
do?***

Adapted from material provided by FEMA and the Consortium for Infant and Child Health
Children with Special Health Care Needs Work Group

**Knowing what to do during an emergency is an important part of being
prepared and may make all the difference when seconds count.**

Preparing for an emergency doesn't have to be overwhelming.

www.vadrs.org

Break it down into simple steps.

Evaluate your surroundings and situation.

- **Check for hazards in the home.** Ordinary items in the home can cause injury or damage. Anything that can move, fall, break or cause fire is a home hazard and could block an evacuation path.
- **Find out about special assistance** that may be available in your community. Register with your electrical utility, the office of emergency services or the local fire department for assistance so needed help can be provided. For example, customers of Dominion Virginia Power who require electrically-powered life support equipment can [submit the appropriate request form](#) to be added to the utility's medical conditions list prior to an emergency.

Then, start preparing in advance of an emergency.

Step 1: Make a plan.

- Discuss disasters and emergency situations and preparation with your family and share information on common disasters.
- Make plans for pets; many shelters allow only service animals, not family pets.
- Locate and learn how to turn off utilities such as gas and electricity.
- Develop a plan with relatives, friends or neighbors for assistance in an emergency.
- Decide on a meeting place outside of your neighborhood if access to your home is blocked because roads are closed.
- Choose an out-of-town relative or friend to be your family's point of contact for emergency communications.
- With your family, write down your emergency plan – get a free worksheet and information at www.ReadyVirginia.gov.



Step 2: Get a kit.

Preparation is key to surviving an emergency and managing the aftermath. In addition to general preparation, families with special needs must be ready to manage their needs. By gathering and storing supplies in advance, your family can more readily handle an evacuation or home confinement. For more details, visit www.readyvirginia.gov.

Your emergency supply kit should include:

- **Water** - Store one gallon of water per person per day and keep at least a three-day supply of water per person.
- **Food** - Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food that requires no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. Have food for those who have special dietary needs.
- **Other Items** -
 - ✓ Battery- or hand crank-radio or [special-needs NOAA Weather Radio](#)
 - ✓ Flashlight with extra batteries
 - ✓ First aid kit
 - ✓ Whistle
 - ✓ Dust mask, plastic sheeting, duct tape
 - ✓ Moist towelettes, garbage bags
 - ✓ Wrench or pliers
 - ✓ Emergency reference material
 - ✓ Matches
 - ✓ Local maps
 - ✓ Cell phone
 - ✓ Chlorine bleach (use as disinfectant or to treat water)
 - ✓ Fire extinguisher



Step 3: Stay informed.

Listen to local media for information and instructions from emergency officials. Be aware of storm watches and warnings and road conditions. You can get road condition information 24/7 by calling 511 or checking www.511Virginia.org.



What if you must evacuate during an emergency?

- Plan two evacuation routes in case roads are closed or blocked.
- Create a network of neighbors, relatives, friends, and coworkers to aid you. Discuss your needs and make sure everyone knows how to operate necessary equipment.
- If you need assistance and your network is not available, find helpers and tell them your needs. Give them instructions on how they can help you evacuate.
- Advocate for yourself. Practice how to quickly explain the best way to guide or move you and your adaptive equipment, safely and rapidly. Be ready to give brief, clear, and specific instructions and directions to rescue personnel, either orally or in writing, such as:
 - "Please take my . . .
 - Oxygen tank.
 - Wheelchair.
 - Communication device from under the bed."
 - "I am blind/visually impaired. Please let me grasp your arm firmly."
 - "I am deaf. Please write things down for me."

- If you are mobility impaired and live or work in a high-rise building, have an escape chair.
- If you live in an apartment building, ask the management to mark accessible exits clearly and to make arrangements to help you leave the building.
- Keep specialized items ready, including extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, prescriptions, food for service animals, and any other items you might need.
- Be sure to make provisions for medications that require refrigeration.
- Keep a list of the type and model numbers of the medical devices you require.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your disability.
- Know the location and availability of more than one facility if you are dependent on a dialysis machine or other life-sustaining equipment or treatment.
- When needed, ask for an accommodation from disaster response personnel. For example, let a responder or relief worker know if you cannot wait in lines for long periods for items like water, food and disaster relief assistance.



Considerations for adults with disabilities

Disability and access/functional needs	Additional steps
Visually impaired	May be reluctant to leave familiar surroundings when the request for evacuation comes from a stranger. A guide dog could become confused or disoriented in a disaster. People who are blind or partially sighted may have to depend on others to lead them to safety.
Hearing impaired	May need to make special arrangements to receive warnings.
Mobility impaired	May need special assistance to get to shelter.
People with intellectual disabilities	May need help responding to emergencies and getting to a shelter.

For families with children with special needs:



- Have a current care plan and list of medications from your child's physician.
- Have an emergency information form filled out on your child.
- Have a minimum of two weeks' supply of medication and supplies for your child.
- Have back-up systems or plans for medical equipment requiring electricity.
- Discuss with your child's doctor the best place for him/her in the event of disaster.
- Ensure that local emergency management teams and neighbors are aware your child has special needs.
- Make sure you have an emergency plan for your child at school or day care.

Want more information for people with disabilities?

www.readyvirginia.gov (Virginia Department of Emergency Management's site with plenty of tips)

www.vaemergency.gov/readyvirginia/getakit/disabilities (information on assembling an emergency kit for people with disabilities)

www.disability.gov/emergency_preparedness (specific information for people with disabilities)

<http://aac-lerc.psu.edu/index.php/pages/show/id/4> (information for people with complex communication needs)

<http://ready.adcouncil.org/beprepared/fep/index.jsp> (create a family emergency plan)

www.ready.gov (overview of emergency information and important links)

www.hrspecialneeds.org/Videos/HRSN-Get-Prepared-SLV.wmv (signed video with information for special needs population <http://www.vadrs.org/>)

www.vadrs.org