



**Cal OES**

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

# Emergency Preparedness Guide/Toolkit for Individuals with Disabilities

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**DOR** DEPARTMENT of  
REHABILITATION

Employment, Independence & Equality

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Emergency Preparedness Guide/Toolkit for Individuals with Disabilities was developed through a partnership between the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and the California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR).

This guide describes actions and considerations that individuals with disabilities can use to increase preparedness before, during, and after disasters.

Cal OES and DOR encourage individuals to:

- 1) Get emergency alerts
- 2) Make an evacuation plan
- 3) Pack a Go Bag
- 4) Build a Stay Box for when you can't leave
- 5) Help friends and neighbors get ready

### **Get Alerts to know what to do during Disasters and Emergencies**

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In an emergency, you need to know what's going on. To make the right decisions, you need reliable, up-to-the-minute information on disasters in your area. You need to know what to do and when.

Know what disasters and hazards could affect your area, how to get [emergency alerts](#), and where to go if you need to evacuate. Make sure you have a plan and practice it regularly.

#### **Be Informed**

- Go to [CalAlerts.org](https://CalAlerts.org) and sign up for free emergency alerts.
- 2-1-1 may provide important emergency information.
- [Know what disasters could affect your area](#), which ones could require you to evacuate, and when you might need to shelter in place.
- Watch or listen to local news for reports on disasters.
- Radio and TV stations will broadcast important information through the Emergency Alert System.

- Find the name and frequency of your county’s Emergency Radio Station at [Local Radio Stations for Emergency Alerts](#).
- Follow reliable sources, such as your County Office of Emergency Management, fire, and law enforcement agencies on social media.

Use the following online resources to access additional alerts and safety information:

- Sign up for earthquake alerts and information using the [MyShake](#) app.
- [News.caloes.ca.gov](#) has the latest emergency information,
- [Response.ca.gov](#) has information about active wildfires, power shutoffs, shelters, and road closures.
- [Ready.gov](#) has safety information for individuals and families.

## MAKE A PLAN

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Think of the people you would want to stay in communication with during an emergency. They may be family, neighbors, friends, or caregivers.

### Create a Contact List

- Make a [contact list](#) of friends, family members, co-workers, neighbors, or others who can help you evacuate and keep it in a waterproof container in your [emergency kit](#).
- Discuss your disaster plans with your support network and, as appropriate, include them in your planning process.

### Choose Emergency Meeting Places

Disasters can be chaotic, and you or someone in your network may find themselves separated or cut off from each other. Designate a place ahead of time to reunite with your support network and plan how everyone will get there.

- Ask schools about plans to reunite parents and children.
- Make sure everyone knows where your meeting places are and practice getting to them.

- Your meeting place may need to change depending on the location of the disaster so plan for multiple options.

## **How To Evacuate**

Think now about the potential problems you may encounter evacuating during a disaster and plan accordingly.

- Follow the guidance of local authorities.
- Evacuate early if you need extra time or support to get out.
- Learn different evacuation routes to leave your community.
- Have a paper map in case internet and cell services are down and secure a county Evacuation Planning Area Map if one is available.
- Practice evacuating using the transportation you would take in a disaster and involve the people you would leave with.
- If you don't have a car, identify your local transit agency.
- Be ready to go to your safe place and have your Go Bag of supplies packed.

## **Additional Planning Keys**

- Responders will take all measures to ensure you and your support system remain together, such as family, a service animal, personal caregivers, or your assistive technology devices and supplies.
- Work with local services, public transportation, or paratransit to identify all accessible transportation options.
- Know the evacuation routes from your home, place of business, school, neighborhood, city, or area and travel them before a disaster so they become familiar.
- Tell your support network where your emergency supplies are and consider giving someone you trust access to your residence.
- If you are dependent on dialysis or other life-sustaining treatment, know the location of more than one facility.
- If you use medical equipment in your home that requires electricity, talk to your doctor, health care provider, local disability organization, or power utility company about how you can prepare for power outages.

- Make sure your emergency information states the best way to communicate with you.
- If you use augmentative communication devices or technologies, keep model numbers, note where the equipment came from (e.g. Medicaid, private insurance, etc.), and plan for how you will communicate if the equipment stops working.

## **Finding Shelter**

In the event of an evacuation, use 2-1-1, the [American Red Cross shelter locator](#), and other local services to find emergency shelters. All government supported shelters in California are designed to be physically accessible.

If you have concerns about seeking shelter, please know:

- Emergency shelters are available to the whole community.
- California law mandates all public shelters must be accessible.
- Service animals are allowed inside public shelters.

## **PACK A GO BAG**

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### **Pack Ahead**

A Go Bag should include the critical items you will need if you are ordered to evacuate. By packing a Go Bag in advance of an emergency, you'll have it ready whenever disasters strike.

- Include your important documents including copies of identification and insurance cards.
- Bring a Map and contact lists
- In case you're not able to access maps on your phone or device, you'll need your map marked with evacuation routes.
- Have your list of important contacts so you can reach out to the people you care about, and who care about you.

- Make a list of your medications that includes:

All prescriptions taken by you and family members.

Names and numbers of your doctors and your pharmacies.

Other important medical information.

### **Bring Some Cash (small denominations)**

- If the power is out, credit and debit card readers may not work and you could be unable to get cash from an ATM.

### **Grab and Go**

#### Things to Pack as You Leave

- Keys, wallet, or purse
- Phones and chargers
- Medications (including extra eyeglasses, dentures, etc.)

If you have them, it would also be good to include...

- Portable radio
- Flashlights
- First-aid supplies
- Your laptop or tablet

In addition to having your basic survival supplies, an [emergency kit](#) should contain items to meet your individual needs in various types of disasters. Consider the items you use daily and which ones you may need to add to your kit.

### **Items/Tips for People Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

- Have a weather radio with text display and a flashing alert.
- Keep extra batteries or a portable battery charger for hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- Pack pen and paper to communicate with someone who does not know sign language.
- Have extra charging cords and backup batteries.

- Install smoke alarms that give signals that can be both seen and heard. At least one smoke alarm should be battery operated.
- Consider carrying a pre-printed copy of key phrases, such as “I speak American Sign Language (ASL) and need an ASL interpreter” or “If you make an announcement, please write it down for me.”

### **Items/Tips for People Who are Blind or Have Low Vision**

- Mark emergency supplies with Braille labels or large print.
- Keep a list of your emergency information on a portable flash drive or make an audio file and keep it in a safe place.
- Keep communication devices in your emergency supply kit.
- Extra eyeglasses or magnifying devices may be needed.
- Consider your service animal or pets and plan for food, water, and supplies. Some shelters only allow service animals.
- If you use a cane, keep extras at work, home, school, etc.
- If you have low vision, place security lights in each room to light paths of travel if there is a loss of power.
- Work gloves and sturdy shoes should be included in your kit.

### **Items/Tips for People with Speech Disability**

- Carry an instruction card on how to communicate with you if your equipment or assistive devices are not working. This may include laminated cards with phrases and/or pictograms.
- If you use augmentative communication devices, plan how you will evacuate with them.
- Keep model information of assistive equipment.
- Keep a pen and paper or whiteboard and marker.

### **Items/Tips for People with a Mobility Disability**

- If you use a power wheelchair, have a lightweight manual chair available as a backup, if possible.
- If you use a power wheelchair or other powered device, pack your charging cords.



- Keep a patch kit or sealant for flat tires and other necessary tools like a portable air pump.
- Keep an extra mobility device, such as a cane or walker, if you use one.

### **Items/Tips for Individuals with Sensory Disabilities**

- Keep an electronic device with movies or games.
- A small pop-up tent can be used to decrease visual stimulation in a busy room or to provide privacy.
- Pack headphones to decrease auditory distractions.
- Keep a pair of dark glasses to assist with visual stimulation.
- Include items to ease anxiety-like fidget toys, chewable jewelry, stress balls, or bubbles, all of which can help to distract as well.

### **Items/Tips for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities**

- Keep handheld electronic devices charged and loaded with videos and activities.
- Purchase spare chargers for electronic devices and keep them charged.
- Include sheets or a small pop-up tent to decrease visual stimulation and noise in a busy environment.
- Consider a pair of noise-canceling headphones to decrease auditory stimuli.
- Identify trusted allies to rely on in a disaster.
- Practice your plan to build confidence and feel safe.

### **Items/Tips for Individuals Who Require Medications**

- Try to maintain at least a week's supply of prescription medicines.
- Keep a list of all medications, dosage, and allergies.
- Keep a copy of your medical information including a list of your prescriptions and prescribers.

## BUILD A STAY BOX

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If a disaster requires you to stay in your home, a Stay Box can help meet your needs during an emergency.

### **Build a Stay Box**

Your Stay Box should include basic, cost-efficient, resources that you can set aside or store in case of an emergency.

### **Water**

You want a gallon of water for each person in your home per day. Pick up water at the store every few weeks to avoid large up-front costs. Store your water in a cool, dark place.

### **Food**

You know what your family likes to eat, so stock up on those foods. Think about what you could eat if there was no power and build up your food supply a little at a time.

### **Important Items**

Set aside items such as extra formula, diapers, supplies for health needs, pet food, etc. for use during emergencies.

Stock up on portable lights, such as flashlights, and extra batteries. If the power is out, avoid candles! They are a fire hazard and can be extremely dangerous if there has been a gas leak from the disaster.

Your Stay Box is a great place to keep emergency items, such as a first aid kit or battery-powered radio.

## HELP FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS GET READY

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Emergency managers, firefighters, law enforcement officers, and emergency responders do an incredible job of keeping the community safe, but they cannot get to everyone at once.

### **Connect With Your Community**

Communities need to stick together to prepare for disasters.

Consider the following questions:

- Who is home at your house during the day?
- Who is at home in your neighborhoods that might be available to help you during the day, at night, or on a weekend?
- Who in your neighborhood might need help?

Speak with your neighbors, talk with them about what they might need to survive, and if they may be willing to help if needed.

### **Community Preparedness**

Becoming more prepared for an emergency is easier than you might think. Many service groups exist and may be operational in your area.

Connecting with local emergency management and with groups such as Citizen Corps Councils, USA on Watch (Neighborhood Watch) teams, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), etc., can help you to prepare and assist others too.

Share these important messages with your communities by using the [Personal Preparedness for People with Disabilities Social Media Toolkit](#)

## **ASSOCIATED CONTENT**

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[Emergency Communication Plan](#) (PDF)

[Prepare for Emergencies Now, Information for People with Disabilities](#) (PDF)

[Transit Commuter Emergency Communication Plan](#) (PDF)

[We Prepare Everyday](#) (Video with open captions, ASL, and audio description)

[Be Informed](#) (Video)

[Make A Plan](#) (Video)

[Build A Kit](#) (Video)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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[Pacific ADA Center Home](#)

[Pacific ADA Center Emergency Preparedness Publication and Resources](#)

[Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs](#)

[Disability Disaster Access Resources](#)

[LISTOS California Emergency Preparedness interactive online course](#)

[LISTOS and Disaster Ready Guides](#)