

## HOW TO HELP OTHERS PLAN FOR DISASTERS

This *Planning Guide* explains how to use the *Disaster Readiness Planner* to help others get ready for a disaster. This *Guide* refers to the people you are planning with as “your partner(s)”, they could be a family member, friend, or someone within your organization.

Almost everyone makes better plans when they work with someone else. The *Planner* helps people plan together. By following the steps in the *Planner* and taking action, you will do more than share information: you will help your planning partners become better prepared.

Connected by arrows, all the steps provide pictures and titles to help you talk about what to do, and then do it. This *Guide* takes you through each step of the *Planner*, giving suggestions on how to use each step.

Encourage your planning partners to use the notes areas to list their concerns, to write down what they will do next, or to make any notes they choose. Of course, you can also make notes for them.

You don't have to be an expert or cover everything at once. Start with the first segments of the *Planner* and then do a few more steps each time you meet.

Help the people you are working with get engaged in the planning process; don't just give them information and hope they will somehow get ready later. Do things together, like going to the store for supplies, or set up a schedule you can check later. Make phone calls to coordinate activities with others, and so on.

Be patient, planning works best if you don't hurry. Don't tell your planning partners what they should prepare for or how to do it. Ask them what they think at each step, and then figure out together what is important to do next.

When large disasters occur, it is easy to panic and forget what to do, help your partner develop a habit of being ready. By keeping the *Planner* visible in the house people will be reminded to practice and make disaster planning part of their regular routine.

This *Guide* includes planning steps for individuals who may have additional needs. Review this material if you are planning with someone for example, who has a disability, cares for a young child, or lives on their own with assistance.

## NOTES:

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Center For Disability  
and Special Needs  
Preparedness

1010 Wisconsin Ave, NW  
Suite 340  
Washington, DC 20007  
Ph: 202-338-7153  
Fax: 202-338-7216

[www.disabilitypreparedness.org](http://www.disabilitypreparedness.org)

**DISASTER  
READINESS  
PLANNING GUIDE**  
YOUR ROAD TO READINESS

←←← YOUR ROAD TO READINESS

# DISASTER READINESS PLANNING GUIDE

## YOUR ROAD TO READINESS

### STEP 1: WHAT DISASTERS?

Decide together what disasters are likely to happen where your planning partner lives. Use the boxes to check off what events could happen or have happened in the area.

Ask your partner if there are other threats not listed here. Remember, you are trying to get them to think and talk about threats and the need to be ready for them.

You don't have to know everything. You can encourage them to get more information on likely disasters from the resources listed in the *Planner*, or from other sources.

### STEP 2: MY CONCERNS

Ask your partner to write down and discuss their personal concerns about a disaster. Respecting their concerns helps give them ownership of the planning process. Some topics you

may want to raise:

- Shelter in Place: What would they need to stay in their home for a week without anything coming in from outside? Can they take care of themselves?
- Evacuation: Do they have their own transportation? Would they need someone else to drive them? Do they have a place to go?

Don't rush or worry if they leave out something you think is important. Bring it up later. Create a list of concerns, and then continue to the next step. Let their concerns energize the planning.

### STEP 3: PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP

Everyone needs a support network of people they can count on during a disaster. Many people who need help can also help others.

Does your partner have family or friends nearby? Can they involve more

people in this planning process, such as their neighbors?

Can they talk about readiness with groups they belong to such as advocacy groups, faith-based organizations, service providers, or community associations? Are any of these already doing anything to improve readiness?

Is the organization ready to help members in a disaster? Is it prepared to continue operating during and after a big disaster?

### STEP 4: HOW YOU GET INFORMATION AND WARNINGS

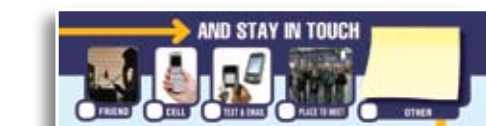


Communication is often called the most important part of being prepared. It is even more important for people who have difficulty seeing, hearing or understanding messages. Decide with your partner how they will get the warning a big storm or other danger is coming.

Most people will receive information and warnings from TV or radio. Crank radios do not require replacement batteries and NOAA weather radios alert people when a storm is approaching. Some people will use TTY, visual/audio alarms or family, friends or neighbors to receive warnings.

Discuss all the options and then do a step with them. For example, practice sending and receiving text messages on a cell phone. Or schedule a step and check later to make sure they did it.

### STEP 5: AND STAY IN TOUCH



Do the people you are planning with have more than one way to stay in touch with family, friends, neighbors, and organizations during a disaster?

Standard corded phones will work when the power is out. Cell phones are good during evacuations. Pre-paid phone cards will let you use pay phones without using coins.

Text messages may work when cell towers are overwhelmed with voice calls. Help your partner practice sending text messages. People who are deaf use pagers or other text alerting devices to communicate.

Choose an out of state person to be a contact. Sometimes local calls or messages are impossible, but calls out of state still go through.

Choose a meeting place in case all com-

munication is out. Have fall-back locations, in case the first meeting place is not reachable or becomes dangerous.

### STEP 6: WHAT YOU NEED TO SHELTER AT HOME AND IF YOU HAVE TO EVACUATE



Practice deciding to stay or evacuate. How will your partner make the decision? What information or warning will they need? If ordered to leave, can they do so quickly? What do they need to take with them? There are many supply lists available on-line; [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) is a good place to start, but any list has to be adapted to their needs.

Getting supplies together can be difficult. If necessary, start with a few items at a time. Car family, friends and organizations help get needed supplies and equipment? Perhaps an organization can get a discount and buy a crank radio or large item for its members.

Experts advise these items are needed for either staying at home or leaving: food, water, medications, flashlight with batteries, first aid kit. Plastic garbage bags with ties can substitute for toilets. Don't forget toilet paper and other toiletries like toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Get these together in a go-kit to be ready to leave quickly if you have to: money or credit cards; picture ID, legal papers, prescriptions, medical insurance cards; supplies for a service animal or pet; cell phone and charger; clothes and blankets; and a whistle.

Keep track of food, water, medicine, and other supplies in your kit. Plan how to use and replace them regularly. Practice taking the go-kit on short trips to get used to it.

### STEP 7: HOW YOU LEAVE



Ask your planning partner to consider how they will travel if they have to leave. Some questions to consider:

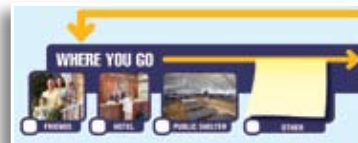
Do they drive? Have a vehicle? Do they

regularly leave town? Do they know more than one way out in case roads are blocked?

Can any of their organizations or other groups provide transportation if needed? Does it have its own bus? Does the organization practice evacuations?

Practice using different routes out of town. During an actual disaster people may have to follow directions and routes given by the authorities.

### STEP 8: WHERE YOU GO



If possible, help your partner plan to evacuate to a safe area where

they can stay with friends, family, or in a motel. Staying in a public shelter may be difficult to do, but in some cases may be the only option.

Public shelters should be a last resort. Your local emergency management agency will only provide public and medical needs shelter locations when a disaster strikes. Public shelters usually only operate for a few hours or days during a disaster.

For some people with special needs a public shelter may not meet medical needs, especially for long periods of time. Medical needs shelters may also be available to people who need medical supports not available at a regular shelter.

Discuss where they will go in the event of a disaster, and have two or three options available.

### STEP 9: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RETURN HOME



When people return home, they should check the building for damage and be especially cautious around gas and power lines. It is best to have utility service workers turn on the gas, water and electric power if these have been turned off.

As soon as your partner returns home, they should contact their family, friends and support networks to let them know they are back and how they can be reached.

After evaluating their home for damage, they should contact their insurance company, and apply for government disaster assistance if needed. Go to [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) for more information.

## SPECIFIC TOPICS TO CONSIDER IF YOUR PLANNING PARTNERS INCLUDE PEOPLE WHO:

### CARE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN OR INFANTS



Children are especially vulnerable to heat, cold, dehydration, disease, and other disaster-related conditions. Parents and caregivers

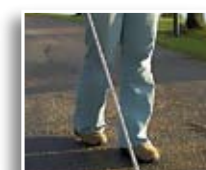
should:

- Know the disaster policy and readiness of the child's school or day care
- Have special supplies on hand such as medicine, formula or special food, diapers, toys, and games for evacuation
- Practice what to do when warnings occur or a sudden disaster event happens
- Teach children their full name and address, how to dial 911 and what to tell police or firefighters

Practice with children what to do if the power is out and 911 does not answer

Visit FEMA's website for families, [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), or the National Women's Health Information Center, [www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov), for more information.

### ARE BLIND OR HAVE LOW VISION



Special arrangements should be made for people who are blind, have low vision, or are deaf-blind, to receive public warnings of oncoming storms or sudden events. People who are deaf-blind may use various means of communication technology. Local groups may be interested in helping people who are blind prepare for a disaster event. Work with your partner to:

- Learn about and obtain equipment like a weather radio
- Build relationships with friends, family, neighbors, organizations and advocacy groups to plan and practice ways to make sure they receive warnings
- Practice making the decision to stay or go using information from warnings and communication with others – then practice sheltering in place and evacuating
- Put together and practice using a go-kit with items recommended for people who

are blind or have low vision

Make transportation arrangements. If they have regular arrangements with a transportation company, will the company be operating in a disaster? Will they sign a contract to transport the person if an evacuation is ordered?

For more information on go-kit items and communication visit the American Council of the Blind's website, [www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org). Lions Clubs, [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org), have numerous programs related to vision and blindness and Rotary Clubs, [www.Rotary.org](http://www.Rotary.org), have a disaster relief program.

### ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING



If your planning partner is deaf, suggest exploring a connection with a local organization for deaf people. Other steps to take with your partner include:

- Checking to see if they are using the closed captioning function when they watch TV
- Obtaining a fire alarm system which has flashing lights or vibrates
- Practice receiving and sending cell phone text messages
- Practice making the decision to leave or stay, including following an official order to evacuate

Many national deaf organizations have developed information and training programs about preparing for emergencies and disasters. Websites to consult are the Community Emergency Preparedness Information Network, [www.cepintdi.org](http://www.cepintdi.org), National Association of the Deaf, [www.nad.org](http://www.nad.org), and the Northern Virginia Resource Center, [www.nvrc.org](http://www.nvrc.org).

### USE ASSISTANCE TO UNDERSTAND WARNINGS AND DIRECTIONS

People may not understand warnings and directions because they do not speak or read English, have developmental disabilities, or



for other reasons. Help from trustworthy family members or a support organization will be especially important for your partner, as is plenty of practice so they will have a habit of cooperating with supporters. Work with them to:

- Make evacuation and sheltering-in-place routine, so it is not disturbing
- Build strong relationships with support networks
- Practice cooperative decision-making, so they are able to make or contribute to the decision to stay or go

For more information consult the National Immigration Law Center, [www.nilc.org](http://www.nilc.org), National Council of La Raza, [www.nclr.org](http://www.nclr.org), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov), and U.S. Administration on Developmental Disabilities, [www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov).

### DO NOT DRIVE OR DO NOT HAVE A CAR OR VAN



Not having access to a personal vehicle requires alternate planning for evacuation, and may make it difficult to collect supplies for sheltering in place. Work with your partner to:

- Help them realize they may have to be ready to go to another area
- Find reliable public transportation or other means of transportation with a friend, neighbor or organization
- Practice traveling on the bus or other form of transport likely to be used in a disaster
- Practice deciding, in cooperation with others, to stay or go

### HAVE LITTLE CONTACT WITH OTHERS

An isolated individual or couple is less likely to plan for a disaster or be able to evacuate or shelter in place successfully. Help your partner:

- Join a supportive organization
- Pair up with neighbors to help each other
- Contact a public agency or private advocacy group willing to help
- Do more on their own to be ready

### ARE HOMELESS

Homeless individuals and families face added difficulties when they need to shelter in place or evacuate. Help your planning partner identify a source of information and group assistance operating when a disaster threatens or strikes. Pay particular attention to:

- Where to go for shelter
- Receiving warnings and information
- Establishing a point of contact or an assem-

bly location for evacuation

Talking to trusted organizations that will help your partner shelter or evacuate

Many cities and counties have general homeless services and plans in place to help homeless people take shelter from bitter cold or a winter storm; for example, [www.bphc.org](http://www.bphc.org) or [www.cityofno.com](http://www.cityofno.com). Visit your city or county's web site for help.

### LACK MONEY TO BUY READINESS SUPPLIES

It is important to be realistic with a planning partner who has very limited resources. Urging them to buy shelter supplies is likely to be pointless, and damage your relationship with them. Building connections to supportive organizations, neighbors, and family may be a way to build readiness with few financial resources.

### USE A WHEELCHAIR OR OTHER EQUIPMENT WHEN LEAVING THEIR HOME

Your partner may use a wheelchair, require a steady supply of oxygen from an oxygen tank, and/or need other equipment to sustain them in their daily life. In some cases, your partner may not use a wheelchair or other assistive technology, but only be able to walk a short distance. Help them:

- Obtain a wheelchair to use during a disaster
- Practice leaving their home with the minimum equipment needed to be mobile and sustain life
- Know the size and weight of their equipment, in case it needs to be transported
- Build a trustworthy relationship with a group or organization willing to help them leave
- Build a strong shelter-in-place capacity to reduce the chances they will have to leave their home

### REQUIRE ASSISTANCE TO LIVE AT HOME OR TRAVEL

If your partner depends on help from a personal care assistant, home health aide, or family member to continue living in their house or apartment, include the aides in disaster readiness preparations. Will aides or assistants provided by an agency continue to work during a disaster? Do they have family of their own they will have to care for? If family

members provide support, will they be able to do so in a disaster? Do they live nearby? If your partner believes an aide or relative will help them in a disaster, have they actually checked and planned how it will work? Work with them to:

- Spell out arrangements with family members, aides, or others
- Contact agency personnel and others with you to confirm expectations
- Practice shelter-in-place, making the decision to leave, and actually leaving

### REQUIRE ELECTRICAL POWER TO OPERATE LIFE SUPPORT EQUIPMENT

People who use electrically powered equipment like respirators and in-home dialysis machines need alternate power sources in case of a power outage. In a disaster, power companies may be unable to restore power and emergency responders may not be able to safely evacuate your planning partner for some time. Back-up generators able to supply power for a limited amount of time may be inadequate, damaged, or run out of fuel in a disaster, and may not be transportable in an evacuation. Although it may be very difficult to consider these possibilities, work with them to:

- Assess the risk they face from likely dangers
- Understand normal rescue operations may be unavailable for a week or more in a disaster
- Explore specific actions they can take with family, friends, neighbors, service providers, and other groups

## REMEMBER

- Respect and engage your partner in the planning process
- Adapt general information to their needs
- Practice the plan before disaster strikes

More information and web links can be found on the Center for Disability and Special Needs website, [www.disabilitypreparedness.org](http://www.disabilitypreparedness.org).

