

ARE YOU READY?



Preparedness tips for people with cognitive disabilities



Part of staying safe during a disaster is following instructions from emergency officials. It also means being prepared and acting quickly.

If you're living with cognitive or developmental disabilities, this could be difficult. Luckily, there are things you can do to get ready.

Gather information, write it down

Learn about the kinds of disasters that can happen where you live. These could be hurricanes, tornadoes or earthquakes. Knowing this information will help you create an emergency plan. For example, you may live in a community at risk for hurricanes. If so, learn about evacuation routes and local emergency shelters. Write down directions on how to evacuate. Keep a copy with your emergency preparedness supplies, and include a map.

Think about your daily activities and how an emergency might impact them. For example, think about how you'll stay safe if the power goes out. What if officials tell you to stay indoors for several days? What supplies will you need? What will you need help with?

Write down clear instructions for yourself when you're planning for an emergency. Keep a copy in your emergency preparedness kit. Remember: An emergency can be a stressful situation filled with distractions, noises and changing directions from officials. Writing down instructions for yourself ahead of time will help you focus and stay calm.



Photo courtesy iStockphoto—number isn't coming up

Communicate

Reach out to friends, family or members of your support network who can help you in an emergency. Talk to them about any help you may need. Clearly explain to them how they can help you.



Make a communication plan ahead of time. It may be easier to call long distance rather than locally after a disaster. Pick an out-of-town contact who you can call and who can let others know you're safe. Also, pick a location where you can meet your family in case you are separated from them during an emergency.

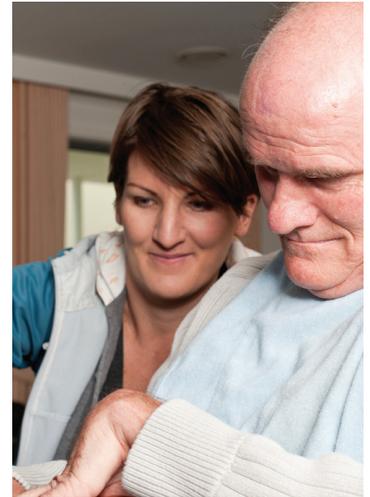
Think about what it will be like to talk to emergency officials. Write down the information they'll need to know about you. Keep it with your emergency supplies. Be ready to describe your disability to responders. You might need to tell a responder: "I may have a hard time understanding or remembering your instructions. Please speak slowly or write them down for me."

Put important items like your ID or house keys in a small bag that you can hang around your neck so you don't misplace them.

Get stocked

A good preparedness plan includes emergency supplies. Your stockpile should include:

- A three-day supply of water and nonperishable foods for every person in your household
- A battery-operated radio
- Extra batteries
- A manual can opener
- A first-aid kit
- Supplies for your pets
- A flashlight
- Pens, pencils and paper



If you take medication, talk to your doctor about getting a seven-day supply for your stockpile.

It's a good idea to put together a portable emergency kit that you can quickly take with you during an emergency. Don't forget to include copies of your medical records and contact information for your doctors.

Make time to practice

Practice your preparedness and emergency communication plan until you feel comfortable. The more you practice, the better you'll be able to cope during an emergency.