

Preparing you for Emergencies: People with Disabilities

To better prepare ourselves as a nation, we must all do our part to plan for disasters. Individuals can decrease the impact of an emergency or disaster by taking steps to prepare before an event occurs, whether they have disabilities or not!

The National Organization on Disability's Emergency Preparedness Initiative is working to promote people with disabilities to become more self-reliant in emergencies. The person with the disability is in the best position to know their abilities and needs before, during and after a disaster. There are many sample plans, templates and checklists, but any plan that a person with disability puts together must fit their own unique circumstances. Here are some tips for people with disabilities.



Photo Courtesy of the National Organization for the Disabled

Be Informed

Learn about the types of hazards to expect here in Louisville. Natural events like thunderstorms, tornado and winter storms could impact the community. Manmade disasters, like hazardous material incidents and terrorist acts could also impact the city.

Emergency Plans are in place in most businesses and here at the University. Find out about them. Look at the plans to see if they address people with disabilities. U of L plans have sections that ensure that people with disabilities are not forgotten and are assisted during an emergency.

Notification of emergencies is extremely important. Find out how you will be informed about a disaster. This includes outdoor warning sirens, weather radios, commercial TV, radio and building fire alarms.

Think about how a disaster could impact you...here at the University, in transit, at home and even where you socialize.

Identify Your Resources

Make a list of friends, family, coworkers and fellow students who might be able to help you in an emergency. Talk to them and ask them to be part of your support network. Try to get three people at each location where you might spend significant time.

Ask yourself what resources you rely on regularly and determine how a disaster might affect them. What resources can replace them if a disaster makes them unavailable? If you don't have the use of an elevator here at the University, there is a procedure to send assistance and carry a disabled person down the steps. What happens if the elevator in your apartment building or business doesn't work?

Ask questions like...Do I rely on equipment that is powered by electricity? What do I do if the power goes out? Do I use a service animal? Is there always enough food in the house for me and my dog should a winter storm hit? Do you need dialysis? What is my back-up plan if my dialysis center is shut down by the disaster?



Federal Emergency Management Agency Photo Library

Create an Individual Emergency Plan

Work with your support network to make a plan. Have a plan for home, another one for work and another one for school. Your plan should include any hazard that you think might impact you or your community.

Apply any contingencies that you develop on a regular basis. Make sure people know how to lift you out of a wheelchair and carry you. Ensure someone knows how to lead you out of a building if you are visually impaired. Make sure that your plan addresses communications. Keep a list of contacts and phone numbers with you whenever possible.

Consider how to shelter with friends and family. Consider how your business or school can provide you shelter in an emergency.

Create a “Ready Kit”

Create a comprehensive “Ready Kit” with supplies to sustain you for 72 hours. This kit should include a 3 day supply of non-perishable food, 3 day supply of water, medical equipment that you need on a regular basis, medicines and glasses. Put a list of your emergency contacts in your kit, including any health services you use on a regular basis. The kit should also contain copies of any important papers, an extra set of keys, a small sum of cash and maybe a credit card. Include personal hygiene products and any supplies needed for service animals. You should have a blanket and pillow readily available as well as clothes, coat and extra shoes.



National Guard troops moving a disabled person after Katrina
The Times Picayune (New Orleans)

Links

[National Organization for the Disabled \(NOD\)](#)

[American Red Cross Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities](#)