

Start with a simple plan:

- Make a contact list of people who support you—family, friends, neighbors, staff.
- Think about how you'll tell people what you need during an emergency.
- Use pictures or symbols if that helps.
- Include your service animal in your plan.
- If you use equipment—like a power wheelchair or communication device—think through how to bring it, charge it, or replace it.
- If you use a power wheelchair, try to have a lightweight manual chair as backup.



Build an emergency kit, including supplies for pets or service animals.

Green Mountain Self-Advocates <https://gmsavt.org/>

Here's the big picture from the CDC:

If you have a disability, emergencies can be even harder. That's why planning ahead really matters. In a disaster, first responders may be delayed, phones might not work, and hospitals can get overwhelmed.

So the question is: *How will you meet your needs if help can't get to you right away?*



Sheltering and Evacuating

About service and emotional-support animals:

Shelters *must* allow service animals. Staff can only ask 2 questions:



1. Do you need the animal because of a disability?
2. What tasks does the animal do for you?

Emotional-support animals are also allowed in emergency shelters under federal housing rules.

Mental Health Matters

Emergencies are stressful for everyone—and people with disabilities may feel that stress even more. It's okay not to feel okay. Call your doctor or counselor if your distress lasts for several days.

Some ways to cope:

- Take breaks from news and social media.
 - Do calming things: deep breaths, stretching, journaling, sitting outside.
 - Stay connected with people you trust.
 - Practice gratitude—write down things you appreciate.
- (Not every tip works for everyone. Pick what's helpful for you.)



Healthy ways to cope with stress. Take care of your mind.

- Take breaks from news and social media. It is good to be informed, but constant information about negative events can be upsetting.
- Make time to unwind.
 - Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate
 - Keep a journal.
 - Spend time outdoors either being active or relaxing.
 - Try to do some other relaxing activities you enjoy.
- Practice gratitude daily.

Remind yourself of specific things you are grateful for and write them down.
- Connect with others.
 - Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
 - Connect with your community-based or faith-based organizations.



Here's the big picture from the Red Cross

Assistance Programs:

Ask your community about assistance programs. Many towns ask people with disabilities to register with the local fire department, police, or emergency management office so help can reach you faster during an emergency. Tell your personal care attendant that you registered and who you registered with. If you depend on electricity for medical equipment, also register with your local utility company.



Escape Routes and Drills:

If you or someone in your home uses a wheelchair, make sure your exits are wheelchair accessible. Practice emergency evacuation drills at least twice a year, and anytime you update your emergency plan or move your furniture. Include your family and/or your personal care attendant in these drills.



Prepare for Different Hazards:

Think about the types of emergencies that could happen in your community and how you will protect yourself in each one. For example, many people go to the basement during a tornado warning, but most basements are not wheelchair accessible. Decide ahead of time where your alternative safe shelter will be and how you will get there.



Don't Forget to Make a Back-Up Plan

- If you use an electric wheelchair or scooter, try to have a manual wheelchair as a backup.
- If you are blind, low-vision, deaf, or hard of hearing, plan ahead for someone who can give you important emergency information if you can't use the TV or radio.
- Keep a cell phone and an extra battery. If you cannot get out of a building, you can call for help and tell people exactly where you are. Keep important phone numbers with you in case 9-1-1 is overloaded.

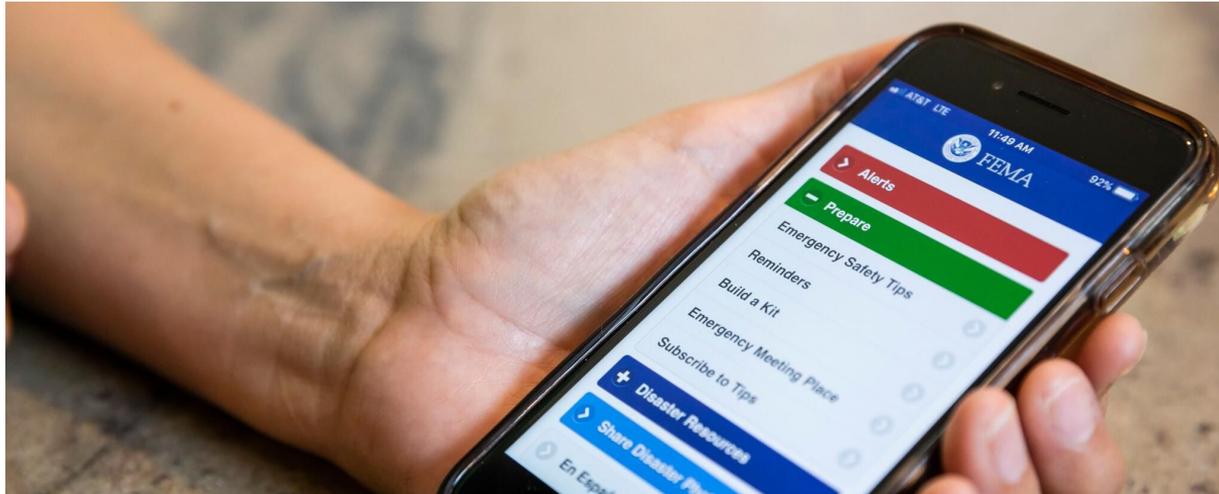


If You Are Told to Evacuate

- When you get to an emergency shelter, check that they can meet your care needs.
- Listen to the radio or TV for shelter locations. Pay attention to which shelters are accessible and which have disability-friendly features like TTY lines.
- Wear practical clothing, including sturdy shoes.
- Bring your disaster supplies kit with you.
- Let your support network—and your out-of-town contact—know where you are and how you're doing.



#1 Sign up for Emergency Alerts in your state. They let you know about floods, fires, accidents, power outages. They send you text messages telling you what is going on, where it is and what to do.



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