

Severe Storm Preparedness Tips for People with Disabilities

Do you know the best way to get emergency alerts and warnings? If you have a disability that affects your communication, identify the best ways for you to access emergency information in advance. What television stations in your area offer live captioning? Can you sign up for text, email, or telephone alerts through your municipality? Keep phones and communication devices charged, and always have a backup way of learning about emergencies. Some options for alerts and warnings are listed below.

- **Television stations with live captioning**
- **Emergency Weather Radio** (some can support strobe lights, bed shakers and text readouts)
- **Wireless Emergency Alerts** - If you are in an area where the alerts are available and have a cell phone that is equipped to receive them, you may automatically receive a text message when an emergency alert is issued.
- **Smartphone applications** - Many smartphone apps will provide text and audio weather alerts. You can set the locations and types of alerts you would like to receive.
- **Social Media** - If social media is accessible for you, look for local emergency management agencies and news stations that also use social media to broadcast alerts and warnings. Save these organizations to your 'favorites' or begin 'following' them in advance.
- **Local warning systems** - Many localities have emergency alert services that will provide alert information to you in a format of your choice. Most locations can send messages to email addresses, mobile phones (text or voice), landline phones, TTYs and Braille readers. Contact your local emergency management agency to learn what options may be available in your community.
- **Support network**- Talk to trusted friends, family and neighbors and create a plan to notify each other of emergency information.

After determining how you will be notified of an emergency, put together an **emergency plan and kit**. Involve your friends, family, neighbors, support staff and anyone else that you trust to assist you. Determine how you will contact them in an emergency and what they can do to assist you. Think about where you will take shelter in your home if you need to. Also consider any services you need (personal care assistance services, dialysis services, etc) and how you will access those services in an emergency. Talk to provider agencies about their emergency plans.

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Make sure your **emergency kit** includes everything that you will need to maintain your health and independence. Depending on your needs, you may want to include the following:

- Medications
- Chargers for wheelchairs, cell phones and other devices
- Low-tech backup options that do not use electricity (example: a manual wheelchair, a printed communication book or emergency symbols)
- Food, bowls and leashes for your service animal
- Extra eyeglasses or hearing aids

Severe storms often bring power outages. If you use assistive technology, mobility devices or communication devices, consider having a low tech back up and extra batteries or chargers in your emergency kits. If you are a medical device user, it is important that you **have a plan in place for power outages**. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has [recommendations for medical device users](#) who are preparing for severe weather and a [printable booklet](#) to document your device information, suppliers and medical information in case you need to quickly replace or repair equipment after a disaster.

Medical device users should consider the following:

- Notify your electric company that you have a medical device that needs power
- Find out if your device can be used with batteries or generators
 - Have backup batteries or a generator ready
 - Find out how long your device can run on backup power
 - Request assistance before the device runs out of backup power
 - Learn about generator safety
- Find out if your device could stop working due to a power surge and what type of surge protector you may need
- Do not plug in power cords if the cords or the device get wet
- When power is restored, check to make sure the settings on your device have not changed

Learn more about preparing for severe weather at www.ready.gov/severe-weather. Also, get severe weather [preparedness information in American Sign Language \(ASL\)](#) from the Illinois Emergency Management Agency.

Stay safe!