

FAMILY NETWORK ON DISABILITIES

Disaster Readiness Guide

**Serving people with
disabilities and their
families since 1985.**





Evacuation Planning

Usually, evacuation orders are made at the last minute, leaving little or no time to prepare. You and your family should have evacuation routes planned and options discussed in order to get your family out of harm's way no matter what type of disaster is occurring. Specific tips for evacuating are provided below.

- Plan evacuation options, both those that allow you to stay within the region and outside the region, maybe even out of the state. Multiple options are necessary in case one location is the area of disaster or unsafe.

Monitor the opening of shelters by local officials. Reach out to family members, friends, or neighbors who are out of the danger area and are unlikely to evacuate and ask if they will share their home with you.

If you need to arrange for a hotel or other place to stay, make these arrangements one of your first priorities. Rooms out of the danger area fill up fast. If you need a disability accessible room, these are very limited.

- If you need assistance leaving your home or building, identify who will be able to assist you and what you will need to do. For example, if the elevator in your home or building is no longer working, are there other options for you to leave?

- If you need to rely on an auditory alert to evacuate independently, make sure this is in place and working as soon as possible.

- Make contingency plans in case your electric wheelchair or scooter malfunctions.

- If you cannot drive yourself, it is necessary to make arrangements for transportation in advance of a disaster. Pre-register for the emergency evacuation service by contacting your local transportation provider. Ask about pet transportation and make sure they can accommodate your supplies you might need to take with you.

- Once you determine your evacuation locations, map your routes out, keeping in mind traffic jams, weather conditions, road closures, downed power lines, and other obstructions, as well as the need for gasoline if you plan to evacuate outside of your region.



Evacuation Planning

- Share your evacuation plans with your family, friends, work, etc.
- Create a plan for how your pets would receive care if you forced to evacuate your home. Pets, including emotional support animals, unlike service animals and guide dogs, will only be allowed in designated pet-friendly shelters. Check with your local emergency management office to see if there is one in your area. It is best to decide now where you will take your pet if you must leave. Remember to take a leash, muzzle, food, water, immunization records, any medications, and a carrier or cage. If you plan to evacuate to a hotel, check ahead of time so your plan to see if they will accept pets during an emergency/disaster.
- Service animals and guide dogs must accompany their owners at all times during a disaster. Service animals and guide dogs are allowed by law in general shelters and special needs shelters, hotels, and anywhere their owner travels. Even though you are not required to produce such information, if you have copies of your animal's training certification with you, it can help prevent uncomfortable situations if someone challenges your right to have them accompany
- Make sure you safely carry sufficient cash with you. Be aware that ATM's may not be functioning, maybe out of cash, or may not be able to access your account during an emergency/disaster.
- Make sure that whatever vehicle you will depend on for transportation is serviced and filled with gas. This includes checking whether the tires are capable of making a trip (perhaps longer than you initially think), the oil is changed, and any other necessary maintenance is performed so that you can be sure you have a safe, reliable means of transportation to get you and your family out of harm's way.
- Collect your important records, including medical records, school records (such as IEP's), wills, insurance policies, prescriptions, etc. and put them in a single, ready to go place so that, when it is time to leave, you don't waste precious time scrambling to gather these. Err on the side of bringing something if you think you might need it.
- Do not wait until the last minute, because it may be too late. If you decide definitely to evacuate, do so as soon as possible.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS DEFINED AND ACTION TO BE TAKEN

FLOODING

Storm Surge: A dome of water pushed onshore by hurricane and tropical storm winds. Storm surges can reach 25 feet high and be 50 – 1,000 miles wide.

Storm Tide: A combination of storm surge and the normal tide (i.e., a 15-foot storm surge combined with a two-foot high tide over the regular sea level creates a 17-foot storm tide).

Before the Flood

- Determine if you are in a flood plain.
- Refer to your emergency plan as to what you will do and where you will go in a flash-flood emergency.

When a flash-flood watch is issued for your area

- Listen to radio and television stations and NOAA weather radio for warnings and reports of flooding in progress.
- Be prepared to evacuate immediately.
- If you are on the road, watch for flooding at highway dips, bridges, and low areas.
- Follow instructions from emergency officials.

When a flash-flood warning is issued for your area

- Save yourself and those who depend on you quickly.
- Do not attempt to cross a flooding stream on foot when water is above your knees.
- Do not try to drive through water. If your vehicle stalls, evacuate all passengers immediately to higher ground. Rising water may sweep the vehicle away causing potentially deadly consequences.
- Go to the highest point in your home and many times people are forced to get on top of the roof of their homes. Have the necessary tools available to create a hole in the roof to climb out of the home.
- If your family has a person with a limited mobility, make a plan that does not require them to be able to climb into the roof of the home. The plan should probably contain an alternative location.
- Avoid walking through deep water if you have open cuts or sores.
- Keep children away from floodwaters near culverts and storm drains.
- Be cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood danger.

Be Prepared: Create a Family Emergency Plan

Increase your family's safety with a well thought out and practiced plan. Residents and visitors to Florida have experienced a variety of severe weather and disaster conditions such as hurricanes, tropical depressions and tropical storms, tornadoes, severe lightning strikes, wildfires and floods.

A Family Plan should contain the following: 1) A Place to Go, 2) A Disaster Supply Kit, and 3) A Pet Plan (Emotional Support Animals), Service Animal or Guide Dog Plan. Consider the needs of extended family members that reside with your family or close to your family.

Maintaining the Family Plan all year round, and not just right before Hurricane Season, is the best approach to assure your family's utmost safety. To maintain your Family Plan: all family members should be familiar with the plan enough to be quizzed on it.; you should complete at least one practice drill per year, check to see if any of your disaster supplies have expired and restock them; and chart your maintenance efforts by completing one of the actions listed every 6 months.


Sample Family Plan

Name	Age	Special Needs	Special Skills	Other Information
Aunt Betty	84	Wheelchair User – Diabetic and Physical Limitations	Manages all of her own medications and in-home care assistance	Wants to shelter with us
John	17	Autism	Fascinated with the weather and tracking storms	Will benefit from practicing the family plan

Your plan should address each person your plan will cover, how many supplies you will need, how much cash to have on hand, which financial, educational and other records you will need to access and what to do with your pets.

HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH DISASTERS TIP SHEET

Teach Your Child What to Do in an Emergency

- 
- Call for help
 - Call a family member, friend or a designated contact for emergencies
 - Practice what family member will take the child to the designated meeting place for the family
 - Decide to take shelter or leave home

Talk to Your Children About Disasters in a way that Nurtures and Protects

- Talking before the need arises about the potential of having to leave home to evacuate or to go to a shelter temporarily can help ease a child's fear and anxiety during a crisis.
- Take your child's fears seriously. The fear is real to the child, whether imagined or not.
- Limit your child's exposure to the media or reports on the disaster. Monitor the reports yourself, but media exposure can increase the child's anxiety by providing too much information for emotional processing.
- Be honest and provide a realistic picture that is manageable for your family.
- Remember that children's fears may also be from their imagination, so have a dialogue about what the child thinks about disasters or the specific type of disasters that can occur.
- Monitor your own reactions to limit the child developing strong reactions to what may be happening. For example, if you react with panic, fear, or a sense of loss, the child most likely will develop even stronger feelings or responses based on your reactions. Work through your thoughts and feeling in a separate area from the children.
- Make sure the child understands that, during a disaster, the family may have to leave home and not perform their daily routine. Prior notice of the routine changing and what will likely happen is necessary for many children, especially children with disabilities.
- Remind the child that your emergency management plan developed by the family will address most incidents or things that can occur prior to, during, and after a disaster. Reassure them that you are prepared for whatever may happen.
- Let your child know it is all right to be upset about something bad that happened. Use the opportunity to talk about other feelings they may have.
- If you feel overwhelmed or helpless, turn to other adults for your emotional support and not your child.
- Provide concrete explanations. For example, the lights went out because a tree fell on the electrical wires outside. However, we knew this was likely to happen and we planned and prepared for this to happen. That is why we have coolers with ice for food, flashlights, lanterns, etc. Use examples from your own family plan.
- Talk about how good it is for all of the family to be together.
- Tell your children they are safe, that you will keep them safe, and that you are doing what you can do because it is the most important thing of all.

Emergency Situations Defined and Action to be Taken

Hurricanes

Tropical Depression: An organized system of clouds and thunderstorms with a defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds of 348 miles per hour (mph) or less. Sustained winds are defined as one-minute average wind measured at about 33 feet above the surface.

Tropical Storm: An organized system of strong thunderstorms with a defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 39 – 73 mph.

Hurricane/Tropical Storm Watch: Hurricane/tropical storm conditions are possible in the specified area usually within 36 hours. Tune in to NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Weather radio, commercial radio or television for information.

Hurricane/Tropical Storm Warning: Hurricane/tropical storm conditions are expected in the specific area, usually within 24 hours.

Hurricane: An intense tropical weather system of strong thunderstorms with a well-defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds of 74 mph or higher.

Hurricane Watch: This watch should trigger your family's disaster plan, and protective measures should be initiated, especially those that require extra time such as putting up hurricane shutters or wood, securing a boat, leaving a barrier island or evacuation zone such as a mobile home.

Hurricane Warning: Once this warning has been issued, your family should be in the process of completing protective actions and deciding the safest location to be during the storm if you are unable to shelter at home.

Short term Watches and Warnings: These warnings provide detailed information about specific hurricane threats, such as flash floods and tornadoes.

WHAT TO DO

- Review your family plan and read this guide carefully.
- Decide where you plan to go if you are requested to evacuate. You may go to a hotel, stay with friends or relatives in a safe location or go to a local shelter.
- Put together your disaster supplies as recommended by this guide if you have not already had them in place.
- Plan for your pets. Pets are not allowed in public shelters but many local government programs have now established pet shelters. Contact your local emergency management office for information on the designated pet shelters.

When the Storm Approaches

- Listen for weather updates. Hurricanes are unpredictable, so remain informed.
- Have your car ready. Check gas, oil, water and maintenance.
- Check your emergency evacuation supplies.
- Board up or put storm shutters on windows. When windows break, homes are destroyed.
- Clear your yard of loose objects, bicycles, lawn furniture, trash cans, etc. Tie down anything that can't be brought in.
- Secure your boat. Remember that most drawbridges and swing bridges will be closed to all boat traffic after the evacuation order is issued.
- Leave swimming pools filled. Super-chlorinate the water and cover pump and filtration systems and intakes. Do not place objects inside of your pool like lawn furniture.
- Turn off propane tanks.

If You Can Stay Home

- Obtain and mark clean containers for storing water. You should have a minimum of at least 1 gallon per person per day.
- Obtain a week's supply of non-perishable foods. Do not forget a non-electric can opener.
- Check your disaster supplies.
- Avoid elevators.
- Do not use the telephone unless absolutely necessary.
- Wait for official word that the danger is over. Don't be fooled by the storm's calm eye. Full-force winds can start again in just seconds.

Making a Plan for Individuals with Disabilities

The best way to deal with an emergency is by planning ahead. If you prepare ahead of time, you are increasing your safety. Having a plan helps you in remaining calm in a time of crisis. If you or a family member has a disability, some extra steps are needed when planning.

- 1) Create your own support network that can help you in an emergency. You may need more than one person to help you prepare and recover after the disaster.
- 2) Wear medical alert bracelets to identify the disability to rescue and recovery personnel. These are important in case you/your family member are unable to communicate for any reason.
- 3) Practice how you would quickly explain you/your family member's condition and equipment to someone who is helping. Be concise and plan a short explanation.
- 4) Plan more than one exit from the home if anyone uses a wheelchair.
- 5) Complete a personal assessment. Be able to plan for what you are able to do yourself, what help you may need before, during, and after a disaster. Keep in mind your daily living needs.
- 6) Electric wheelchair/scooter users should have a back-up method to charge your batteries if electricity is not available for days.
- 7) Learn about your community resources and write them down so they are handy, such as emergency evacuation transportation.
- 8) If you are a dialysis patient or depend on a life sustaining treatment, know the locations and availability of more than one facility in your area.
- 9) If you plan to evacuate out of the danger area, research the options and the facilities where you are going.
- 10) Gather your medical records and important documents in one place for easy access, especially if you may need to evacuate.
- 11) Stockpile sufficient supplies of medicine and oxygen or whatever you may need to survive for up to a week without access to outside help.

Maintain your Plan

Quiz: Review your plan every six months and quiz your family about what to do.

Drill: Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills on a regular basis with your family.

Restock: Check food supplies for expiration dates and discard, or replace stored water and food every six months.

Test: read the indicator on your fire extinguisher(s) and follow the manufacturer's instructions to recharge. Test your smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries at least once per year. Replace alarms every 10 years.

Plan Maintenance Chart (Mark off task and enter date completed)

	6 Months	1 Year	18 Months	2 Years
Review Plan and Quiz	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Hold fire and emergency evacuation drills	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Replace stored food and water	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Check fire extinguisher and recharge	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:



SPECIAL NEEDS SHELTERS (SNS)

In Florida, each local county emergency management center runs an application and eligibility determination program for special needs shelters. Individuals with disabilities and children with disabilities DO NOT have to register at a special needs shelter and can plan on evacuating to a general shelter, unless the person is in need of assistance in managing their disability. Be aware that Special Needs Shelters are not "one size fits all needs" and the services, equipment, and training of staff at each shelter varies widely from county to county. These shelters are not meant to serve all person with disabilities or special needs. Please be advised, however, if the person relies on life saving medical equipment and does not have a full time caregiver to assist them throughout the disaster, they might NOT be eligible for a special needs shelter.

If your family member would need a quiet room in a special needs shelter or general shelter for their disability, contact the county office directly to determine if they offer that type of accommodation. Not all counties have implemented this type of accommodation to date.

To learn more about services, including Special Needs Registry and shelters provided by your county for those with special needs or to sign up for the Special Needs Registry, contact your local county emergency management office.

<https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/disability/disability-shelters/>
SHORT LINK- goo.gl/AkfHKm

Recovery

After the immediate crisis passes

The road to recovery is lined with people to help pave the way

If you've evacuated, when is it safe to return home? Rely on news reports, friends, neighbors, social media, etc., to get the best and most accurate information possible. Did your home sustain damage that needs to be repaired before you can return? Who will make those arrangements and who is responsible for paying for them? Your home may be without power and/or water for an extended time. While some may choose to return home and "tough it out" under these circumstances, many are not able to do so. You may decide to return close to your home and stay somewhere that has power and other services until these are restored at your home.

When you return home, be aware of safety issues. There may be debris in roadways and elsewhere, familiar roads may be blocked, power lines may be downed, and police and fire/rescue services may be limited or unavailable.

Take advantage of all assistance offered to help you/your family recover. Apply for assistance to replace what you lost (and file insurance claims). Many areas also offer free counselors and support to disaster victims.

People/places may be displaced. For example, following the hurricanes in 2017 that impacted the Gulf Coast states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, many people reported that, after the storm, the physical locations where they would meet their support network were no longer there or usable, or, if the places were there, the people in the support network were not - either temporarily or permanently.

Recovering from an emergency or disaster can be every bit as stressful as preparing for one, evacuating, or sheltering in place during one. If you need help after the crisis, who can you turn to? Whether you are able to return home, but unable to connect with your pre-emergency networks, or if you are displaced and need assistance finding help in a new location, SAMHSA is here for you. Please see the numbers and websites below for immediate help, wherever you may be in the United States.

Links to helpful websites and phone numbers:

www.ready.gov

SAMHSA Links:

Behavioral Health locator - findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Other Helpful Links:

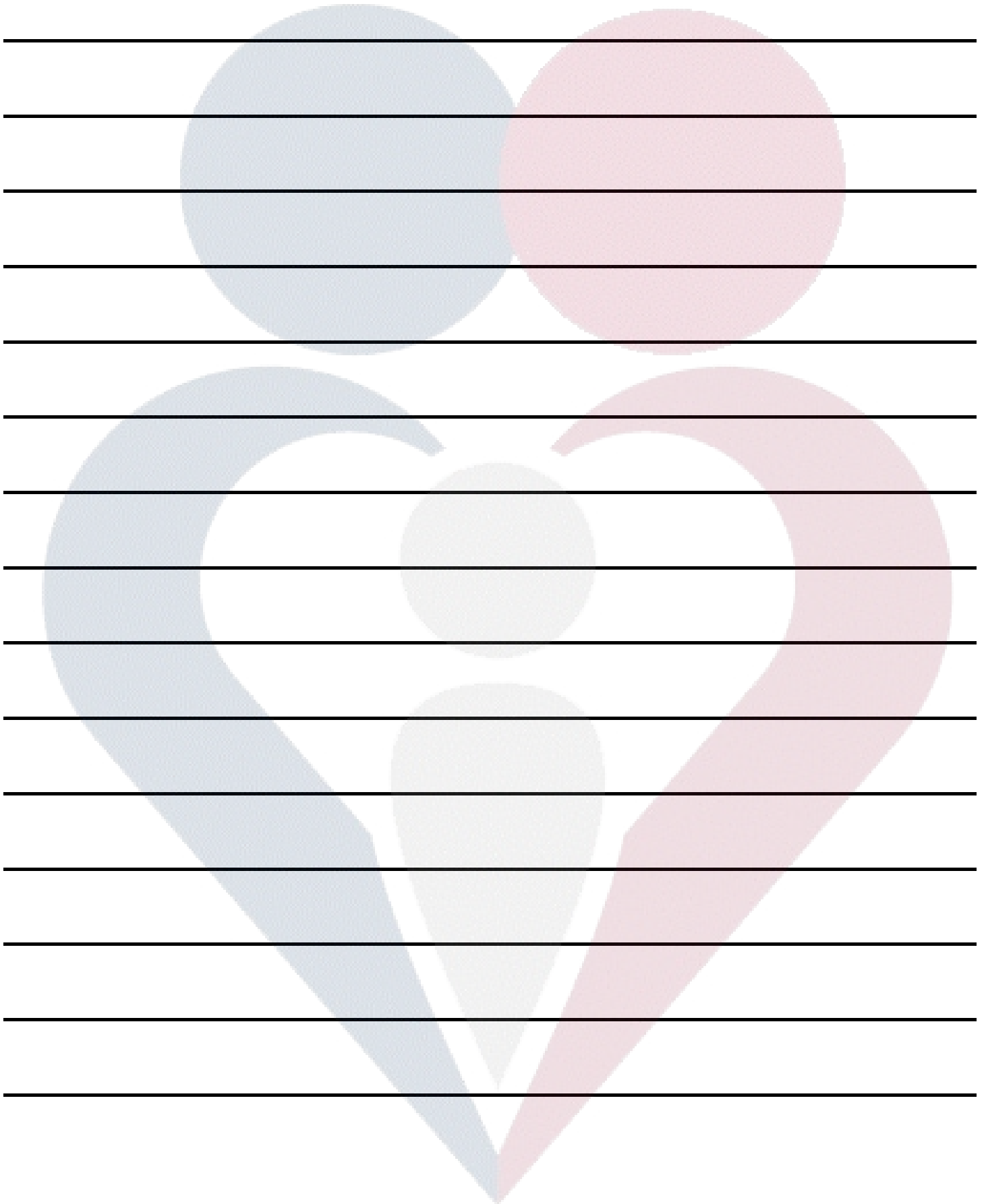
American Red Cross: <http://redcross.org>

National Weather Service: <http://www.news.noaa.gov>

National Parent Center link for programs funded by OSEP: www.parentcenterhub.org

National link to Family to Family Health Information Centers (F2F HIC's) funded by HHS: www.familyvoices.org

NOTES:





Contact Information



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All materials were created in collaboration with
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