



# Special Situations In Case of Emergency



## Important Overview Planning for Individuals with Special Needs

For the millions of Americans who have physical, medical, sensory or cognitive disabilities, emergencies such as earthquakes, fires, and floods present an additional challenge. The same challenge applies to elderly persons and other special needs populations. Protecting yourself and your family when disaster strikes requires planning. Discuss these ideas with your family, friends, personal care attendant and/or anyone else in your support network. If you are faced with additional challenges or are planning for someone who is, it will be important for you to keep the following planning steps in mind as you plan:

### Create a Personal Support Network

A personal support network can help you prepare for a disaster by identifying and obtaining the resources you need to cope effectively. Network members can also assist you after a disaster. Members of your network should be from home, school, workplace, or any other place you spend your time. They should be people you trust. They should know your capabilities and needs and be able to provide help within minutes. Include at least 3 people for each location that you regularly spend time.



### Complete a Personal Assessment

Decide what you can do for yourself and what assistance you might need. Make a list of your personal needs and resources for meeting them in a disaster. Think through and note the answers to the questions that appear on the other side of this flyer. Base your plan on your lowest anticipated level of functioning.



### Individuals with Mobility Challenges

Falling objects can pose one of the greatest hazards for individuals who have difficulty walking. It may be difficult or impossible for people with special needs such as **older family members and members with limited mobility** to quickly move to more protected areas.

Therefore, it is doubly important to follow the following steps to reduce or eliminate falling hazards that could cause injury if you have these types of challenges.

## Secure Your Environment

- Securely anchor medical equipment, heavy appliances and furniture, hanging plants and other items. Fasten tanks of gas, such as oxygen, to the wall.
- Anchor special equipment such as telephones and life support systems
- Make it as easy as possible to quickly get under a sturdy table or desk for protection.
- Place heavy objects on low shelves.
- Move beds away from windows.
- Ensure that doorways, halls and exits are clear, enabling safe exit.
- Add latches to cabinets and drawers to keep them from opening during a disaster.
- Put a security light in each room. (These lights plug into any outlet and light up automatically if there is a loss of electricity. They continue operating automatically for four to six hours, but they can be turned off by hand.)

## Prepare Before a Disaster

- Have a whistle near you to signal for help.
- Keep extra emergency supplies at your bedside and with your wheelchair or walking aid for use before help comes.
- If you rely on electrically powered equipment, make sure that you have a plan for the event that the power is disrupted.
- Make sure that wheelchairs or walking aids are located close to you even when not in use.
- Maintain a current list of medications, allergies, special equipment, names and numbers of doctors, pharmacists and family members and keep it with you at all times. Maintain an adequate supply of necessary medications so that you have a three-day emergency supply.
- Keep extra batteries for hearing aids with your emergency supplies. Replace them regularly.

## During and After a Disaster

- If you are in bed or sitting, do not get up during the event. During a disaster that could cause items to fall from the walls or ceiling, you should remain in place and cover your head and neck. If you are standing, duck and cover or sit down.
- If you are in a wheelchair, stay in it and go into a doorway that doesn't have a door.



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## Personal Assessment For People with Special Needs

### Evacuating

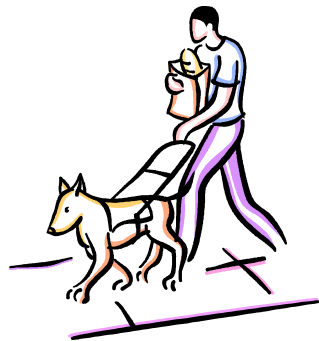
Building Evacuation: Do you need help to leave your home or office? Can you reach and activate an alarm? Will you be able to evacuate without auditory cues (these cues may be absent if the electricity is off or alarms are sounding)?

Building Exits: Are there other exits (stairs, windows or ramps) if the elevator is not working or cannot be used? Can you read emergency signs in print or Braille? Do emergency alarms have audible and visible features (marking escape routes and exits) that will work even if electrical services is disrupted?

Getting Help: How will you call or summon for the help you will need to leave the building? Do you know the locations of text telephones and phones that have amplification? Will your hearing aids work if they get wet from emergency sprinklers? Have you determined how to communicate with emergency personnel if you don't have an interpreter, your hearing aids aren't working or if you don't have a word board or other augmentative communication device?

Mobility Aids/Ramp Access: What will you do if you cannot find your mobility aids? What will you do if your ramps are shaken loose or become separated from the building?

Service Animals/Pets: Will you be able to care for your animal (provide food, shelter, veterinary attention, etc.) during and after a disaster? Do you have another caregiver for your animal if you are unable to meet its needs? Do you have the appropriate licenses for your service animal so you will be permitted to keep it with you should you need or choose to use an emergency public shelter?



### Daily Living

Personal Care: Do you regularly need assistance with personal care, such as bathing and grooming? Do you use adaptive equipment to help you get dressed?

Water Service: What will you do if water service is cut off for several days or if you are unable to heat water?

Personal Care Equipment: Do you use a shower chair, tub-transfer bench or other similar equipment?

Adaptive Feeding Device: Do you use special utensils that help you prepare or eat food independently?



Electricity-Dependent Equipment: How will you continue to use equipment that runs on electricity, such as dialysis, electrical lifts, etc.? Do you have a safe back-up power supply and how long will it last?

### Getting Around

Disaster Debris: How will you cope with the debris in your home or along your planned exit route following a disaster?

Transportation: Do you need a specially-equipped vehicle or accessible transportation?

Errands: Do you need help to get groceries, medications and medical supplies? What if your caregiver cannot reach you because roads are blocked or the disaster has affected him or her as well?

For more information and to download the entire San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department Family, Home and Personal Emergency Preparedness Workbook, please visit us at:

[www.smcfire.org](http://www.smcfire.org)