

Preparedness Planning

The best time to prepare for an emergency is well ahead of time. When you prepare from a position of safety and calm, you and your caregivers can better cope with an emergency or disaster situation when it happens. An emergency or disaster may present unique challenges for people with disabilities and special needs. If you or someone you care for has a disability or special need, you may have to take additional steps to prepare yourself and your family.

Here's what you need to get ready for an emergency or disaster:

1. **Form a Personal Support Network:** These are the people you should involve in your emergency planning and can help you in an emergency situation. They include your nearby family, friends, caregivers, neighbors and co-workers. Be sure to give at least one trusted member of your support network a key to your house or apartment. Also, let members of your support group know where you store your emergency kit (more about this later). Most importantly, you should not rely on just one person, but have at least three or more people you can call on for help.
2. **Complete a Personal Assessment:** Make a list of your personal needs and your resources for meeting them in a disaster environment. You need to take into account what you will be able to do for yourself and what assistance you may need before, during and after a disaster such as a hurricane, flood or major winter storm. This should include daily living needs (personal care/personal care equipment, adaptive feeding devices and electricity-dependent equipment), your ability to get around before, during and after a disaster (cleaning up disaster debris, transportation and blocked roads) and evacuating if necessary.

3. Get Informed: Know about the specific hazards that threaten your community (hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, etc.), learn about community disaster plans and community warning systems and find out more about special assistance programs. Old Orchard Beach citizens with disabilities and special needs should register with their local emergency management office.

4. Make a Plan: You and your family should create your own personalized Family Disaster Plan. Creating a plan is simple, easy and only takes about a few minutes. Update your plan frequently.

5. Create an Emergency Kit: Your emergency kit should have supplies specific to your special needs.

Other Helpful Tips:

- Wear medical alert tags/bracelets to help identify your disability/special need.
- Practice how to quickly explain your condition and your adaptive equipment to someone who is helping you.
- Wheelchair users need to have more than one exit from their residence that is wheelchair accessible. Practice how to escape from your home.
- Know the size and weight of your wheelchair, in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.
- If you are dependent on dialysis or other life sustaining treatment or equipment, know the locations and availability of more than one facility in your area.