

Facts:

from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment



Preparedness: Tips for People with Special Medical Needs

How can I prepare for emergencies?

Being ready for an emergency is a part of maintaining your independence. Although you may not know when a disaster or crisis will strike, if you are prepared ahead of time, you will be better able to cope with the disaster and recover from it more quickly. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's "Tips for People with Disabilities" also may be helpful to you as you prepare.

What will I need?

Try to picture yourself during a disaster and during the three days immediately following it. What might be some of your special medical needs?

Medications

- Keep at least a three-day supply of your medications at all times.
- Store your medications in one location in their original containers.
- Have a list of all of your medications: name of medication, dose, frequency, the name of the doctor prescribing it, and the pharmacy.

Medical Supplies

- If you use medical supplies, such as bandages, ostomy bags, or syringes, have an extra three-day supply available.

Intravenous (IV) and Feeding Tube Equipment

- Know if your infusion pump has battery back-up, and how long it would last in an emergency.
- Ask your home health care provider about manual infusion techniques for power outages.
- Have written operating instructions attached to all equipment.

Oxygen and Breathing Equipment

- If you use oxygen, keep an emergency supply for three days or more.
- Oxygen tanks should be securely braced so they do not fall over. Check with your medical supply company for safety instructions.
- If you use breathing equipment, have a three-day supply or more of tubing, solutions, medications, and other needs.

Electrically Powered Medical Equipment

- For all medical equipment requiring electrical power, such as beds, breathing equipment, or infusion pumps, check with your medical supply company and get information regarding a back-up power source, such as a battery or generator.
- Check with your local utility company to determine that back-up equipment is properly installed.

Emergency Bag

Have a bag packed at all times in the event you need to leave your home. The bag should contain:

- A medication list.
- Medical supplies for three days.
- Copies of vital medical papers, such as insurance cards, Advanced Directive, Power of Attorney, and others.
- When you leave your home, take refrigerated medications and solutions. Keep ice packs in your freezer if your doctor tells you to keep medications cold.

People Who Can Help

- Plan with your family, friends, and neighbors. Know who could walk to your home to assist you if other means of transportation are unavailable.
- Discuss your disaster plans with your home health care provider.
- Ask your local fire department if the department keeps a list of people with special medical needs.
- If you depend on electrical power for your medical equipment, notify your local power company. Some companies provide priority service to people with special medical needs.
- Keep a list of people, with their names, addresses, and phone numbers, who can help you if needed.

How can I help people with disabilities during a crisis?

- **Offer assistance.** If a disaster warning is issued, check with neighbors or coworkers who are disabled. Learn how to transfer or move someone in a wheelchair and what exit routes from buildings are best.
- **Prepare an emergency plan.** Work with neighbors who are disabled to prepare an emergency response plan. Identify how you will contact each other and what action will be taken.
- **Help evacuate.** Be able to assist if an evacuation order is issued. Provide physical assistance in leaving and transferring to a vehicle. Provide transportation to a shelter. This may require a specialized vehicle designed to carry a wheelchair or other mobility equipment.
- **Join a self-help network.** Self-help networks are arrangements of people who agree to assist an individual with a disability in an emergency. Discuss with the relative, friend, or co-worker who has a disability what assistance he or she may need. Urge the person to keep a disaster supplies kit and suggest that you keep an extra copy of the list of special items such as medicines or special equipment that the person has prepared. Talk with the person about how to inform him or her of an oncoming disaster and see about getting a key to the person's house so you can provide assistance without delay.

Adapted from the American Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Reliable sources of information

Colorado HELP hotline

1-877-462-2911 (toll-free)

M-F 7 a.m. – 11 p.m.;

S-S 9:30 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region VIII

www.fema.gov

303- 235-4800

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov

1-800-311-3435 (toll-free)

National Organization on Disability

www.nod.org

202-293-5960

202-293-5968 (TTY)

Ready Colorado

www.readycolorado.com



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment