

# Are You Prepared?

By Max Barrows

Have you given any thought on what you would do if a disaster occurred?

Here in the U.S, we have our share of natural and man-made disasters. Natural disasters include hurricanes (Katrina), tornadoes, flash floods, and ice storms. Man-made events have been terrorist attacks (9/11), nuclear power plants (3 Mile Island), and bridge collapses (Minnesota).

When disasters strike, there are two basic possibilities. First, you may have to stay put (shelter in place) for an inconvenient period of time. Or, you may have to get out in a hurry (evacuate). In either case, you need to prepare!

So, what do you need to be thinking about?

When you have to shelter in place, what are your basic needs? If the power is out for several days, would you be able to stay warm, have enough food and water, or be able to communicate with others?



## Emergency Supplies When You're Stuck At Home

Supplies are expensive! Just buy a few things at a time and put them away in a dry place.

### Food and Water

- Water: 1 gallon per person per day
- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables, juices and soups
- High energy foods—peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix
- Comfort foods: Cookies, hard candy, instant coffee, tea bags
- Special diet foods if needed

### Tools

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Battery operated radio or TV
- Manual can opener
- ABC-type fire extinguisher
- Shut-off wrench to turn off household gas or water if necessary
- Matches in waterproof container

### Other Important Items

- Books, cards, games (*to keep you busy & calm*)
- Extra eyeglasses

### Supply List (as needed)

- Extra batteries for wheelchair, medical equipment, hearing aids, etc.
- Wheelchair patch kit
- Gloves for manual wheelchair
- Cards listing key phrases you would use in an emergency
- Extra medical supplies like dressing materials, catheters, syringes

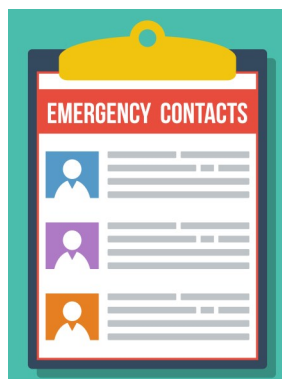
### Sanitation Supplies

- Toilet paper and feminine hygiene products
- Soap, hand sanitizer, disinfectant
- Plastic garbage bags and plastic bucket with tight lid

### First Aid Kit and Medicines

- Non-prescription medicines like pain relievers, stomach remedies, etc.
- Extra prescription medicines
- First Aid Kit and manual

You should have an emergency bag ready. This might include matches, candles, flashlights, batteries, blankets, water, medications, can food, a cell phone, and a battery powered radio.



Getting the real information about what's going on can be challenging when you are stuck in one place. Feelings of isolation can kick in, and not knowing what's going on can be frightening. For example, when 9/11 occurred, some people with disabilities in Vermont were afraid that New York City was much closer than it actually is. They needed accurate information so they wouldn't feel as scared!

If you had to get out in a hurry (evacuate), what would you need to think about? One thing to consider is having a backpack ready to go. It might contain ID and insurance cards, medications for several days, contact numbers for family and friends, money, flashlights, food, and bottled water.

Another tool to include might be a pre-written plan about where to meet in case you get separated from your supports, and where your nearest shelter is located.

Before disasters occur, it would be a great idea for local self-advocacy groups to meet with emergency first responders. This would be helpful in educating first responders to know how to assist persons with disabilities respectfully. What if suddenly someone came to your house, and told you to evacuate? I, for one, would deeply appreciate them taking the time to accurately explain what is going on. It might take a little bit of patience to let my mind process this information!

There are a lot of States that have been working on emergency preparedness for persons with disabilities. Check with your local and state self-advocacy organizations to see what's been done already. For a national resource, you can visit: [www.disabilitypreparedness.gov](http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov). Hopefully we can all be better prepared and be more in charge of ourselves in the event of a disaster!

## Pack A Bag To Go With You In An Emergency

- Change of clothing and shoes
- Personal care products (toothbrush, etc.)
- Cash
- Towel
- Prepaid phone card
- Blanket or sleeping bag
- Extra eyeglasses
- Flashlight and batteries
- Copies of *Emergency Information Sheet and Emergency Contact List*
- Copies of important documents like (birth certificate, driver's license, passports, bank account and insurance information, etc.)

Put these things in a bag but don't make it too heavy.  
Make a note *that says "Don't Forget Your Medications!"*  
Pin the sign on the outside of your bag.

