

## PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES FOR TEXANS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

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Texans with disabilities and special health care needs can prepare for hurricanes and other disasters by becoming well informed; reviewing available resources, capabilities and needs; making evacuation plans and preparing evacuation supplies well in advance of hurricane season. Hurricane season begins June 1 and lasts through Nov. 30.

### **Be Informed**

Learn more about hurricane preparedness and planning for people with disabilities and special health care needs by reviewing helpful websites. A list of helpful websites is located at:

[www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem) under Public Information.

Find out what emergency plans are in place in your community, school, workplace, service agencies, etc. Check whether those plans have considered your specific needs.

**If you cannot drive and if you cannot make transportation arrangements with others to assist you in an evacuation, you may register in advance for a ride by dialing 2-1-1. Local officials will use the registry information to make sure you get transportation.**

During hurricane season, pay attention to all types of media, including newspapers, radio, weather radio, television and the Internet, prior to an emergency. Determine which ones provide the best information and are most accessible to you. Use all methods and networks you have to get accurate and timely information – and ask friends and neighbors to keep you informed as well.

Consider how a hurricane evacuation will affect your daily activities and daily health care needs. Make a list of your specific needs before, during and after a hurricane evacuation.

If you require accessible transportation to evacuate an area, identify resources both public and private.

## **Create a Support Network**

Create a support network by making a list of family, friends, co-workers, personal attendants, service providers and others who can be part of your emergency plan. Choose at least three people in each location where you spend time, such as home, school and your workplace.

Talk to your support network in advance about your plan, and remind them of your plan as hurricane season approaches. Include people both in and out of your immediate neighborhood or community, such as a relative in another state.

If you receive regular services (home health care, transportation, dialysis), make a plan with each service provider. Learn about their disaster plans and how to contact them in an emergency. Work with them to identify back-up service providers.

## **Create an Emergency Plan**

Work with your support network to create a personal emergency plan. You should have a different plan for places you spend time regularly: home, work or school. This will help as you consider alternative plans relating to hurricanes.

If local officials call for a hurricane evacuation, consider whether you want to shelter with friends and family, and how that would work for you. Also consider how a shelter designated for the public would meet your needs.

Use this opportunity to make a basic plan that includes not only hurricanes but all hazards that can impact your community, from a neighborhood fire to a major disaster of any kind. Learn about emergency exits in your school or office building and be sure you have at least two ways to get out of your home in an emergency. Discuss emergency exits and plans with officials in your school or workplace.

Remember to include strategies you already use to deal with power outages, or transportation delays or breakdowns.

## **Identify your Resources**

Ask yourself what resources you rely on regularly and determine how a hurricane, electric power outages, lack of air conditioning or

refrigeration might affect your access and ability to use them. This checklist can help.

- Do you use communication devices?
- Do you depend on accessible transportation to get to school, work, medical, appointments or to other places in your community?
- Do you receive medical treatments (e.g. dialysis) or self-administer treatments such as glucose testing and insulin shots on a regular basis? Do your medications need refrigeration?
- Do you need assistance with personal care?
- Do you rely on equipment depending electricity or other special medical equipment?
- Do you use mobility or daily living aids such as a walker, cane, wheelchair, scooter, bath safety or other bathroom products, dressing aids, drinking straws, etc.?
- If you have a service animal, do you know the plans in your city and state regarding service animals? Do you know what you will need to bring with your service animal— such as food and feeding bowls, identification tags, veterinary contact information, proof of up-to-date vaccinations.

### **Create a Communications Plan**

Make sure you and members of your support network have a list of contact information for everyone in the network, along with names of your doctors and other service care providers.

Make sure you have alternate ways to communicate if phones are not working (such as an assigned meeting place, use of pagers, e-mail or other technology that does not depend on phone lines). In case telephones and cell towers are not operational, you may want to make a list of contact information on paper that you normally store in electronic devices.

For individuals who use relay services, there are several options: dialing 711 (nationwide - landline), captioned telephone (CapTel), Internet-enabled relay service (Internet Relay and Video Relay Service - Internet). Individuals who have wireless notebooks, pagers or PDA can call Internet Relay Services.

*For more information on how the public can prepare for emergencies, including hurricanes, visit the GDEM website at*

[www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/hurrweek06index.htm](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/hurrweek06index.htm). Other resources can be found at [www.Ready.gov](http://www.Ready.gov) and [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).