

ARE YOU READY?



Preparedness tips for people with hearing disabilities



What would you do in an emergency? How would you stay on top of the latest updates? How would you communicate with emergency responders? So you have supplies to stay safe and healthy on your own?

It's a lot to think about, which is why planning ahead is critical. And if you're living with a hearing disability, there are some extra things you should keep in mind.

Know the risk

First, the basics. Learn about the kinds of emergencies that can and have happened in your community, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods or landslides. It's also a good idea to learn about the conditions you might face in a human-caused disaster, such as a terrorist attack. Learn about your community's emergency warning systems, evacuation routes and official emergency shelters.

Next, do a personal assessment. How would an emergency or a loss of electricity impact your ability to stay safe and healthy and communicate with others? What do you need on a daily basis that may be negatively affected in an emergency? Asking and answering these questions will help you create a preparedness plan that meets your needs.



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Communication considerations

Think about how you'll communicate with emergency responders without an interpreter. This means having paper, pencils and pens easily accessible. It's a good idea to have notes pre-written and ready to give to emergency responders. For example, your note could say "I speak American Sign Language" or "I need a sign language interpreter."

Next, find out which broadcasting systems use closed captioning or interpreters so you can stay up to date on the latest emergency news. This is especially important if officials call for evacuation or advise you to stay indoors.

The National Weather Service provides the latest information on dangerous weather and other potential hazards. There are a number of ways you can access the National Weather Service. This may be especially important if you'll have a difficult time hearing community warning systems and sirens. For example, some National Weather Service radio receivers can be connected to bed shakers, flashing lights or pillow vibrators.

You can also install home alarm systems that use a highly noticeable flashing light if triggered.

Also, ask neighbors or someone in your support network to help keep you informed. Remember: Your community's emergency warning system may not be equipped to meet your needs. It's up to you to make a plan to keep you and your family safe and healthy.

For example, you may live in a community prone to tornadoes. If you know you'll have a hard time hearing tornado warning sirens, ask a neighbor to help keep you informed. In addition, double-check that your local emergency system can interact with TTY or Internet-based relay services. And keep your TTY around even if you rarely use it, in case Internet service goes down.

Get your stocks in order

Every household should have an emergency preparedness stockpile with these basics:

- A three-day supply of water and nonperishable foods
- Extra batteries
- A manual can opener
- First-aid kit
- Flashlight
- Needed medications
- Supplies for your pets



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It's a good idea to have a portable emergency kit that you can quickly grab if you have to evacuate as well.

Some special items to go in your stockpile include:

- Extra hearing aids and batteries for them
- Extra batteries for your TTY and light phone signaler
- Pens, pencils and paper
- Two whistles or noisemakers — one for your stockpile and one to keep next to your bed
- Pre-written notes you can quickly give to emergency response officials

You may also want to consider purchasing a small, battery-operated television that has captioning to keep up with emergency broadcasts.

Finally, practice your emergency preparedness plan with all members of your household. Look for areas in which you can do better and celebrate improvements.



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