

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (PWD) & OLDER ADULTS - Prepared by Anne Camozzi

All Canadians (<https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/yprprdnssgd/index-en.aspx>) are asked to be prepared to be self sufficient for at least 72 hours and also be ready to evacuate quickly if needed. While disasters affect everyone, PWD and Older Adults face unique challenges. This handout addresses specific needs of this community. Detailed information can be found at <https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/pplwthdsblts/index-en.aspx>.

A supply of drinking water (2 litres per day per person) is especially important.

HOW TO STAY SAFE

Make a personal plan and support network with your family, friends, and neighbours to assist you during a wide scale disaster or emergency. Write this plan and keep posted in a prominent area. Disasters and emergencies are stressful and it's best to plan ahead and have this readily available for yourself and others. A plan includes identifying risks and needs and solutions.

Advise your network of what support you require.

Have your own special needs written out and explained, particularly if communication is difficult for you when you are tired and/or under the considerable stress an emergency brings.

If you are a caregiver to someone, do a similar plan for that person.

Ensure someone from your network has a key to your home and knows the lock pad entry code. It may also be useful to share the passcode to your smartphone if applicable.

Have a large sign ready to place in your window or door if you need assistance and have no other way to communicate.

If you rely on life sustaining electrical equipment like oxygen or dialysis, consider registering with the NS POWER Critical Customer Communication Program (<https://www.nspower.ca/outages>), while also having your personal support network check on you immediately if a power outage occurs. It should be noted that the NSP program does not provide for quicker restorations, but they will communicate with you about your restoration times and will also provide advance notice of known/planned outages. A letter is required from your equipment supplier or doctor to register. Most equipment suppliers will have a form for this. Power wheelchairs are not eligible.

Carry a whistle or a personal alarm - something loud enough to draw attention to yourself.

Tag special needs equipment, including instructions on how to move device(s) during an emergency.

If you use a mobility device and live in a space with an elevator, request that an emergency evacuation chair (EVAC chair) be placed near the stairwell on your floor.

If you are assisting a PWD, speak slowly, clearly and in a soft manner. Do not touch the person, their assistive devices, equipment, or service animal without permission. Do not assume what the person can and cannot do. Be conscious of invisible disabilities.

YOUR EMERGENCY GO BAG

A list of what should be in everyone's emergency kit can be found at <https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/yprprdnssgd/index-en.aspx>. You can purchase a bag from the Canadian Red Cross at <https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/yprprdnssgd/index-en.aspx>. PWD & Older Adults have unique needs. This document is meant to help you plan effectively. Add your own specialized needs to this list.

Many people will need one bag for medical items and another with clothes and more common items identified in most emergency preparedness lists. Make sure your bag(s) is organized in one place, and easy to find and carry. A rolling carry-on suitcase can be useful.

Keep cash in your bag and make sure to include important papers and passwords. If you do not want to pack these because you use them now, put a note on top of your Go Bag with the items to add at the last minute.

Include a detailed list of medications and medical conditions (these can be put on a phone or a smartwatch). Include in this a list of instructions about how to help you, including things a person should not do. This should include unique information important for your condition/s such as identifying areas of your body that should not be touched, due to pain or other issues.

Some items for your bag that may not be on some lists:

A detailed list of special need items in the event they need to be replaced.

At least one week and preferably more of your medication needs, including syringes if used.

At least one week of your special food requirements, if applicable.

Any special device you require for drinking water (cups, straws etc.)

Medical supplies such as catheters, latex-free gloves, tools and patch kits for mobility devices

A lightweight foldable manual wheelchair if you are a scooter or power wheelchair user.

Other assistive items you require such as hearing aids. Backup batteries for items.

Writing pad and pencils or pen for communication.

Supplies/needs for your pet or service animal, if applicable. Make sure your animal is tagged.

SUMMARY TO DO

CREATE EMERGENCY PLAN

IDENTIFY SUPPORT NETWORK

CREATE DOCUMENTS (plan, network, lists of conditions, medications, equipment, and needs)

KEEP EVERYTHING UPDATED AND HANDY

REACH OUT TO LOCAL MUNICIPAL OFFICE IF YOU NEED MORE INFO THAN GIVEN HERE