

Earthquake Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities and Other Access or Functional Needs

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Think about What May Happen During and after an Earthquake or other Disaster:

Consider your daily activities; think about how a disaster will impact your life. Take into consideration what you do independently and where you may need assistance. Keep in mind that your regular sources of assistance may not be available after a disaster. Plan now for how you will meet your needs.

- • What if power, gas, and phone lines are not working?
- • What if roads and sidewalks are impassible or your means of transportation is unavailable?
- • How will you maintain supplies of water, food, medications, and other critical needs?
 - ○ *Right now:* Make a list of equipment and medication you may need if you had to leave your home. Store extras, labeled with your name and contact information, in your disaster supplies kit. (See Step 3, below)

This guide follows the ***Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety***, featured in the *Putting Down Roots in Earthquake Country* series of publications at www.earthquakecountry.org/roots. The content has been specially adapted for people with disabilities and other access and functional needs.

STEP 1 – Secure Your Space, by identifying hazards and securing moveable items:

When you enter a room, look for safe places to “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” (see Step 5).

- • Safe spaces are places where heavy or falling objects and breaking glass won’t injure you, such as under tables or desks, along inside walls, etc.
- • The more limitations you have, the more important it is to create safe spaces for yourself - especially if you cannot Drop, Cover, and Hold On under a desk, table, etc.
- • Create safe spaces by bolting heavy furniture to wall studs, moving heavy items to low shelves, securing hanging art to walls with closed hooks, or taking other measures found at http://www.daretoprepare.org/secure_your_stuff.html
- • Secure essential equipment such as oxygen tanks or other life support devices, so they won’t fall and be damaged or cause injury.
- • When you are in public places, be aware of your surroundings and identify your safe spaces.

STEP 2 – *Plan to be Safe*, by creating a disaster plan and identifying communication needs

Create a Family Disaster Plan – include your family and personal support team when creating, reviewing and practicing your plans.

- • Develop your Personal Support Team (PST) at home, work, and every place where you spend a lot of time.
- • A PST is made up of at least 3 people who are within walking distance and can assist you immediately, such as neighbors and co-workers.
- • Team members will need to know how to enter your home to check on you in case you are injured or cannot answer the door.
- • You will need to familiarize your team with your schedule, how best to assist you, how to operate any necessary equipment, etc. Also, inform your Personal Support Team if you go out of town.
- • Label all your adaptive equipment with your current contact information.
- • Identify an Out of Area Contact. An Out of Area contact should live out of state or at least 100 miles away who is your main point of contact and should be the one person family and friends call to report their status. Make sure your PST has your contact's information.
- • Have an Evacuation Plan – identify a meeting place just outside your home where you can make sure everyone has gotten out safely. Identify a second meeting place just outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.
- • If you are near a beach, large lake or in a tsunami evacuation zone, learn what to do:
www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/geologic_hazards/Tsunami/Documents/TsunamiBrochure.pdf
- • Make sure every family member and your PST know the location of both meeting places.
- • If you have pets make a care plan for their care, as they will not be allowed in shelters. Only service animals are allowed in shelters.

STEP 3 – Organize Disaster Supplies in convenient locations

Create a kit specific to your needs and think about things you may want or need to include, such as:

- • Food
- • Water
- • Extra medications (including over the counter and medications taken as needed), and medical supplies
- • Medical information and medication list
- • Emergency contact information
- • Communication supplies
- • Flashlight with extra batteries
- • Extra supplies for your specific needs
 - o Hearing aid batteries, walking stick, oxygen or nebulizer supplies, blood glucose tester, special equipment or hygiene and catheter supplies, feeding equipment, VNS magnet, etc.
- • A radio with extra batteries (consider also getting a NOAA weather radio)
- • Extra cash
- • An extra pair of clothes
- • A pair of heavy gloves
- • Hygiene Supplies
- • First Aid Kit
- • Face mask to protect from dust & debris
- • A copy of a recent color photo or I.D. card and utility bill
 - o For identification & proof of address (which may be needed if you must go to a shelter or to re-enter an evacuation area)
- • Include supplies for service animals and family pets
- • Attach a “GO BAG” to your bedpost or bed frame with flashlight, batteries, sturdy close-toed shoes, heavy gloves, a whistle or noise maker, and your emergency information list http://www.scec.org/education/public/espfocus/Apr_06.pdf
- • Add medications, eye glasses, communication and hearing aids including batteries where appropriate

STEP 4 – Safeguard Your Finances, by strengthening your property and considering insurance

- • See www.earthquakecountry.org

STEP 5 – *Drop, Cover, and Hold On* when the ground shakes

Practice what to do in a Drill:

- • Participate in a The Great ShakeOut earthquake drill in your region (www.shakeout.org) and encourage others to participate with you!
- • Put your plan into action during your drills. Include family members, personal support team members, caregivers, etc.
- • If during your drill you identify any challenges, revise your plan to better accommodate your needs.

What to do During an Earthquake:

Protect yourself in the safest place possible without having to move far - no matter your limitations, you need to protect yourself as best as possible. The more limitations you have the more important it is to create safe spaces for yourself.

Do NOT try to get out of the building during an earthquake! Most people are injured by other people or falling debris as they try to exit buildings during the shaking.

Drop under a piece of furniture or against an inside wall. Take **Cover** under a desk or table if possible, and protect your head and neck with one arm/hand. **Hold on** to a desk or furniture leg to keep it from shifting or uncovering you until the shaking completely stops. Learn more at www.DropCoverHoldOn.org

Suggestions for If it is difficult to Drop, Cover, and Hold On:

- • If you are in a wheelchair, recliner or bed, do not try to transfer to or from your chair during the shaking. Wait until the shaking stops to transfer.
- • Stay put. Cover your head and neck with your arms or a pillow until the shaking stops.
- • Wheelchair user: lock your wheels; cover your head and neck, after the shaking stops. The force of the earthquake may knock you off your feet or throw you to the ground. If you have mobility or balance issues, the shaking may make it even harder for you to move around.
- □ If you have difficulty getting back up after dropping under a desk or table, consider other ways to protect yourself. Be sure you to have someone check on you in case you need assistance.
- □ If it helps – count out loud until the shaking stops. It may help keep you calm. Hearing your voice can reassure others you are okay.. If you have practiced counting out loud during your drills, it can serve as a reminder for others to keep calm and remember what to do.

STEP 6 – *Improve Safety*, by helping the injured, preventing further damage, and evacuating from tsunami zones

Once the shaking stops –

- Check yourself for injury and pay extra attention to any areas where you may have reduced sensations.
- If you are near the coast and feel strong shaking for more than 20 seconds, a tsunami may be possible. Move inland, to a nearby hill, or to a higher floor of a large building. Do not wait for an official warning.
- Be prepared for aftershocks. Stay close to and aware of the safe spaces in your environment.
- Look around for hazards (broken glass, objects in your way, etc.)
- Furniture may have shifted and sound cues may not be available.
- Evacuate only if necessary, otherwise stay where you are and shelter in place.
- If the authorities advise an evacuation for your area, follow their directions immediately. Do not expect that they will be able to return to assist you.

STEP 7 – *Restore Daily Life*, by reconnecting with others, repairing damage, and rebuilding community

- Follow your disaster plan.
 - Contact your out-of-area contact, tell them your status, then stay off the phone. Text messaging may be more reliable than phone.
 - Expect aftershocks, remain aware of your surroundings as the aftershocks may change conditions or create new hazards.. Always be ready to protect yourself (see step 5).
 - Repair or replace damaged items as needed.
- After any disaster, review and revise your disaster plan. Apply any lessons learned.

What if you have refrigerated medications?

- Keep your medications in the refrigerator until it begins to get warm, and then move it to the freezer until it is warm. Next transfer medication to as small an insulated container as possible. Use chemical cold packs to keep your medications cool.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if your medications can be unrefrigerated, and if so, for how long.
- If you evacuate to a shelter, tell shelter staff that you have refrigerated medications.
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Disability-Specific Tips:

For Developmental/Cognitive/Intellectual Disabilities:

- • Use simple, short and clear language for instructions.
- • Have a written or visual reminder checklist with short, easy steps.
- • Include communication tools in your kit that each person knows how to use. If you are nonverbal, include pictures, written phrases, or Kwik Points.
- • If you use a portable communication device; store extra batteries.
- • Practice Drop, Cover, and Hold On and all steps in your plan – regular practice will help you remember what to do and remain calmer when a disaster occurs.

For Deaf or Hearing Impaired:

- • Have more than one method to receive warnings and evacuation information.
- • If you use any hearing or communication devices, store extra batteries and supplies in your disaster kits.
- • Keep pen and paper in your kits for receiving and communicating information.
- • Ask a Personal Support Team member to keep you up to date on any emergency information.
- • Advocate for yourself and develop your personal support team so you do not become information isolated or left behind.

For Blind or Visually Impaired:

- • Earthquakes can cause items to fall and furniture to shift making navigating the room more difficult.
- • Sound clues may not be available.
- • If you need to evacuate, move slowly and check for obstacles in the way. Consider shuffling your feet if there is a lot of debris on the ground.
- • Store extra canes, batteries and supplies for your communication devices.
- • Label Emergency Supplies using large print, fluorescent tape, Braille, or other methods that work for you.

For Service Animals:

- • Keep license and ID tags on service animals at all times.
- • Keep copies of any Service Animal certification or documentation - immunization records, medications, and veterinarian's contact information in your disaster kit.
- • Store extra animal food, water and feeding bowls.
- • Keep an extra harness and/or leash with your disaster supplies.
- • Your service animal may be frightened or injured and may not be able to work after the earthquake. Their paws might be injured by broken glass or debris on the ground.
- • Be prepared to use alternate equipment if your animal cannot provide its normal services. As an example, if you are visually impaired, store extra canes.
- • Arrange for your personal support team to check on you and your animal.
- • Service animals are allowed in shelters, pets are not. Be prepared to explain what services your animal performs for you.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THESE TIPS - Remember to:

- Create safe spaces for yourself.
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- Develop your Personal Support Team and include them in all phases of your planning.
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- Help members of your Personal Support Team develop their individual and family plans.
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- Make disaster supply kits for your home, car and office.
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- Practice Drop, Cover, and Hold On and your disaster plan!
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- Advocate for yourself! Make sure you are included in practice drills at home, work and in your community.
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- Volunteer with your local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) or other community-based emergency response organization.
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- Update your plan, contacts, and supplies at least annually so they are always current when you will need them most.

Additional Resources for People with Disabilities and Other Access & Functional Needs:

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs

Earthquake Country Alliance / ShakeOut

www.earthquakecountry.org/disability

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

www.cdc.gov/Features/EmergencyPreparedness

Preparing Together – Salvation Army

www.preparingtogether.org/mm5/merchant.mvc

National Organization on Disabilities, emergency preparedness materials

www.nod.org/research_publications/emergency_preparedness_materials/for_people_with_disabilities

EPI Global – inclusive emergency management practices and resources

www.epiglobal.org

Disaster resources for people with disabilities and others with access & functional needs

www.JIK.com/disaster.html

Preparedness information in multiple languages

www.redcrossbayarea.org/general_calltoaction.asp?CTA=2&SN=5011&OP=5270&IDCapitulo=VA24T92924

CA Emergency Management Agency, Office of Access & Functional Needs (OAFN)

www.calema.ca.gov/ChiefofStaff/Pages/Access-and-Functional-Needs.aspx