

Hurricane Disaster Kit

It may seem like hurricane season is nearing its end, but we are still a ways off from the season's official peak, which occurs from mid-August to late October. This time is when storms are likely to be at their worst, so as the peak of the season draws nearer, it is increasingly important to make sure that you, your family, and your pets and service animals are prepared. By now, you and your support network should fully understand your hurricane preparedness plan and how you plan to navigate a disaster with a disability.

The final major step to disaster preparation is to create a disaster supplies kit. This should include anything that you and your family will need if you are without power or safe water for an extended period of time, or if you must evacuate from your home. It is recommended to have a complete kit with everything you may need should you be forced to stay in your home for a period of time, as well as a smaller, lightweight kit with a few essentials, such as medications, that can be taken with you if there is an evacuation order.

The contents of your home kit will be dependent on your family's needs, but there are some general guidelines for the types and amounts of supplies that you should include in your kit. It is recommended that your kit be set up to sustain your family for at least three days, though seven or more is preferable. All items should be nonperishable, and food and water should be replaced every six months. It is a good idea to label each item with the date that you added it to the kit, so that you can keep track of when it is time to replace items. You will also want to pay close attention to any expiration dates, especially for food and medications.

You will want to include plenty of water in your disaster supplies kit. The recommended amount is one gallon of water per person per day that you are planning for in your kit. This is for both drinking and sanitation, although hot environments and high physical activity can double the necessary daily amount. Children, nursing mothers, and ill people will need even more water. Be sure to include extra water for your animals! You will also need nonperishable, ready-to-eat food to last your family and animals at least three days, and remember to add a non-electric can opener if you are including canned foods. Make sure the foods you add fit your family's dietary needs or restrictions. Additionally, any necessary medications should be included in the kit. You may need to talk with your doctor or pharmacist about how you can obtain and store your medications in the event of an emergency.

Some other important items for your supply kit include a flashlight with extra batteries, a battery-powered or hand crank radio with extra batteries, a first aid kit, garbage bags, and any toiletry items, such as soap, towels, and hand sanitizer. Be sure to include in your kit anything that you need related to your disability and extras, if available. If you rely on power-dependent equipment, you may want to consider purchasing a generator, although you will want to contact your utility company to learn of any complications or restrictions. If a generator is not an option, you can look into alternate methods of surviving a potential power outage. Your support network can also be an important resource in obtaining supplies and planning for a disaster.

Once you have completed your disaster supplies kit, you want to store it in a safe, dry place that is easily accessible to both you and members of your support network. Check the storage requirements for each item to make sure that you keep everything in a safe place. Following these guidelines can help you and your family create a disaster kit that will help you survive hurricane season. For a more extensive list of items and preparation tips, check out the American Red Cross's information booklet for disaster preparedness for people with disabilities:

http://www.handicap-international.fr/bibliographie-handicap/5CooperationInternationale/contextes_urgence/DisasterPrepa.pdf