

disaster preparation for families with special needs



Preparation is the key to surviving a disaster and managing any chaos that may follow. Families with special needs must take stock of their ability to manage and must plan for extra supplies in their Disaster Supply Kits.

Those who have family members with special needs must take extra measures to ensure their preparedness. The following are suggestions from the American Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Families with special needs must carefully assess their options. They should ask themselves the following questions:

- Can we manage the entire needs of our family for three days with little or no outside assistance?
- Can we meet any crisis or emergency on our own for that period of time?
- Can we make decisions concerning our special needs without consultation or help for three days?
- Do we have the supplies and equipment to meet our special needs for three days?

If the answer is “no” to any of the above questions, families must seriously consider evacuation from their homes in the event of a disaster. Advance preparation should include how to evacuate and where to relocate. Many areas have “special needs shelters” that are equipped with medical staff and specialized equipment. In your preparation, check the shelters in your area and become familiar with their locations, procedures and policies concerning how many people are allowed to accompany the family member with special needs.

For more information about shelters, call your local Red Cross office, or contact your local county emergency management office to preregister for a special needs shelter. See page 8 in the yellow, center pull-out section for helpful county phone numbers.

SUPPLIES TO CONSIDER FOR SPECIAL NEEDS INDIVIDUALS

- for respirators, other electric-dependent medical equipment or oxygen—make prior arrangements with your physician or check with your oxygen supplier about emergency plans
- two-week stock of disposable supplies such as dressings, nasal cannulas, suction catheters, etc.
- two-week supply of medications, prescription and non-prescription
- electrical backup for medical equipment
- copies of prescriptions for medical equipment, supplies and medications—ask your physician or pharmacist about proper storing of prescription medications
- contact lenses and supplies
- extra eyeglasses
- extra batteries for hearing aids, communication devices