

Disaster Preparedness and the Deaf Community

For the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Latened Deaf



American Red Cross
Greater Rochester Chapter
Lifblood of our community.



NTID
Rochester Institute of Technology
National Technical Institute for the Deaf



We are a group of Deaf and Hard of Hearing community members from the Greater Rochester, NY area who were trained in CERT (Community Emergency Response Training) and who currently volunteer with the American Red Cross Greater Rochester Chapter. As we connect with people around our community the need for us to be more prepared for disaster became very important to us.

Whether you are **Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Latened Deaf** there are specific things that you need to consider as you prepare for disaster. We urge you to review the enclosed information and start thinking about your own steps to preparedness. Be sure to keep this reference in your disaster kit and refer to it regularly.

Disaster Preparedness & the Deaf Community

You and your family could be anywhere when disaster strikes – at work, at school or in the car. How will you find each other and what will you do?

Emergencies and disasters can strike quickly and without warning and can force you to evacuate (leave) your neighborhood or be confined to (stay in) your home. What would you do if basic services - water, gas, electricity or communications - were cut off?

Local officials and relief workers may not be able to reach everyone right away. You can deal with disaster better by preparing in advance and by working with your family, neighbors and friends as a team. Knowing what to do is your responsibility. Follow the steps listed in this booklet to be more prepared.

The Four Steps to Preparedness

1. Get Informed

2. Make a Plan

3. Build a Kit

4. Maintain your Plan & Kit

When Disaster Strikes

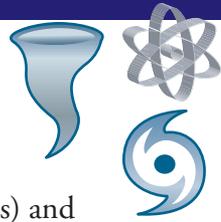
Emergency Contact Card

Four Steps to Preparedness

1. Get Informed

Community Hazard Assessment

What hazards threaten your community and neighborhood? Make a list of how they might affect you. Think about both natural (e.g. hurricanes, flooding, winter storms and earthquakes) and human-caused (e.g. hazardous materials and transportation accidents) and about your risk from those hazards.



My Community Hazards:

Self Assessment

What are your personal abilities and limitations that may affect your response to disaster?

- Do you live alone?
- Do you drive and own a car?

What are your communication preferences?

- Do you use ASL?
- Do you lip read?
- Do you need an interpreter?
- Do you communicate verbally?
- Do you have any residual hearing?
- Are you able to hear on a telephone?



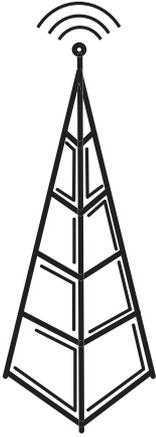
Community Disaster Plans

Ask about the emergency plans and procedures that exist in places you and your family spend time such as your workplace, school or day care center. What if your child's school needs to reach you in a disaster? How can you work with them to include your communication and hearing needs in their plan? Include this in your personal family plan also.

Know about your community's response and evacuation plans (e.g. hurricane, nuclear, extreme weather). If you do not own a vehicle or drive, find out in advance what your community's plans are for evacuating those without private transportation or connect with a neighbor that you could travel with.

Community Warning Systems

(How will you be notified?)



This is of concern to those of us who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Know how local authorities will warn you of a pending or current disaster situation and how they will provide information to you before, during and after a disaster.

Unfortunately your city or county government's disaster communication plan may not fully address your needs. Remember that if their plan is not perfect then your personal plan will need to fill those gaps. Often one solution is not enough but a combination would provide for a sufficient plan. Here are some options:

Friends, Family & Neighbors

Before a disaster happens it is a good idea to make connections with your neighbors. Let them know your needs in an emergency situation; ask them how they could assist with your plan and whether they would be willing to help. How can your family or friends help? Consider that during some emergencies travel is severely limited and they may not be able to get to you.



Local Neighborhood Emergency Teams

Connect with a group in your local neighborhood. Some of these could include CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), neighborhood watch, community block associations, churches, etc. Even if you feel you cannot become a member let them know your needs and ask them how they could assist with your disaster plan.

Local Volunteer Fire Depts



Connect with your local volunteer fire department or ambulance and let them know your needs (especially if you live in a less urban area). Discuss with them how they might be able to assist in your disaster plan.

Local EAS (Emergency Alert System) TV Stations

Most TV stations are mandated to display emergency broadcasts (including captioning or on-screen scrolls). Find out which stations broadcast on the EAS system and check that they close caption their entire emergency broadcast. It would also be a good idea to have a battery powered television so that you can view these broadcasts even if you have no power.



My Best Local EAS TV Stations (with captioning) are:

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www.emergencyemail.org

Sign up for free to receive immediate emergency alerts that can be sent to you as an email, text message or page to your computer, pager or PDA.

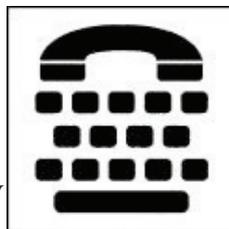
NOAA Weather Radio/All Hazard Alert Radio



These special radios provide one of the earliest warnings of weather and other emergencies and are programmed to alert you to hazards in your specific area. Many models come with strobe attachments and limited text screen displays. Check individual models to see whether they meet your specific needs. Visit www.nws.noaa.gov for more information.

Reverse 911

Some communities have a reverse 911 system that can contact you in an emergency. Contact your local emergency management office to ask them whether this is available in your area, whether it can interface with a TTY and how it could possibly meet your needs.



Internet Sites

There are some websites that can provide you with breaking emergency alerts. However care should be taken to not use a computer during an electrical storm. Also consider how you would access the internet if phone lines are down and power is out (e.g. wireless internet connection).

www.weather.gov (NOAA)

www.fema.gov

www.weather.com (The Weather Channel)

Other useful websites:

Four Steps to Preparedness

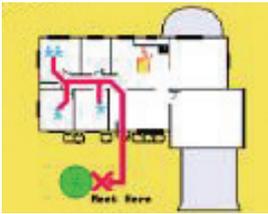
2. Make a Plan

Meet with Your Family Members or Friends

Share the information you gathered about community hazards and plans. Explain your concerns to children and work with them as a team to prepare. Be sure to include any caregivers in your meeting and planning efforts.



Escape Routes and Meeting Places



- Plan the best and quickest escape routes out of your home. If you or someone in your household uses a wheelchair, make sure all exits from your home are wheelchair accessible.
- Choose a meeting place right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
- Choose a location outside of your neighborhood in case you can't return home (a friend or relative's house, community center, landmark, etc). Consider the impact that traffic congestion and road closures may have upon your meeting place.
- Know the safe places within your home should you need to shelter from extreme weather events (e.g. tornado)
- Practice your evacuation drill every six months.

Choose an 'Out-of-Town' Contact

Set up an out-of-town contact. If family members/friends are separated during a disaster all of you should contact this person. Everyone must know how to make contact (TTY, email, pager, instant messenger, etc) and this should be included in your plan. Consider the effects that a power outage may have in reaching this person.



Make an Emergency Communication Wallet Card

Carry all useful contact information with you at all times (in your wallet or purse). Use the contact card at the back of this booklet to record this information and be sure each friend or family member has a copy.

Plan for Those with Disabilities and Other Special Needs



Keep support items like wheelchairs & walkers in a designated place, so they can be found quickly. For those who have home-health caregivers, particularly for those who are bed-bound, it is essential to have an alternate plan if the home-health caregiver cannot make it to you. In advance, provide the power company with a list of all power-dependent life support equipment required by family members. Develop a plan that includes an alternate power source for the equipment or relocating the person.

Plan for Your Pets or Service Animals

Take your pets with you if you evacuate. However, be aware that pets (except service animals) are not permitted in emergency public shelters for health reasons. Prepare a list of family, friends, boarding facilities, veterinarians, and 'pet-friendly' hotels that could shelter your pets in an emergency.



- If you have a hearing ear dog make sure that you have the proper identification and equipment with you. This will be required to check into an emergency shelter or a hotel. (Keep a copy of this identification in your disaster kit.)

Utilities



Know how and when to turn off water, gas and electricity at the main switches or valves and share this information with your family. Keep any tools you will need nearby. Turn off the utilities only if you suspect the lines are damaged, you suspect a leak or if local officials instruct you to do so. (Note: Only turn off your gas in the event of a real emergency)

Smoke Detectors & Other Alarms

Will your fire alarms, smoke or carbon dioxide detectors wake you in an emergency? Consider strobe or vibrating alert systems that might meet your needs. Change the batteries in all alarms every six months.



Insurance Coverage

Check if you have adequate insurance coverage. Homeowners insurance does not cover flood damage and may not provide full coverage for other hazards. Talk with your insurance agent.

Vital Records and Documents

Copies of vital family records and other important documents such as birth and marriage certificates, social security cards, passports, wills, deeds, and financial, insurance, and immunizations records should be kept in a safe location.

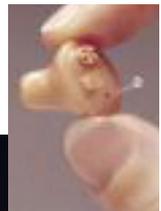
Visual and Vibrating Alerting Devices



Examine all of your visual and vibrating alerting devices (e.g. alarms, telephone, door bell). Determine whether they are battery operated or have battery back-up. In the event of a power outage these devices may not operate. You should also check that your TTY has battery back-up. Change the batteries in these devices every six months.

Hearing Aids

Consider storing your hearing aids in a container by your bedside which is attached to your nightstand using Velcro. Some disasters (e.g. earthquakes) may shift items that are not secured making them difficult to find quickly.



Key Phrases Card

You may want to carry a pre-printed card that has key phrases (see the card at the back of this booklet). This may help you communicate with fire-fighters and other emergency personnel.

Some phrases that may be useful are:

“I use American Sign Language (ASL) and need an interpreter”

“I need announcements written or signed”

“I cannot hear sirens or alarms”

Prepare for Different Hazards.

Include in your plan how to prepare for each hazard that could impact your local community and how to protect yourself. For instance, the actions you would take to protect yourself from an ice storm are different from those you would take for a fire. Reference the websites listed on the back cover to learn more about the different actions required for different hazards.

Four Steps to Preparedness

3. Build a Kit

Disasters can happen at any moment and you probably will not have an opportunity to shop or search for needed supplies. Building a disaster supplies kit is an important part of being prepared.

Having appropriate supplies ready is important whether you need to leave your house (evacuate) or whether you need to stay inside (shelter-in-place).

Keeping your kit up to date is also important. Review the contents at least once every six months or as your family needs change. Regularly rotate food, water, batteries, medications and other perishable items.

Consider having emergency kits in each of your vehicles and at your workplace.

On the following pages are some suggestions for building your disaster supplies kit. Include any additional items that you feel might be useful for your particular needs.

RECOMMENDED DISASTER KIT SUPPLIES

Basic Needs and Supplies

- Three-day supply of nonperishable food (canned, dry, etc)
(It is a good idea to include foods that do not need cooking)
- Three-day supply of water (one gallon per person, per day)
- Manual can opener
- Flashlight with extra batteries (do not use candles)
- First aid kit and manual.
- Sanitation and hygiene items (toilet paper, feminine products)
- Matches in waterproof container
- Whistle (to attract the attention of emergency personnel)
- One change of clothing
- Blanket
- Photocopies of identification and credit cards
- Cash and coins (ATMs may not be accessible)
- Prescription medications (three-day supply)
- List of medications, doctor & pharmacist contact information
- Eye glasses, contact lens solution.
- Items for infants, such as formula, diapers, bottles, and pacifiers.
- Pet supplies (including food and vaccination record)
- Map of the local area
- Pack of cards
- Extra set of keys (car, house, etc)
- Plastic garbage bags
- Family & friends emergency contact information

Considerations for those Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Extra hearing aid or implant batteries
- Portable, battery-powered television with extra batteries
- Battery operated lantern with extra batteries
This will aid you in communication (lip reading, ASL)
- Notebook and pen
- Extra batteries for any visual or sensory alerts (strobe/vibrating)
- Vibrating/strobe alarm clock with extra batteries
- Extra pager batteries
- Extra TTY batteries
- Car charger for pager/communication devices
(Do not run your car inside a garage)
- Hearing ear service animal identification

Cold Climate Supplies

It is possible that you will not have heat during or after a disaster. Think about your clothing and bedding needs. Be sure to include one set of the following for each person:

- Jacket or coat
- Long pants and long sleeve shirt
- Sturdy shoes
- Hat, mittens, and scarf
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket

Supplies for your Vehicle

- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Maps
- First aid kit and manual
- Tire repair kit
- Jumper cables
- Flares
- Bottled water
- Non-perishable foods such as granola bars
- Winter:* Blanket, hat, mittens, shovel, sand, tire chains, windshield scraper, florescent distress flag
- Summer:* Sunscreen lotion SPF 15 or greater, shade item (umbrella, wide brimmed hat, etc), water

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Four Steps to Preparedness

4. Maintain Your Plan & Kit

Every Six Months

- Review your plan every six months with all of your friends and family.
- Check your disaster supplies kit every six months and rotate all perishable items. (e.g. food, water, medications, and batteries)
- Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills on a regular basis with your family.
- Change batteries in all essential devices (e.g. smoke detectors, TTY) every six months. A good idea is to do this every Fall and Spring when you change to/from daylight savings time.

When Disaster Strikes

- If you are instructed to take shelter immediately, do so at once.
- If you are instructed to evacuate monitor emergency broadcasts and messaging for updated instructions.
- Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Take your disaster supplies kit.
- Use approved travel routes and don't use shortcuts because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous.

After a Disaster

- If the emergency occurs while you are at home, check for damage using a flashlight. DO NOT light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches. Check for fires, chemical spills and gas leaks.
- Shut off any damaged utilities.
- Check on your neighbors, especially those who are elderly or disabled.
- Connect with your out-of-town contacts.
- Stay away from downed power lines.
- Do not drive through flooding roads.
- Monitor local broadcasts for information about where you can get disaster relief assistance.

If Electrical Power is Lost

- Use a flashlight or battery-operated lantern. Do not use candles.
- Turn off all major appliances (e.g. stove, refrigerator, dryer). They could overload electric lines when power is restored, causing a second outage.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Food can be kept cold for a day or two if the doors are kept closed.
- Use portable generators cautiously. Make sure they are operated only out-of-doors in a well-ventilated area. Refuel a generator only after it has cooled. Do not connect a generator to your home's electrical system except through an approved transfer switch installed in compliance with local electrical code.



Key Emergency Phrases:

I use American Sign Language (ASL) and need an interpreter
I need announcements written or signed
I cannot hear sirens or alarms

Police: _____

Fire Dept _____

Ambulance: _____

Family Doctor: _____

Poison Control Center: _____

Visit www.redcross.org for more information

Important Numbers

Emergency Contact Card



American Red Cross

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Household Members Contact Information

Out-of-town contact: _____

Family meeting place outside the neighborhood: _____

Useful Websites Include:

- www.RochesterRedCross.org
- www.redcross.org
- www.ready.gov
(US Dept. of Homeland Security)
- www.noaa.gov
- www.fema.gov
- www.disasterreduction.org

For more information, please contact your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter.

The American Red Cross, a humanitarian organization led by volunteers, guided by its Congressional Charter and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement, will provide relief to victims of disasters and help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies.

Acknowledgements:

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