

# Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities: Same But Different

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DES MOINES, Iowa – The keys to effective disaster preparedness—be informed, make a plan and take action—apply to all of us, but people with disabilities or access and functional needs (AFN) should approach preparedness planning with additional considerations.

Now is a great time to consider the needs of people with disabilities or AFN when disaster strikes. This Friday, July 26, marks the 29th [anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#). This milestone civil rights law affirms rights of people with disabilities or AFN and prohibits discrimination based on disability by state and local governments, private entities and telecommunications. ADA is a powerful tool to ensure everyone is included in all aspects of emergency management.

FEMA recognizes that emergency management is a whole community effort and is committed to helping people with disabilities before, during and after disasters. So here are some considerations to help prepare for and respond to disasters for people with disabilities or access and functional needs:

- Ahead of a disaster, check with your local emergency manager regarding specific arrangements or requirements for people with disabilities or AFN who may be going to a shelter. Certain measures may have to be taken into consideration if there is a need to evacuate to a shelter after a storm.
- Disasters can strike at any time so be sure to prepare for helping persons who may need extra assistance because of a temporary or short-term disability such as a sprain, broken bone or surgery recuperation.
- Create a support network. Check with those who can assist you, if needed. Keep a contact list in a watertight container in your [emergency kit](#).

## Tips for People with a Mobility Disability

Include:



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- If you use a power wheelchair, have a lightweight manual chair available as a backup. Show others how to operate your wheelchair.
- Know the size and weight of your wheelchair, and if it is collapsible for transportation.
- Keep an extra mobility device such as a cane or walker, if you use one.
- If you use a seat cushion to protect your skin or maintain your balance, and you must evacuate without your wheelchair, take your cushion with you.

For more on the tips above and disaster planning for those with AFN or disabilities visit [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov).

Be ready for flooding—and for any other disaster—and remember to help those who may need neighborly assistance.

For general preparedness information, visit the state's website at [www.beready.iowa.gov/](https://www.beready.iowa.gov/).

For more information on the Iowa disaster and a variety of recovery resources, log on to: [www.floods2019.iowa.gov](https://www.floods2019.iowa.gov) or call 2-1-1. Find more information at [www.fema.gov/disaster/4421](https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4421).

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The Iowa Department of Human Rights can provide information on resources for people with disabilities. Call 515-242-5655 or go online at <https://humanrights.iowa.gov>.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has faced discrimination or needs help with accessible communication, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-3362. Multilingual operators are available.

FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters.

HSEMD Mission: To lead, coordinate and support homeland security and emergency management functions in order to establish sustainable communities and ensure economic opportunities for Iowa and its citizens.

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