

# Fact Sheet: Not all Disaster Preparedness Plans Are the Same

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Hurricane Maria posed a threat to so many on the island, residents have become more conscious of what they need to do to prepare themselves for possible disasters in the future. But certain populations, such as college students, pregnant women, young children, the elderly and those with accessible needs should take special precautions

Everyone should have an emergency kit with flashlights, batteries, a weather radio, plenty of extra cash, a first aid kit, copies of important documents and food and other provisions for at least 10 days. They should also have an emergency plan – know where and how they will evacuate and how they will get in touch with family and friends at some point after the disaster.

The following are some specific recommendations for certain vulnerable populations:

Pregnant women:

- Women who are scheduled to give birth during hurricane season should check whether their doctor is affiliated with other hospitals outside the area or identify an alternate doctor that could see them case there is any emergency.
- Pack medications and prenatal vitamins and continue taking them should you have to evacuate.
- If at a shelter, make sure to inform staff of your pregnancy.
- During disasters, harmful chemicals may be released into the environment. Listen to announcements from emergency officials about chemical safety and actions you may need to take to protect yourself.

Families with young children:



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- Pack enough diapers and formula for 10 days.
- If breastfeeding, try to continue to do so.
- For formula-fed infants, use ready-to-feed formula if possible. If using ready-to-feed formula is not possible, it is best to use bottled water to prepare powdered or concentrated formula. If bottled water is not available, boil water for 1 minute and let it cool before mixing with formula.
- Make sure toddlers have their favorite stuffed animals and games that will help comfort them and keep them occupied.
- Learn about the school or childcare center's emergency plans. Every school and childcare center should have a written emergency plan with information, such as how to contact parents in an emergency and where children will go if evacuated.

#### College students:

- Students should know how to exit their apartment, dorm or house in case of an evacuation. Know at least two ways to get out.
- Plan for several different meeting places. One meeting place should be directly outside of your apartment, dorm, or house. The other should be a site away from your neighborhood in the event you cannot return home. Give your family members and roommates a copy of this information.
- Most colleges have emergency plans that outline procedures in the event of a natural or manmade disaster. Check the college's website to see if its plans are posted.

#### Elderly:

- Be Informed about treatment centers: If you undergo routine treatments administered by a clinic or hospital, find out their emergency plans and work with them to identify back-up service providers.
- Create a support network of family, friends and others who can assist you during an emergency, and share your disaster plans with them. Practice your plan with them.
- Access to emergency supplies: Make sure to have an extra key to your home, know where you keep your emergency supplies and how to use lifesaving equipment or administer medicine.
- Plan for Mobility Issues: If you are in a wheelchair, make sure someone in your support network knows how to operate it. Keep extra canes or walkers nearby if



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possible in case you have to evacuation.

- Check the facility's emergency plan: Those in a nursing home or assisted-living facility should speak with the administrator about disaster-specific evacuation plans.
- Don't forget your pets or service animals. Not all shelters accept pets, so plan for alternatives.
- Include in emergency kit:
  - Foods rich in B12 vitamins and low in sodium.
  - Spare eyeglasses, catheters, batteries, oxygen systems, etc.
  - Medicaid and Medicare cards, medical-alert tags or bracelets with information about healthcare needs.
  - Medicines and copies of prescriptions that can be refilled for up to six months.
  - Blankets, extra clothing and comfortable shoes.

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