



POLK COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

POLK COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
111 COURT AVENUE, DES MOINES, IA 50309
PH. (515) 286-2107 FAX (515) 323-5256
EMAIL: aj.mumm@polkcountyiowa.gov
WEB SITE: www.polkcountyiowa.gov

A.J. MUMM, DIRECTOR

Media Release (3 pages) – For Immediate Release
September 7, 2010
Contact: Jon Davis, Assistant Coordinator

National Preparedness Month September 2010 - Persons with Special Needs

September is National Preparedness Month and Polk County Emergency Management is supporting this campaign to increase awareness and assist you in becoming as prepared as possible if an event occurs. Today's topic is: *what you need to know for persons with special needs during an emergency.*

For the millions of Americans who have physical, medical, sensory or cognitive special needs, emergencies such as fires, floods, other natural disaster events and acts of terrorism present a real challenge. The same challenge also applies to the elderly and other special needs populations. Protecting yourself and your family when a disaster strikes requires planning ahead. This article will help you get started. Discuss these ideas with your family, friends and/or your personal care attendant, or anyone else in your support network and prepare an emergency plan. Post the plan where everyone will see it, keep a copy with you and make sure everyone involved in your plan has a copy.

Where will you, your family, your friends or personal care attendants be when an emergency or disaster strikes? You, and those you care about, could be anywhere, at work, home, school or in transit. How will you find each other and will you know your loved ones are safe? Emergencies and disaster can strike quickly and without warning and can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services such as water, gas, electricity or telephones were cut off? Local official and relief workers will be on scene after a disaster but they cannot reach everyone right away. You are in the best position to plan for your own safety as you are best able to know your functional abilities and possible needs during and after an emergency or disaster situation. You can cope with disaster by planning in advance with your family and care attendants. Create a personal support network and complete a personal assessment to address your special needs. Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility.

Complete a personal assessment of your particular needs. Decide what you will be able to do for yourself and what assistance you may need before, during and after a disaster. Create a personal support network of at least 3 people and at least 1 should not live in your immediate area but have all of your contact information and special needs if they need assistance from local officials to get to you. Your needs will be based on the environment after the disaster, your capabilities and your limitations. Think about the following situations and detail your answers based on your lowest anticipated level of functioning.

Proudly serving the communities of:

Alleman - Altoona - Ankeny - Bondurant - Clive - Des Moines - Elkhart - Grimes - Johnston - Mitchellville
Pleasant Hill - Polk City - Polk County - Runnells - Urbandale - West Des Moines - Windsor Heights

Daily living:

- Personal care. Do you regularly need assistance with personal care, such as bathing and grooming? Do you use adaptive equipment to help you get dressed?
- Water service. What will you do if water service is cut off for several days or if you are unable to head water?
- Personal care equipment. Do you use a shower chair, tub-transfer bench or other similar equipment?
- Adaptive feeding devices. Do you use special utensils that help you prepare or eat food independently.
- Electricity-dependent equipment. How will you continue to use equipment that runs off electricity, such as dialysis, electrical lifts, etc.? Do you have a safe back-up power supply and how long will it last?

Getting around:

- Disaster debris. How will you cope with the debris in your home or along your planned exit route following the disaster?
- Transportation. Do you need a specially equipped vehicle or accessible transportation?
- Errands. Do you need help getting groceries, medication and medical supplies? What if your primary caregiver cannot reach you because roads are blocked or the disaster has affected them as well?

Evacuating:

- Building evacuation. Do you need help to leave your home or office? Can you reach and activate an alarm? Will you be able to evacuate independently without relying on auditory cues? The cues may be absent if the electricity is off or alarms are sounding.
- Building exits. Are there other exits (stairs, windows or ramps) if the elevator is not working or cannot be used? Can you read emergency signs in print or Braille? Do emergency alarms have audible and visible feather marking escape routes and exits that will work even if electrical service is disrupted?
- Getting help: How will you call or summon for the help you will need to leave the building? Do you know the locations of text telephones and phones that have amplification? Will your hearing aids work if they get wet from emergency sprinklers? Have you determined how to communicate with emergency personnel if you don't have an interpreter, your hearing aids aren't working, or if you don't have a word board or other augmentative communication device?
- Mobility aids/Ramp access: What will you do if you cannot find your mobility aids? What will you do if your ramps are shaken loose or become separated from the building?
- Service Animals. Will you be able to care for your animals during and after a disaster? Do you have the appropriate licenses for your service animal so you will be permitted to keep it with you should you need or choose to use an emergency public shelter?

If a service animal is part of your support system you must include them in your plan. Service animals are limited to any dog or common domestic animal under the American with Disabilities Act. Your service animal can go anywhere you go. Create an emergency supply kit for them as well. You may want to make two supply kits for your service animal. One for circumstances where you may be forced to stay home and have a supply to get you through three days and a lighter "go" kit in the event you are required to evacuate. The kits should include:

- Food, water, treats, and food bowls
- Copies of immunizations and veterinarian contact information.

- Current photo of your service animal, in case you are separated.
- Disposal bags and paper towels for waster.
- Ties, extra harnesses or lease, toys and bedding.
- Consider having ID microchip with contact information.

For more information please visit the following websites:

http://www.idph.state.ia.us/bh/disability_emergency_prep.asp

<http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/emergencymanagement/>

<http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/EmergencyManagement/emergency-preparedness/>

Follow us on Facebook <http://tinyurl.com/polkema>

twitter.com/PCEmrgManAgency

www.ready.gov or