

Advisory report:

Guidelines for persons with disabilities

How to act in emergencies



TAFF

Technical Assistance Financing Facility
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Advisory report on the Guidelines for persons with disabilities on how to act in emergencies.

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About these Guidelines

These Guidelines support persons with disabilities across Europe to better prepare for and act during and after emergencies. They are in line with the objectives of the European Commission's Preparedness Union Strategy, particularly Action 33 under Population Preparedness, which calls for every citizen to have an active role in crisis preparedness and response. They are grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which affirms the right to protection and safety in emergencies, equal access to information and services, and full participation in decisions that affect them. Preparedness planning must respect each person's will, preferences, autonomy and dignity, including when support is needed, and all persons with disabilities retain the right to make their own preparedness decisions. The Guidelines focus on Article 11 (situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies), Article 9 (accessibility), Article 19 (independent living), and Article 21 (access to information and communication).

Two complementary Guidelines were created to ensure everyone has the tools, knowledge and opportunity to act confidently in an emergency:

- 1. Guidelines for persons with disabilities:** A practical guide to support persons with disabilities to prepare, act, and recover in any emergency, and to guide support persons and the community to assist with these activities.
- 2. Guidelines for First Responders:** A practical guide to support emergency services personnel assist persons with disabilities in emergencies.

These Guidelines were developed through a collaborative process, reviewed and updated over two rounds of consultation between May and June 2026. They reflect the opinions and feedback received through online meetings and written inputs from civil protection authorities and organizations of and for persons with disabilities across Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) countries. Input from the wider public was also welcomed.

The Guidelines are not prescriptive or binding. They are recommendations that countries can use to update or complete existing resources, adapt to local and national contexts, or build new resources where none exist. Although specific preparedness arrangements will vary depending on national and local systems, available services, household circumstances, and the nature of the emergency, the principles of dignity, non-discrimination, accessibility, participation, autonomy, and informed consent apply across all contexts.

Who these Guidelines are for

These Guidelines are written for persons with disabilities across Europe, and for anyone experiencing functional limitations, including those related to age, pregnancy, and temporary conditions or illness, regardless of formal diagnosis. They provide practical tools to help the person prepare for emergencies, whatever their level of autonomy, functional requirements and support needs, living situation, health, background, or economic situation.

However, preparedness is a shared responsibility. While, personal, household and community preparedness can strengthen safety, it does not replace the responsibility of authorities and service providers to deliver accessible warnings and emergency communication, evacuation, shelter, sanitation, response services and recovery support.

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Glossary of terms

112 emergency number: 112 is the single European emergency number, available free of charge across the EU for contacting emergency services. Persons who cannot make a voice call may be able to access 112 through alternative communication methods, such as text, video, relay, or sign language services, where available. You can check the options available in your country and any country you are travelling to, and include them in your emergency plan.

72 hours preparedness (minimum 72-hour self-sufficiency): The ability of individuals, households, and support networks to meet their essential needs and remain safe, informed, and functional for at least 72 hours (three days) during a crisis or major disruption, without immediate assistance from emergency services or authorities. It involves maintaining essential supplies, including food, drinking water, medicines, communication tools, and other items necessary to manage independently during the initial phase of an emergency, taking into account individual circumstances and support needs. Persons with chronic health conditions may also need to maintain an appropriate reserve of prescribed medication (one-month ideally), whenever possible.

7 basics of self-preparedness: Essential things every household should have ready before a crisis hits: clean water, non-perishable food, items to stay warm, basic hygiene supplies, a stock of medicine and first aid, a way to receive information and stay in communication, and a small amount of physical cash for when electronic payments fail. Having these seven basics in place helps you and your family get through the first critical days of an emergency on your own.

Accessibility: Accessibility is the quality of being easy to approach, enter, or use. In its broadest sense, it ensures that products, services, and environments are equally usable by everyone, regardless of age, physical ability, or specific needs, while minimizing or eliminating barriers to full participation.

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC): Communication methods used by people who have difficulty speaking or persons who cannot rely on speech alone. AAC can support or replace spoken communication and may include gestures, facial expressions, writing, drawings, communication boards, pictures, text, speech-generating devices, mobile apps, pictograms, and other assistive technologies. A person may use AAC all the time or only in certain situations.

Communication card: A personal, non-official document that helps emergency responders, shelter staff, and others understand your communication preferences, functional requirements, support needs, and emergency contacts. You can complete it yourself, or with support from a trusted person if needed, and carry it with you at all times, especially when outside the home. The card is a practical tool to help others communicate with you and provide appropriate assistance during an emergency. It does not replace official identification or documentation and should not be confused with the European Disability Card or other official documents.

Emergency backpack: A bag that you prepare in advance with essential items needed to support your safety, health, and basic needs if you have to leave your home quickly during an emergency. Also known as a go-bag, grab bag, or emergency kit, it should be tailored to your individual circumstances, preferences, and support needs and may include food, drinking water, medicines, important documents, communication devices, hygiene items, clothing, and assistive products. It is intended to help you manage independently for at least 72 hours.

Evacuation: Leaving your home, building, or area and moving temporarily to a safer place before, during, or after an emergency to protect your safety and wellbeing. Evacuation can be sudden or planned in advance. Standard evacuation procedures may not always meet everyone's communication preferences, functional requirements, and support needs, so it is important to plan for your individual circumstances.

First responders: Trained personnel who provide immediate assistance during emergencies, disasters, or crises. They may include firefighters, emergency medical personnel, police officers, mountain rescuers, civil protection personnel, 112 operators, social workers, and other professionals involved in emergency response and support. In these Guidelines, we help you prepare to tell first responders quickly and clearly what you require, need, and prefer.

- **112 operators:** The people who answer calls to the European emergency number, 112. They are trained to ask the right questions, decide which services to send (police, ambulance, or firefighters), and stay on the line with you until help arrives.
- **Firefighters:** The professionals who respond to fires, explosions, building collapses, road accidents, floods, and other emergencies where rescue is needed. Firefighters are often the first to reach a person who cannot leave a building on their own. In many countries, firefighters lead evacuation operations and carry out technical rescues, including assisting persons with disabilities.
- **Police officers:** The officers responsible for public safety and order during an emergency. In an emergency, the police secure the area, manage traffic and crowds, support evacuation, protect property, and assist persons who need assistance. Police officers may also deal with situations involving violence, accidents, or missing persons.
- **Medical assistance personnel:** Medical assistance personnel are responders who provide emergency medical care to ill or injured persons at the scene and during transport, including doctors and ambulance staff. They need clear information about your medication, your disability, and your medical history to help you safely.
- **Mountain rescuers:** Trained professionals who search for and rescue people in difficulty in mountains, forests, or other hard-to-reach areas.

- **Social workers:** Trained professionals who assist people dealing with social, emotional, and practical difficulties. In an emergency, social workers can support you in a shelter, help you find temporary housing, contact your family, organize care for children or older relatives, restore your access to medication or assistive devices, and connect you with longer-term recovery services.

LGBTIQ+: An initialism for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other people with sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics that are perceived not to conform to social norms.

Organization of persons with disabilities (OPD): An organization led, governed, and directed by persons with disabilities that represents and advocates for their rights and interests. Most of its members are persons with disabilities, who guide its work and decisions.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP): An individual plan agreed between you and an employer, school, accommodation provider, or other responsible organization that explains how you will evacuate safely from a specific building or location during an emergency. It sets out how you will receive warnings, who will support you, your evacuation routes, and any equipment, communication support, or other assistance you may need.

Personal Emergency Plan: A written document that helps you prepare for emergencies by setting out what you will do, who will support you, how you will communicate, and where you will go if you need to evacuate or seek assistance. It should include key information such as your support network contacts, emergency communication arrangements, medication, functional requirements and support needs, important locations, and any assistance you may require from emergency responders and others.

Preparedness: Getting ready for an emergency before it happens. Preparedness means understanding the risks you may face and taking practical steps to stay safe, informed, and connected. This can include making a Personal Emergency Plan, building a support network, preparing an emergency backpack, knowing how to receive warnings, and practicing what you would do in an emergency.

Recovery: The period after an emergency when you restore your health, wellbeing, home, support network, medication, assistive devices, documents, and daily routines, while taking steps to reduce future risks and strengthen resilience. For persons with disabilities, recovery may take longer and require additional support to maintain independence and access essential services.

Resilience: The ability of individuals, households, communities, and societies to prepare for, cope with, adapt to, and recover from an emergency. This includes staying safe during a crisis and restoring access to your home, support network, medication, assistive devices, services, and daily routines as quickly as possible. Resilience is strengthened through preparedness, mutual support, actions that reduce risks, and learning from past emergencies.

Shelter: A safe temporary place where you stay during or after an emergency, when your own home is not safe or does not support your wellbeing. A shelter provides security, protection from the weather, and helps prevent health problems. It can be a friend's home, a community center, a school, a sports hall, a civil defense shelter, or tents. Shelters must be accessible from the start, including entrances, toilets, sleeping areas, information points, food distribution, hygiene facilities, charging points for assistive technology, quiet spaces, assistance animal support, and safe spaces.

Sign language interpretation: A service that helps deaf and hard-of-hearing people communicate with hearing people, provided by a qualified sign language interpreter. In emergencies, this can be done in person, by video call, or through a relay service that connects you to emergency services such as 112.

Support network: A group of trusted people who know you, understand your communication preferences, functional requirements, and support needs, and can assist you before, during, or after an emergency. Your support network can include family members, friends, neighbors, personal assistants, colleagues, or other trusted people who have agreed to support you in an emergency.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(CRPD): An international human rights treaty that aims to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Warning system: The system used to warn you about a current or upcoming emergency and tell you what actions to take. Warnings may be delivered through sirens, text messages, mobile apps, television, radio, loudspeakers, or other communication channels. Public authorities have the primary responsibility to ensure that warning systems are accessible to everyone, including persons with disabilities, through multiple formats such as text, audio, visual alerts, easy-to-read (ETR) information, sign language, accessible apps, and relay services.

Introduction: Preparing together

Europe is facing a new reality, marked by increased risk and deep uncertainty. Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of floods, wildfires, heatwaves, droughts, and other extreme weather events. At the same time, new threats such as cyberattacks and disinformation can disrupt essential services, spread confusion, and affect daily life. These challenges are becoming more frequent, more complex, and more interconnected, making preparedness and resilience increasingly important for everyone.

You can play an important part in your own safety and in your community's resilience. By using your knowledge, skills, and experience, you can prepare for emergencies and contribute to helping others. At the same time, preparedness is a shared responsibility. Families, friends, neighbors, and colleagues can help build safer, more inclusive, and accessible communities, while governments, emergency services, and service providers are responsible for ensuring that emergency communications, evacuation, response services, shelters, and recovery support are accessible to everyone. These Guidelines are designed to help you prepare for emergencies and navigate any gaps that may remain, in addition to the accessible support systems and services you have the right to expect.

What these Guidelines contain

These Guidelines help you prepare step by step. You can start with what is most important. You do not need to read everything at once.

Self-assessment: This helps you identify which sections are most relevant to your situation right now. It shows you where to begin based on your level of support requirements and preparedness needs. This way, you can focus on what matters most to you and prepare together with the people who support you.

Core guide: Essential actions for everyone: This section contains the most important things everyone should do to prepare.

7 additional modules: When you have more time, support, and resources, you can read the other seven modules. Choose the ones that fit your situation, interests, and needs. These span from preparing your home to recovering after an emergency.

Use the Toolkit that accompanies the Guidelines. The Toolkit is the actionable part of the Guidelines because it gives you the tools to actually prepare and turn learning into life-saving action now. It has four tools you can already use: Personal Emergency Card, Personal Emergency Plan, communication cards and a checklist for your emergency backpack. You can start getting ready today by filling them out and sharing them with the people who can support you.

Getting started: Self-assessment

This self-assessment helps you find the information most relevant to your situation. You may identify with different paths for different activities. Your functional requirements and support needs may also change over time or during an emergency.

Getting started: Self-assessment

This self-assessment helps you find the information most relevant to your situation. You may identify with different paths for different activities. Your functional requirements and support needs may also change over time or during an emergency.

Choose your preparedness path

Think about how much support you need in daily life to understand how to approach emergency preparedness. People may use different types and levels of support in their daily lives. Regardless of support needs or functional requirements, all persons with disabilities have the right to participate in preparedness planning and decision-making.

These three preparedness paths are designed to help you identify the planning approach that best reflects your support, communication and accessibility requirements. Choose the path that best matches your individual circumstances and preferences, regardless of where you live or how much support you use in your daily life.

Path 1: I can prepare and act mostly on my own

In daily life, this might mean:

- I can go shopping or arrange for delivery on my own.
- I can read and understand written instructions without support.
- I can communicate and be understood by others.
- I can exit my building and move around my neighborhood independently (including walking or climbing stairs).

For emergency preparedness, this might mean:

- I can shop for supplies and build my own emergency backpack.
- I can fill out forms and plans (emergency plan, emergency card).
- I can contact people to create my support network.
- I can leave my home and reach a meeting point independently. I can also navigate to a friend's house or shelter if needed.
- I can communicate with first responders about my requirement, needs and preferences.

**Box 1****Your preparedness priority**

Build your emergency plan, create your support network, and gather supplies for evacuation and shelter in place, adapted to your requirements and situation. Even though you can do most things independently, having a support network is important, especially if you live alone. Make sure that emergency services know about you; where a voluntary assistance or notification system exists, consider registering after reviewing its purpose, how your information will be used, how it will be protected and updated, and what support the system may provide. Registration should complement, not replace, a Personal Emergency Plan, a support network, and accessible public services. Practice your plan and evacuation route.

Where to focus:

- **Core guide: Essential actions for everyone**
- **Module 1: Home preparedness**
- Choose the other modules based on your time, preferences and priorities.
- **Toolkit for the Guidelines**

Path 2: I require some support to prepare and act**In daily life, this might mean:**

- Someone supports me with shopping or carrying heavy things.
- I need support reading complex information or filling out forms.
- I can do some things on my own, but need support for others.
- Someone supports me getting to appointments or new places.

For emergency preparedness, this might mean:

- I require someone to support me shopping for supplies or carrying them.
- I require support understanding and filling out my emergency plan.
- I require support to contact people for my support network.
- I require someone to visit shelters with me to check if they are accessible.
- I can navigate independently in the neighborhood, but I require support in going in or out my building.
- I need support communicating with first responders.
- I have difficulty seeing warnings or hearing alarms, even with glasses or hearing aids, or understanding what they mean.
- I can leave my home on my own, but might need someone to alert me when there is an emergency.
- I can participate in making a list of shopping and organizing supplies at home, but need support.

**Box 2**

Your preparedness priority

Prepare together with your support network. Share these guidelines with them and read “[Module 7: Guide for support persons and the community together](#)”. Make sure you have people around you who can support you and that they know your needs, requirements, and preferences. Practice together often and update your plan whenever something changes. Make yourself known to emergency services and where a voluntary assistance or notification system exists, consider registering after reviewing its purpose, how your information will be used, how it will be protected and updated, and what support the system may provide. Registration should complement, not replace, a Personal Emergency Plan, a support network, and accessible public services.

Where to focus:

- **Core guide: Essential actions for everyone**
- **Module 2: Staying informed and connected**
- **Module 7: Guide for support persons and the community**
- **Toolkit for the Guidelines**

Path 3: I rely on others for most daily activities**In daily life, this might mean:**

- Someone takes care of my personal care needs (bathing, dressing, eating).
- Someone manages my medication and health appointments.
- I may use support to communicate and make decisions. I might have difficulty communicating, understanding or being understood.
- I need full support to leave my home.
- I live in a residential facility / care home.

For emergency preparedness, this might mean:

- Someone else will shop for and pack my emergency backpack and house supplies.
- Someone may support me to develop my emergency plan.
- Someone else will make arrangements to ensure I have a robust support network.
- Someone else will check shelters and make arrangements.
- I cannot leave my home alone. I need full support to evacuate.
- Someone will communicate with first responders for me.
- Someone will organize all supplies and keep them ready.
- Someone will oversee my medication and treatment continuity.

**Box 3****Your preparedness priority**

Make sure your personal assistant, support person or your family knows what you need in an emergency, including medication, medical and assistive devices, communication preferences, and how to evacuate you safely. Share these Guidelines with them and ask them to read Module 7: Guide for support persons and the community. While they will do most preparation tasks, you should still be part of the planning. Your voice, preferences, and choices are important and should guide all decisions. You should also prioritize building a strong support network. Where a voluntary assistance or notification system exists, consider registering after reviewing its purpose, how your information will be used, how it will be protected and updated, and what support that system may provide. Registration should complement, not replace, a Personal Emergency Plan, a support network, and accessible public services.

Where to focus:

- **Core guide: Essential actions for everyone**
- **Module 6: Being prepared everywhere**
- **Be prepared at home**
- **Be prepared in a residential setting**
- **Module 7: Guide for support persons and the community**
- **Toolkit for the Guidelines**

Core guide: Essential actions for everyone

No matter where you live or what support you need, there are three things everyone must do to be prepared. This core guide walks you through the essential first steps of preparedness: making an emergency plan, building a support network, and packing an emergency backpack. These actions form the foundation of your preparedness.

Being prepared for 72 hours

Being prepared before an emergency is the most important thing you can do for your own safety. Emergencies come in different forms, affect different regions, and can last days, weeks or months.

In all of these situations, the first 72 hours, which means three days, are critical. In the immediate aftermath of a crisis, emergency services may be overwhelmed and not be able to reach everyone immediately. It is important to know how to be as autonomous as possible until public authorities and emergency services can reach you.

Step 1: Make your emergency plan

Preparing now helps you stay safe in an emergency. A Personal Emergency Plan sets out clearly what you will do where you will go, who will help you and how during a crisis. Preparing does not mean something bad is going to happen. It means that if something does happen, you will know how to stay safe and how others can help you. You will be able to take care of yourself, and also help others in your community.

Use the questions below to start your emergency plan today. Think about them on your own or discuss them together with your family, support network or staff.



Box 4

Questions to help you prepare your plan

- You cannot hear the alarm in your building or understand what it means. **How will you know when to get outside?**
- The lift in your building is not working. **How can you get outside?**
- You cannot reach your family or support person by phone. **Where will you meet?**
- You depend on home care or medical equipment. **How will you get the care you need if normal services stop?**
- You live in a care facility and your family lives in another city. **How will you stay in contact?**
- The internet is down. **Where can you find reliable official information during an emergency?**

What to include in your plan

- **Your personal information:** Your name and address. This allows emergency services to know who you are and find you quickly.
- **Your support network:** At least two to three trusted people who have agreed to help you before, during, and after an emergency. Include their names, phone numbers, and what role each person will play. You can also add a person who lives in another city.
- **Your meeting points:** Two places where you and your support network will meet if you cannot contact each other during an emergency. This can happen, for instance, in an earthquake when phone lines are down or internet is not working. Choose a place close to your home, and another further away. Agree on these places and when to use them. Practice the route together. But also make sure you can reach it on your own.

- **Your medical requirements:** A list of your medications, doses, allergies and any specific instructions for your care. Include the contact details of your doctor or specialist. If you rely on electrically powered medical devices, arrange a backup power source or identify the nearest government emergency support point.
- **Your support requirements:** Your disability type, your level of support or accessibility required, and any instructions for how to help you safely. Mention how you prefer to communicate. Add information about any assistance animals.

Start your emergency plan today

Start by filling in the templates in these guidelines. You can do it on your own, or ask someone you trust for help.

- **A Personal Emergency Card is a small card you keep with you.** The card tells first responders what you need if you are hurt and cannot talk. Find the **Personal Emergency Card** template in the “**Toolkit for the Guidelines**”.
- **A Personal Emergency Plan is a longer paper.** In this paper, you write all the things that can help you in an emergency. Find the **Personal Emergency Plan** template in “**Toolkit for the Guidelines**”.

Keep your plan where you can see it and find it fast. You can have your plan on paper, on your phone or your computer. Always keep a paper copy. This is important if the power goes out. Keep it in a waterproof container (sleeve, bag, pouch, box) in your emergency bag, on your fridge, or in a drawer in the hallway near the front door. First responders are taught to look in these places. Give a copy to each person who helps you in your everyday life.

Review and update your plan at least once a year, or whenever your situation changes.

Talk with each other

Thinking about an emergency might feel uncomfortable. Share your worries and feelings with the people around you and ask them to help you feel safe. Reaching out to someone you trust can help you feel calm. It can also help you see things in a new way.



Box 5

Are you worried or unsure?

Here are some steps you can take now to feel less worried and unsure:

- **Talk about your feelings with people you trust**, like your family, friends, doctor, or support person.
- **Break the task of preparing down into small steps.** Choose one thing and start with that.
- **See if you can help others.** Reaching out to someone or offering help can make you feel useful and close to others.

Step 2: Create your support network

Your support network is made of people you already know, and they have agreed to help you in an emergency. They can be your family, your friends, your neighbors, the people you work with, social workers, people from your disability group, or people from your community. Your support network should have at least three people. This way, someone can always help you.

1. **A person who lives very close to you.** This person can come to you fast.
2. **A person who lives far away.** This person will not have the same emergency as you. They can take you to their home, if needed.
3. **A person who knows what you need and how to help you.**

These people are your support network because you have a plan with them. Having a plan with these people can help you stay safe in an emergency.



Box 6

If you are alone, hard to reach or experiencing homelessness

If you have no family nearby, or live far from others, make yourself known by reaching out to your local fire station, civil protection office, local authority, social services or disability group. Tell them about your situation and ask what support is available in your area.

If no support exists, focus on what you can do: Know your risks, make an emergency plan, and put together some supplies. You may be on your own but being prepared, no matter how little, can still make a big difference in an emergency.

If you are experiencing homelessness, most preparedness advice may feel out of reach. Try to locate the nearest shelter, soup kitchen, social service or community organization, as people there may know what emergency support exists and can help you navigate it based on your situation and requirements.

Reach out and help other people too

You are an important part of your community. The people around you can learn from you and rely on you too. You might help an older neighbor stay connected or get groceries delivered, share first aid knowledge, or be someone others can come to for advice. You could also be a preparedness buddy for a neighbor or colleague, or lend supplies and equipment in an emergency. Some tasks might be harder for you, but you can still help others prepare.

**Box 7**

Questions to prepare with others

Talk about preparedness and your plan with the people around you. Maybe your friend, the person you work with, or your neighbor has not thought about it yet.

- Have you prepared for an emergency? What have you prepared for? And how?
- Do you need help preparing for an emergency?
- Do you think anyone we know needs help preparing for an emergency?
- Who else do we need to talk with to be better prepared?
- Are people in the neighborhood getting ready? Are local groups getting ready?
- What can we do right now to be better prepared as a community?
- What plans can we make together?
- How can we help each other?
- Are you worried about an emergency happening? How can you feel less worried?

Step 3: Make your own emergency backpack

Your emergency backpack is a portable bag you prepare in advance for at least 72 hours (three days). You use it when you need to leave your home fast and may not be able to return for days. It is different from your home supply. Your home supply is for staying at home (“[Module 1: Home preparedness](#)”). Your emergency backpack is for leaving.

Every emergency backpack should have these things:

- **Documents and information:** ID, emergency plan, medication card, copies of prescriptions, cash, phone numbers on paper.
- **Food and water supplies:** nonperishable food, water bottles, manual tin opener, food for specific needs, including food for babies, pets or assistance animals, if relevant.
- **Warmth and clothing:** blanket, emergency survival blanket or sleeping bag, one change of seasonal clothing, waterproof jacket and shoes, warm socks, hat, gloves and rechargeable or battery powered fan and towels for cooling.
- **Hygiene items:** wet wipes, hand sanitizer, toothbrush and toothpaste, menstrual products or diapers, toilet paper.
- **Communication and light:** radio that works on batteries or sunlight, spare batteries or charges, power bank, rechargeable LED torches with magnets or LED headlamps for hands-free lighting, car charger, torch, whiteboard with erasable marker, pen and paper.
- **Medicine and assistive devices:** prescription medications in a waterproof bag, first aid kit, portable cooler for temperature-sensitive medication.
- **Practical items:** spare keys, matches in a waterproof box, whistle, dust mask.



Box 8

About your emergency backpack

Keep your emergency bag where you can reach it fast. For example, in the hallway. Do not hide it in cupboards. Make sure all the people in your family and your support network know where it is.

If more than one person uses the same bag, make sure the bag has enough things to meet everyone's needs.

Regularly check and replenish your bag, ideally every six months. Change the medicine, the batteries, and the food before they get old. Remember to update the contact details and the medical information when anything changes. You can also arrange for someone to help you or do these activities for you.

How to adapt your emergency bag to your requirements

Every person needs a different emergency backpack, so use the list above as a starting point and add what you need. Think about prescription medications, equipment and devices. Consider everyone in your household, including children, older adults, and your assistance animal. A list of additional items to consider packing can be found in the “Toolkit for the Guidelines” under “Checklist for your emergency backpack”.

How to prepare your emergency bag with little money

Putting together your emergency backpack might be cheaper than you think. You may already have most of the things at home. You can build it up step by step over time. Start with what you already have (e.g., flashlight, batteries, document copies) and pack old clothes. You can also add one extra item each shopping trip, hunt for affordable items at garage sales or thrift stores, and watch for seasonal sales on emergency supplies. Finally, ask a community food bank for food and reach out to your support group for help putting it all together.



Module 1: Home Preparedness

In a crisis, you might not be able to go out and get what you need. This module helps you prepare the 7 basics you need to survive at home for at least 72 hours (3 days).

The 7 Basics of Preparedness

The goal when you cannot leave your home is to have everything you need for at least 72 hours, or ideally a full week. Think about your medication, assistive devices, diet, and any equipment you use, and make sure it is all ready and accessible. A longer supply gives you more time before help arrives and may allow you to support others. Organize supplies in a consistent and logical way so they can be found easily, using tactile markings where needed. Think of preparedness as an ongoing process rather than a one-time activity, and regularly rotate and replenish your supplies so everything is usable when you need it.

1. Water

Water is the most important thing you need in an emergency. You may need at least 3 litres of water each day for drinking and cooking. You may need more water if you use water for your medical devices. When an emergency happens, the water from your sink may stop working or may not be safe to drink. Your city may bring water trucks to your area. But you still need to keep water at home. Keep water bottles in a cool, dark place like a closet. Get new bottles when the expiration date has passed.

What to Keep at Home:

- Get containers and buckets with lids to collect and store water.
- Buy bottled water or fill up your own containers.
- Use small bottles and keep an adaptive bottle and jar opener, if you do not have strength or grip. You can also get special emergency water packets that last a long time and are easy to carry.
- Keep extra water for your medical devices, washing your hands, cleaning cuts, taking medicine, and staying clean.



Box 9

Good to know

1. Fill plastic bottles with water and put them in your freezer. If the electricity cuts off, the frozen bottles keep your food cold for longer. When the ice melts, you can drink the water. Do not fill the bottles all the way to the top, water expands when it freezes and may crack the bottles.
2. You can buy water disinfection tablets. Check for allergies before you buy them. Use the tablets if you think your tap water is not safe and you have no bottled water left.

2. Food

Choose food that is good for you and keeps you full for longer.

Pick food that does not need water to make or can be prepared with minimal water. In a power outage you can use a camping stove, primus, or outside grill to prepare meals. If possible, prefer energy-saving cooking methods like soaking, stewing, salting, and pickling. Instant noodle soup is an easy meal which you can enrich by adding a teaspoon of food oil. Choose food containers that are easy to open and keep an adaptive hand-operated tin opener.

Keep your food in a cool, dry, and dark place. When you buy new food, put it behind the old food. Eat the old food first. Check the expiration dates on your food every six months.

What to keep at home:

- **Food that does not spoil easily:** grains, cereal, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, muesli, instant mashed potatoes, tortillas, crispbread, crackers, salt, and spices.
- **Food that comes in cans:** vegetables, fruit, and ready-to-eat meals.
- **Food that is rich in protein:** dried or tinned meat and fish, dried mushrooms, chickpeas, beans and lentils.
- **Food that is rich in fat:** oil, pesto, sun-dried tomatoes in oil, peanut butter, nuts, and seeds.
- **Foods that give you energy:** jam, chocolate, honey, protein bars, and dried fruit.
- **Food for children (if applicable):** milk powder, oatmeal, and other baby food.
- **Food for assistance animals and pets (if applicable):** freeze-dried food, canned wet food, dry kibble, treats and chews.
- **Drinks:** coffee, tea, ultra-high temperature milk, hot chocolate mix, juice, or milk powder.
- **Adaptive hand-operated tin opener.**



Box 10

Good to know

You can store food with other people.

- 1. Start small.** You do not need to buy everything at one time. Add a couple of extra things to your shopping each week. Build up your food supply step by step.
- 2. If it is hard for you to build a food supply, ask someone to help you.** You can ask for help at food banks, at community kitchens or local groups that help people.
- 3. If you have more food than you need, give some to other people.** Think about your neighbors and your community. Keep some food for them. You can also start a shared food store in your building or neighborhood.
- 4. Grow your own food, whenever possible.** If the season and your capabilities allow, you can grow food in your garden, your balcony or on your windowsill. Use the fruits and berries that grow near you that you know are safe to eat.

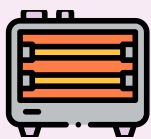
3. Warmth

Staying warm in an emergency can save your life. When the power stops, your home gets cold very fast. If your home gets cold, together in one room with your family. Put blankets over the windows to keep the heat inside. Put rugs or mats on the floor. Dress in layers, as this keeps you warm better than one thick garment. Sleep next to each other to stay warmer. Emergency survival blankets keep your body heat in, are small and light to store, and are affordable.

Staying cool in an emergency is also important. When the power stops in summer, your home gets very hot. If you have a co-occurring medical condition, heat can increase your symptoms and make it harder for you to function, which can be dangerous. Wind and any moving air cool you: use a rechargeable or battery powered fan. Water cools you: take a cold shower or go swimming, if possible. Put a wet towel on your shoulders or around your neck. When the water evaporates, it cools you down.

What to keep at home:

- Extra blankets, emergency survival blankets and sleeping bags - at least one per person.
- Warm clothing: wool layers, thick socks, hats, gloves, and scarves.
- Complete change of clothes and waterproof shoes. Make sure they are right for the weather in your country.
- Sleeping mats or rugs to keep the floor warm.
- Rechargeable or battery powered fans and towels to wet for cooling down.
- Candles, matches, and a lighter. Or another way to stay warm that does not need electricity, like a gas heater or special fuel heater. Use these safely.



Box 11

Good to know

Always stay near your heater when it is on. If you use a different way to make heat, open your window a little bit to let fresh air in. Turn the heater off before you go to sleep.

4. Hygiene

If water and the toilet stop working, you can get sick quickly. It is important to have basic cleaning supplies at home to stay clean and safe.

Wash your hands often. This is important especially before eating and after using the toilet. If tap water is not working, use wet wipes or hand sanitizer.

If the toilet does not flush, you need other ways to throw away waste. This helps you stay clean and healthy. You can still urinate in the toilet even when it does not flush. Put used toilet paper in a garbage bag or a bin with a lid. Keep human waste and urine apart from each other to reduce the smell. Put a garbage bag inside your toilet bowl, or use a bucket with a lid. After each time, cover the human waste with compost litter, sawdust or clumping cat litter.

What to keep at home:

- Toilet paper, wet wipes and moist disinfectant wipes.
- Soap and hand sanitizer.
- Toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Menstrual products, continence pads and diapers.
- Disposable gloves.
- Garbage or plastic bags for throwing away waste.
- Compost litter, sawdust or clumping cat litter.
- A bucket with a lid or a portable toilet.

5. Medicine and assistive supplies

During an emergency, you could lose access to medication or assistive devices for days or weeks. Aim to keep a supply for at least three days, or one month for chronic or long-term conditions. For some medications, particularly more specialized or expensive ones, this may not be possible. Check with your doctor or pharmacist based on your treatment plan. Check expiry dates every six months and replenish before they expire. If you use an assistance animal, keep supplies for them as well (see below [Box 12: If you use an assistance animal](#)).

Keep extra parts for your assistive devices, ensure they are charged and well-maintained, and have backup batteries or chargers on hand. After a power outage, plug in devices gradually to avoid overloading the grid. Practice using your devices regularly so you can use them confidently under stress. Store medication, devices, and important documents in one clearly defined, accessible place. A waterproof box in the fridge works well so first responders can find it quickly.

What to keep at home:

- **Prescription medicines** stored in a waterproof bag or box, ideally in the fridge.
- **A list of all your medications, doses, and allergies** in a format that works for you, such as written, audio, or Braille.
- **A portable cooler and ice packs** for medication that needs to be kept cold.
- **Basic first aid supplies** such as bandages, antiseptic wipes and pain relief medication.
- **Extension lead, chargers, generators, power banks, and spare batteries** for any medical and assistive device that uses power.
- **Sensory and calming items**, like headphones or spiky sensory massage ball.
- **Assistive communication devices and supplies**, like communication cards, pictograms, whiteboard with erasable marker and pen and paper.
- **Medical and assistive supplies**, like walking canes, hearing aids, glasses, stomas, shunts, catheters, urine bags, or machines that keep you alive.
- **Mobility equipment**, like a manual wheelchair, wheelchair tire repair kit, walkers, crutches, portable ramps, transfer board or transfer belt.

**Box 12**

If you use an assistance animal

An assistance animal, such as a guide dog, is a working animal, not a pet. Include your assistance animal in your evacuation plan, practice together, and have a reunification plan in case you become separated.

What to keep at home:

- Food, water, portable bowls, leash, collar, blanket, and a toy.
- Medical records, medication with doses, schedule, and veterinary contact details.
- An up-to-date identification tag, a recent photo, and any assistance animal certification.

6. Information and communication

In an emergency, access to reliable information and the ability to communicate can be lifesaving. Prepare now so you can stay informed and reach out for help whatever the situation. Find out already where you can get reliable news in case of an emergency or crisis. Install accessible official emergency apps and sign up for alerts in a format that works for you. Be aware that in some emergencies, your phone, internet, and television may not work for days or weeks, and the radio may be the only way to receive official news. Prepare alternative ways to communicate with emergency services if speaking or hearing is difficult, and learn how to spot and verify trustworthy information before sharing it.

What to keep at home:

- A battery-powered, hand-crank, or solar radio with spare batteries. Note your local emergency radio station frequency on your radio in writing or tactile marking.
- A phone, power bank, and car charger. Keep the power bank charged at all times.
- An accessible record of important phone numbers as

a backup to your phone, such as a written list, audio recording, or Braille note.

- A list of official, accessible sources such as government websites, civil protection services, and local authority emergency pages. Ask your local organization of persons with disabilities (OPD) or social services to help you identify the right ones for your country.
- Assistive communication devices such as pictograms, a whiteboard with erasable marker, or a text-to-speech app, as well as pen and paper as a backup.
- Offline maps downloaded on your phone and a paper map as a backup.
- A whistle, glowing stick or other non-verbal signaling device to alert others or signal for help if you cannot speak or are trapped and need to attract attention without relying on technology.

7. Cash and documents

In an emergency, you may not be able to pay online. The cash machines may be empty or not working. When you have cash at home, you can still buy the things you need.

Also, having copies of your important papers helps doctors and other persons who might want to support or take care of you. It also helps you go back to normal life faster. These papers can be your ID card, your bank papers, your insurance papers, and your medical papers. Keep the real papers in one safe place at home. Keep copies in your emergency bag. Put your important papers in a waterproof container (sleeve, bag, pouch, box) on your fridge with a magnet to hold it in place, in a drawer in the hallway near the front door, or a safe box at the bank. You can also save your papers on a computer, on a small drive, or on a safe cloud service or take a photo of your papers with your phone.

What to keep at home:

- Keep around 70 to 100 euros at home for each household member, or the equivalent in your country's currency, to cover essential needs for about 72 hours. Keep this cash in small bills and in a safe place.
- Documents of your house and family, like your ID, birth and house certificate. These prove who you are and help you get back in touch with family if you are separated.
- Your disability certificate and benefit documents. Keep the contact details of the services that are important for you. If payments stop during an emergency, you will know who to contact.
- Health insurance card and medical information. Keep copies so you can require the care you need no matter what happens.
- Money, legal and tax papers. These help you get your money situation back to normal and get help after a disaster.
- Your home insurance certificate. You also need to take pictures of your home as it is now. This helps you repair, rebuild, or replace what is damaged.
- A printed list of phone numbers and names of your doctors and services that you might need, including interpreting and video relay services, mobility services, assistive device repair and supply services, medication providers, and more.
- Food, water, portable bowls, leash, collar, blanket, and a toy.
- Medical records, medication with doses, schedule, and veterinary contact details.
- An up-to-date identification tag, a recent photo, and any assistance animal certification.



Module 2: Staying informed and connected

In an emergency, the right information at the right time can save your life. This module helps you understand the risks where you live, know how emergency information and warnings will reach you, and learn how to ask for help effectively. It also introduces you to first responders and shows you how to communicate your needs, requirements and preferences clearly.

Know the risks in your area

Risks are growing and becoming more diverse. These include disasters such as earthquakes and floods, heatwaves, wildfires, draughts, heavy rain and snowstorms. As well as health crises such as pandemics. Other threats include cyber-attacks, disinformation, or armed conflicts. Each local authority knows the risks in its own area.

Know what emergencies are most likely in your area, and what they might mean for you. This helps you find the barriers that could make an emergency harder to manage and give you time to prepare so that you stay safe and independent. Your disability, location, and personal situation all shape how an emergency affects you and what you need to do.

What to do

- **Find out what risks exist in your area** by contacting your local authority, civil protection authority, or checking their website.
- **Think about how each risk could affect you specifically**, including any barriers related to your disability.
- **Identify gaps in your preparedness and address them** in advance.

How to receive warnings and stay informed

Different countries warn people in various ways during an emergency. National authorities and local authorities choose warnings that fit the risks in their area, including loud sirens, text messages, radio and television broadcasts, emergency apps, first responders at your door, and messages on social media and websites. Not all ways work for everyone. Find out which systems are used where you live and make sure you can receive alerts in a format that works for you. You can ask your local authority or organization of persons with disabilities (OPD), or check the website of the office in charge of civil protection during emergencies in your country.

What you can do

1. **Keep your phone charged and reachable at all times**, including at night.
2. **Take official warnings seriously and act on them without delay.**
3. **Download warning apps and sign up for alerts.** Find out which channels and apps send accessible alerts and subscribe.

- 4. Learn what each alert means and practice.** In many countries, public emergency alert systems are tested on specific days of the week, or at specific times during the year. Some alerts give you time to prepare or take precautions, some warn you of immediate danger and require you to act right away, and others simply give you important news. Learn what each alert means. Prepare for how to respond to each of them.
- 5. Pass warnings on to neighbors, friends, and family.** Make sure everyone has the latest official information. Have a plan in case alerts do not reach you. Do not share information that does not come from trusted official sources.

How to trust information in an emergency

In an emergency, knowing the difference between trustworthy information and disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation can help you stay safe and make informed decisions. You may receive contradictory or incorrect information, including on social media or even from family, friends and neighbors. Sometimes this happens naturally through misunderstanding or rumor. Other times this happens deliberately, such as spread by parties intending to influence opinions, create panic, undermine trust in authorities, or divide communities.

How to spot untrustworthy information

- It is highly emotional, unsettling, or causes you to misjudge a situation.
- It uses exaggerated or absolute language such as “everyone knows” or “they are hiding this from you.”
- It pressures you to act immediately, without giving you time to think.
- It comes from unknown, anonymous, or unverifiable sources. It cannot be found on any official or trusted news source.

What you can do

- Always get information from official sources such as your national civil protection authority, local authority, or public broadcaster.
- Check websites for a legal notice containing official address. Do not trust anonymous sources.
- Think critically before sharing information. Ask yourself: Is this based on facts? Are sources and references provided? If in doubt, wait for official confirmation before acting or sharing.
- Compare questionable information against sources you already trust.
- Report deliberate disinformation to authorities or platform moderators, where possible, to protect others.

How to ask for help

In an emergency, your family or support staff may not be with you. This is why you need to know how to ask for help and how to contact 112. You need to know what happens when help comes and how to communicate with first responders. This way, they can help you without causing harm.

Who are the first responders

In an emergency, there are people whose job is to help you and keep you safe. They are called first responders. You need to understand what each first responder can do for you. Some first responders wear uniforms that may scare you. You also need to learn now how to communicate with them. Share what you require, need and prefer in a concrete and simple way. This helps them support you faster.

First responders you might meet in an emergency

Firefighters



Firefighters wear special clothes to stay safe. They wear a big helmet and gloves. They may carry a tank with air to breathe. They drive big trucks with loud sounds and lights.

- Firefighters can rescue you and take you to a safe place, in case of fires, explosions, earthquakes, road accidents, floods, and other emergencies.
- If you use a wheelchair, they will try to keep it with you. Sometimes, they must leave it behind to keep you safe.

If you have communication difficulties, point to your communication card or emergency plan, so that they can support you in a safe and dignified way according to your requirements.

Mountain rescuers



Mountain rescuers wear uniforms and carry special equipment to help people in difficult terrain.

- Mountain rescuers can help you if you are lost or stuck in a forest, on a mountain or in other hard-to-reach areas.
- They can help if you have an emergency in a remote or difficult terrain, such as being injured or in danger from wild animals. They can carry you to a safe place or to the hospital.
- They sometimes work with trained search and rescue dogs, which are there to help find you; not to harm you.
- They can even help you get out of buildings in different crisis, working together with firefighters.

If you have communication difficulties, point to your communication card or emergency plan, so that they can support you safely and with dignity according to your requirements

Police



Police can wear a blue uniform. They drive cars with sirens and flashing lights. They can also have working dogs with them. You may meet them first in an emergency.

- Police guide people in the streets away from danger.
- Sometimes they look for people who are hurt or stuck.
- They help to give out food, water, and medicine.
- They give clear emergency information to people.
- They can tell people where to find a safe place to stay.

Medical emergency personnel



Medical emergency personnel can work on an ambulance or in a hospital. They can carry medical tools, like a first aid kit, but also a special bed to take you out of your building if you cannot walk on your own. They help you when you are sick or hurt.

- Tell them what hurt you or where you feel pain.
- Tell them about your health. Tell them what medicine you take.
- Tell them how they can help you.
- Ask them to describe step by step what they will do to you.

Social workers

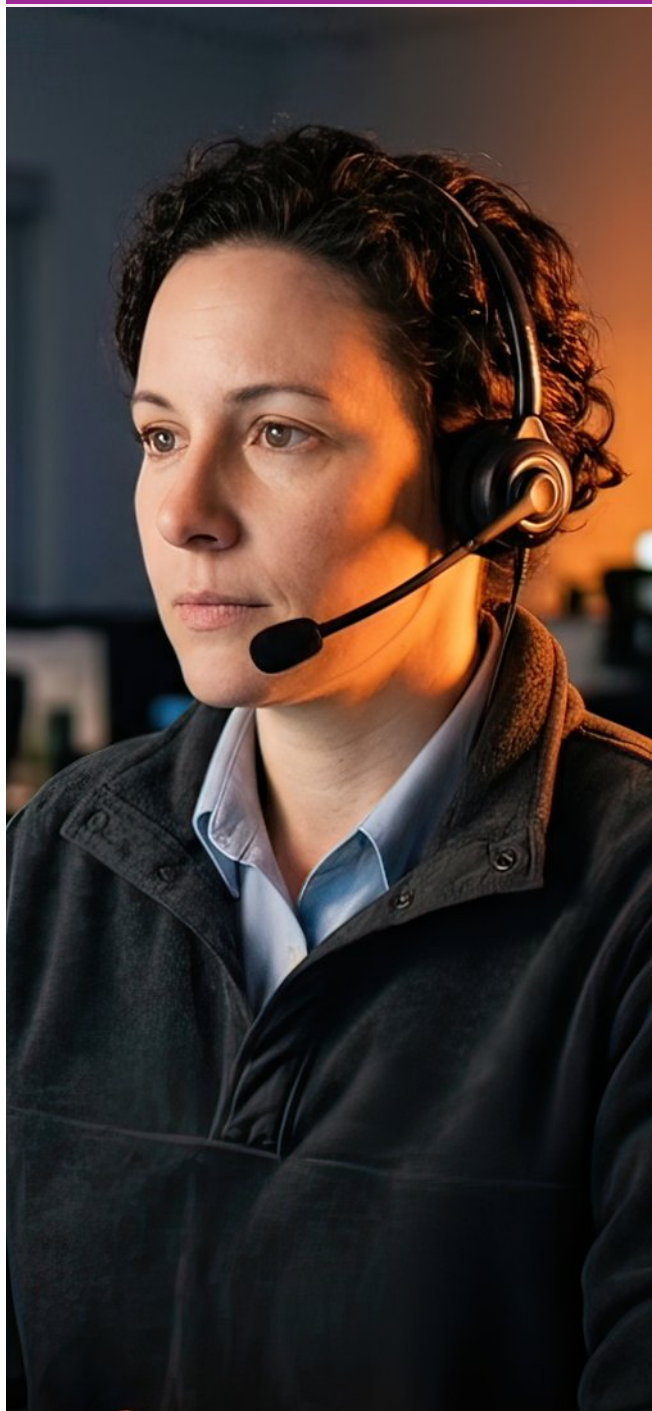


You can meet a social worker at the hospital or at a shelter, for example.

The social worker is a professional. They know about disability and how to help you. Tell them what you need.

- They can help you get back in touch with family or support persons, if you get separated from them.
- They can help you find a new home.
- They can help you get the assistive equipment and medical supplies you need. They can also help with fixing or replacing them, if necessary.
- They can be there for you when you feel sad or scared. They can help you feel calm.
- They can help you ask for money after an emergency.
- You can tell them if you are afraid of someone or if you need protection.

112 operators



112 is the emergency phone number in Europe. You can call 112 when you need help. An 112 operator answers the phone and knows how to assist you. Do not contact 112 unless there is an emergency.

The 112 operator will ask:

- **Who are you?**
- **Where are you?**
- **What happened?**
- **How to help you?**

If possible, let the 112 operator know if you are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or have dementia or an intellectual disability, so they understand you may need more time or a different way to communicate. In some countries, you can also contact 112 through accessible options such as eSMS or video relay services.

How to communicate with first responders

When a first responder comes to assist you, first make sure they are who they say they are. Ask them their name and their job. They should wear a uniform or show you their badge. If you are not sure, you can contact 112 to check before you open the door. Once you know who they are, you can also tell them how to help you. When you communicate with them, explain your situation clearly. Inform them about where you are, what is happening, what you need, and how urgent it is. Give them the most important information first.

- Inform them of your name, your support requirements or medical condition, and how you prefer to communicate.
- **Share how urgent your situation is, and what you need first.**
- **If you have a support person, tell them how to communicate about you.** With your agreement, your support person can guide first responders in assisting you in a better way.
- **Show them how to use your assistive devices,** if they need to know. Keep a whiteboard with erasable marker or a pen and paper with you.
- **Inform them how you want to be helped.** Give them clear steps on how to help you in a safe way.
- **Give them more information.** Point to your emergency card or your plan.



Box 13

How to contact 112

Contact 112 only if you have an emergency. You can contact 112 in all countries in Europe. When contacting 112, you need to know how to answer these 4 questions:

- 1. Who are you?** State your name. You can add your disability or medical condition and how they need to communicate with you. This helps them get ready and send the right help.
- 2. Where are you?** Share where you are. If you do not know the street, just give them a landmark, like a church or a big park.
- 3. What happened?** If you can only say one word, say it: “Fire.” “Accident.” That is enough to start.
- 4. How to help you?** Share with them what they need to know to help you. Tell them how to move you and share what medicine you need.

- **If you have alternative communication requirements:** Find out in advance what accessible options are available in your country to contact emergency services, such as eSMS or video relay, at berec.europa.eu/en/emergency-means. If you cannot speak, call 112 and stay on the line without speaking, as operators in many countries can trace your location. You can also ask a nearby person to call using a pre-prepared written description, or use a pre-agreed signal with your support network.
- **If you are calling on behalf of a person with disabilities:** Tell the operator what helps that person and what to avoid. Responders can prepare before they arrive. Get to know first responders

Getting familiar with first responders and practicing with your support network can help you feel calmer and know what to expect in an emergency.

- **Look up pictures and videos of first responders in their full work clothes** and discuss about them with your support network or staff.
- **Practice what you would do if a firefighter came to your door**, by talking it through or acting it out with your support network.
- **Visit your local fire or police station**, on an open day to meet first responders, see their equipment, and ask questions. Contact the station in advance to let them know what you need.
- **If you are part of a disability group, invite local first responders to one of your meetings** and ask them to come in their work clothes and explain what they do.



Module 3: How to act in an emergency

When disaster strikes, you may not have time to think. This module gives you five clear steps to follow in any emergency, plus specific guidance for different types of crises. These actions help you stay calm, protect yourself, and make decisions that keep you safe.

5 steps in every emergency

When an emergency happens, you may not have time to think about your plan. These five steps tell you what to do to stay safe.

- **Step 1: Stay calm and understand what is happening.** Stay as calm as you can. Take a breath. Look at what is around you. Ask yourself: What do I see? What do I hear? What do I smell? What do I feel?

- **Step 2: Protect yourself first.** Depending on the emergency, you can: lean into an interior wall, get down low, move away from windows, protect your head, etc. If exertion worsens your symptoms, prioritize rest, break tasks into small steps, and avoid unnecessary effort.
- **Step 3: Take your important things and go to a safe place.** Take your emergency bag, medicine, mobility aids, or communication cards with you, if they are close by and easy to reach. Go to a safe place: your home, a friend's house, or a public shelter. If these things are not close by or easy to reach, leave without them.
- **Step 4: Ask for help.** Inform them where you are, what is happening, and what you need. You can also message a friend or neighbor, or signal using a whistle or flashlight.
- **Step 5: Follow the emergency news.** Use a battery-powered, manual or solar radio. Get information only from official and trusted sources. Do not trust messages from unknown sources or social media.

How to avoid getting bored or stressed out

In a longer emergency, you need to think about how to pass the time, especially without electricity. Staying busy can help you stay calm. Stay active in ways that work for your requirements, at home or outdoors, if possible, with support from family, personal assistants, or support persons as needed. Keep in mind that rehabilitation, physiotherapy, and mental health support services may be disrupted for extended periods, so it helps to have other ways to stay active and maintain functional independence.

Things you can do:

- Read or listen to books.
- Play board games, dice games, card games, puzzles, and quizzes.
- Exercise according to your requirements, condition and context. If possible, do sports, swim and spend time outdoors.
- Do crafts, knitting, solitaire, or other hobbies.
- Enjoy the time together with your loved ones. Prepare treats and try to turn an emergency meal into a celebration.



Module 4: Evacuating and finding shelter

In some emergencies the safest choice is to leave your house. This module prepares you for evacuation. You will learn how to make a personal evacuation plan, find and check your nearest shelter, and understand what to expect when you arrive. Knowing your route, making sure the shelter meets your requirements and needs, and planning how to reunite with your support network and first responders means you can reach safety with less stress and more confidence.

Personal, household, and community preparedness can strengthen safety and resilience. However, it does not replace the responsibility of authorities and service providers to deliver accessible warnings, emergency communications, evacuation, shelter, sanitation, response services, and recovery support.

Be ready for evacuation

What keeps you safe varies depending on the emergency. Some emergencies will find you on the road or at work. Other emergencies will happen at home, like the pandemic. Then, you will need to stay home for many days or many weeks. This is called shelter in place. In the case of an air raid, the safest thing to do is to go inside and hide. Other times, it is not safe to stay inside. Then, you need to leave. This is called evacuation. Evacuation can happen fast, like in a fire or over many hours, like in a flood or in a war.

Make your Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan

You may not be able to leave your home by yourself. Make sure at least two people in your support network know you need help and understand how to assist you before an emergency happens. A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan helps you do this.

When planning your evacuation, consider your specific requirements, needs and preferences. Plan considering rest stops, transport or mobility assistance, sensory needs, communication support, medication, or reduced waiting times, and share these with your support network and first responders in advance.



Box 14

Your Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

Your Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan sets out:

- **Warnings systems:** Find out how warnings reach you in your building, whether through lights or sounds. If they may not reach you, arrange for a neighbor, colleague, or building manager to alert you.
- **Your support network:** Identify who will help you and what they will do. If you are Deaf, arrange for someone to warn you. If you have a mobility disability, identify at least two people to help you evacuate. Plan and practice with them.
- **How you get out:** Know whether you will leave independently, with assistance, or using evacuation equipment such as an evacuation chair or stretcher. Make sure the equipment is in place, regularly checked, and that everyone knows how to use it safely.
- **Your evacuation routes:** Pick two ways out of every room and the building. Remember that lifts may be prohibited or not work and stairs may not be safe in all emergencies. Plan for different scenarios.
- **Accessible assembly points and shelters:** Find out where your nearest assembly point and shelter are and whether you can reach them independently. If not, plan what support you need and which routes are accessible.
- **What to do if you are stuck:** Move to a safe place inside the building, contact 112, and signal your location using a whistle, torch, or something visible from a window.

Write **your Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan** down and keep it together with your Personal Emergency Plan. Practice it with your support network or staff at least twice a year, including at night or on waking. Try different routes each time. **In a home fire scenario, to the extent possible, you should be aiming to exit to safety within two minutes.**

Know how to move around in an emergency

Getting around during or after an emergency may be harder than usual. Roads, bridges, and public transport may be damaged or unavailable, and digital maps and GPS may not work without an internet connection. Planning in advance gives you safer and more reliable options when it matters most.

What to do

- Identify in advance alternative routes to the places that matter most to you, such as your shelter, your meeting points, hospital, school, or workplace, in case the main routes are blocked.
- Walk or drive these alternative routes in advance so you know them well, and check that they are accessible for you. Find alternative accessible means of transportation. Note key landmarks along your routes, as familiar reference points may look different after a disaster.
- Download offline maps on your phone and keep a paper map at home as a backup. Learn how to orient yourself using a map.
- Keep your vehicle fuel tank reasonably full, as petrol stations may be closed or overwhelmed.
- Stay alert to hazards as you move, keep your distance from dangerous areas, avoid contaminated water, and be equipped for all weather conditions and times of day.

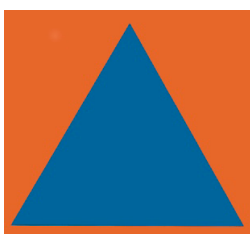
Going to a shelter

A shelter is a safe place you stay during or after an emergency when your home is unsafe or does not support your wellbeing. A shelter can be a friend's or family member's home, a church, or a camp of containers or tents; in some countries this can be a building basement that opens only during emergencies, while in others everyday spaces like schools, sports halls, and community centers become shelters when needed.

Find and check your shelter now

Emergency shelters vary depending on the type of emergency and where you live. Authorities should plan and operate shelters so that entrances, toilets, sleeping areas, information, food distribution, hygiene facilities, charging points, quiet spaces, and assistance-animal arrangements are accessible. However, during a large-scale emergency, shelters might not always be able to provide all the medicine, equipment, staff, or disability-specific support you might need. If you encounter barriers, inform shelter staff as soon as possible and request reasonable accommodation, an alternative arrangement, or referral where appropriate. To prepare for these situations, think in advance what support, equipment, medication, or accessibility features you may require and, where possible, identify suitable shelter options in your area.

- 1. Find your shelter options:** Identify friends or family in different areas who could host you, and find the nearest emergency or civil defence shelters (marked with a blue triangle inside an orange square) on your local authority emergency plan or by contacting civil protection authorities.



Emblem of Civil Défense

Source: Emblem of Civil Defense available at [International Civil Defense Organization \(ICDO\)](https://www.icdo.org/).

- 2. Check if shelters meet your requirements:** Contact local civil protection authorities, your **local authority**, firefighter stations, or building manager in advance, or plan a visit with a friend or family member, if possible, to check that toilets, showers, cooking spaces, and communal areas are accessible, and that medical support, assistive technology needs, communication preferences, privacy requirements, and space for service animals can be accommodated.

- 3. Test your route:** Travel to each shelter before an emergency, time how long it takes, check whether you can get there independently or with support, look for obstacles such as stairs, narrow paths, or busy roads, and identify alternative routes. Remember to leave early during an emergency, as roads and paths may become dangerous or blocked if you wait too long.
- 4. Add it to your emergency plan:** Write down and save addresses and contact information for all shelter options on your phone, share your plan with people who support you, and discuss staying with friends or family during emergencies.

What to do when you arrive at a shelter

Remember that you have rights in a shelter, including the right to move around easily, to be treated with respect, to receive the same help as others, and to be safe.

When you arrive at a shelter, these are the main steps:

- 1. Tell staff your name, disability, health condition.** This information is confidential and will only be shared with relevant staff.
- 2. Find out where key spaces are:** toilets, sleeping areas, and exits.
- 3. Ask for support that fits your requirements, needs and preferences,** including medical care, emotional support, communication preferences, accessible spaces, and continuity of any care or treatment you were already receiving. If the shelter cannot meet your needs, ask if you can be transferred to a better suited one.
- 4. Ask who to contact if you have a problem or feel unsafe.**
- 5. Ask staff to help you reconnect with your family, friends, or support network.**

How to stay safe in a shelter

Here are some general safety tips:

- Stay close to people you know and trust.
- Keep your daily routine the same as much as you can.
- Use things that bring you comfort.
- Ask staff upfront how you can report a problem confidentially and in an accessible format.
- Tell staff right away if you feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or unwell.



Box 15

If you have specific safety needs in a shelter

- **If you are a woman or girl:** Ask for women-only bathrooms and sleeping spaces, period and continence products, and pregnancy or breastfeeding care as soon as you arrive. Ask how to report a problem. You can always request a woman staff member.
- **If you are a child:** Stay with an adult you know at all times. Ask staff to help you contact your family, if it is safe to do so. If you cannot reach your family, ask staff to connect you with a social worker or child protection officer.
- **If you are an LGBTIQ+ person:** You have the right to be safe and treated with respect. You only need to share what you feel comfortable sharing. Ask for a private sleeping area if you need one.

Ask how safety or safeguarding concerns can be reported confidentially and in an accessible format. Shelter staff should provide more than one reporting channel and should explain what action will follow a report.



Module 5: Recovering after an emergency

An emergency does not end when the immediate danger passes. This module supports you through recovery: managing the emotional impact, replacing lost medication or assistive devices, returning home safely, and rebuilding your sense of normal. Recovery takes time, and you do not have to do it alone.

Recovery planning should identify and address the different barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities, children, older persons, migrants, persons living in institutions, LGBTIQ+ persons, and persons separated from their support networks. Recovery services should provide accessible and private sanitation, safe reporting mechanisms, continuity of essential health services, and meaningful participation in recovery decisions.

How to recover after an emergency

An emergency can be hard and you might feel lonely, scared or angry. You might have trouble sleeping, and feeling happy or close to other people. Sometimes these feelings only come days or weeks later, when the danger is over, but life is still not back as it was. This is normal. It does not mean you are weak.

Recovering after an emergency takes time and looks different to everyone. Staying connected with people you trust, taking care of your mental health and getting support to cope with your feelings, and are all part of recovery. The steps and guidance below can help you look after yourself and know when to ask for help.

3 steps to feel better

Every person feels different after an emergency. When things are hard, it is important to take care of yourself. Here are 3 steps that can help you feel better:

- **Step 1: Acknowledge your feelings and accept them.** Say what you feel. For example, “I feel angry”, “I feel sad”, “I feel scared” or “I feel hopeful”. Let yourself feel sad. Let yourself cry. Let yourself be angry. Do not be hard on yourself for feeling this way.
- **Step 2: Take care of yourself.** Do small things that make you feel good, like taking a walk. Try to rest, eat, drink water and go outside every day. Be patient with yourself. Keep a daily routine, as much as possible. A daily routine is the things you do every day, often at the same time.
- **Step 3: Ask for help and stay close with people.** Do not isolate yourself. Share your feelings and thoughts with people you trust. Ask for help when you need it. Help other people too.

Table 2. What to do and not to do to feel better after an emergency

✓ Do	✗ Do not
<p>✓ Pay attention to your sleep patterns. Sleep at the same time every night. Create a calming routine. If you cannot sleep for several nights, ask for help.</p>	<p>✗ Do not ignore sleep problems. Do not use alcohol or drugs to sleep or feel better.</p>
<p>✓ Eat healthy food. Drink enough water.</p>	<p>✗ Do not skip meals, overeat, or eat only junk food.</p>
<p>✓ Be kind to yourself.</p>	<p>✗ Do not blame yourself for what happened, or for not recovering as fast as you would like.</p>
<p>✓ Stick to a daily routine, as much as possible.</p>	<p>✗ Do not make big life choices during a hard time. For example, do not get a divorce, move to a new town, or leave your job.</p>
<p>✓ Ask for help. Go to therapy. Join a support group.</p> <p>Therapy is when you share your feelings and thoughts with a mental health professional. A support group is a group of people who meet and share their experiences to support each other.</p>	<p>✗ Do not feel bad about asking for help. Do not wait until you feel very bad.</p>

✓ Do	✗ Do not
✓ Move your body. Go outside when you can.	✗ Do not stay inside all day. Do not think about negative things constantly. Do not check the news and social media all the time.
✓ Do things that make you happy. For example, sports, reading, or playing games.	✗ Do not stop doing things you love. Do not do things that are bad for you. For example, do not spend too much money or gamble.
✓ Say no when you cannot do something. Know your limits and take distance or breaks.	✗ Do not do more than you can. Watch for signs that you are very sad or very tired.
✓ Spend time with people you love. Share what you are going through.	✗ Do not stay alone. Do not push people away. Do not feel guilty sharing your problem with other people.

When to get professional help

Every person recovers in their own way, after an emergency. There is no fixed time that works for everyone. Some people feel better after a few weeks. After a month, you may still feel a little sad. If you continue to struggle, you can seek professional help.

Every country in Europe has helplines that can support you. Ask your national or local disability organization or support staff to help you find the right one for you, and request accessible communication in your preferred language, including sign language, or information in easy-to-read.

Recovering your medication and assistive devices

In an emergency, you might lose your medication and assistive devices. For some people who rely on a machine or medication to stay alive this can be very dangerous and life threatening. For others who rely on assistive devices to live independently, losing them can mean losing the ability to do things on their own, like moving or talking with people. Both situations are serious, so you need to get your medication and assistive devices back as fast as possible.

This is why it is important to plan now. Keep extra medication at home for one month if you can. Ask your doctor for extra medication before an emergency. Find out where the nearest treatment facility is. Make a list of other doctors who can help you if your doctor is not available.

If you have lost your medication or your medical equipment, do these things:

- 1. Inform a professional right away.** Tell the shelter doctor, nurse, or social worker. A social worker is a person who helps people in need. Show them your medication list if you have one.

2. **Ask for special emergency medication.** Some medications cannot be replaced with other medication. If you take this kind of medication, tell the staff right away. Say it is urgent. Explain that you cannot wait, or use other medication instead.
3. **Ask for a fridge if you need one.** Some medications must stay cold. Ask for cold storage right away.
4. **Ask to move if the shelter is not safe for you.** Some medical equipment needs power all the time. If the shelter cannot give you power all the time, ask to move.
5. You can go to a hospital or another safe place.
6. **Ask for help to find another treatment place.** Ask a social worker or the shelter staff. They can help you find the nearest place for treatment.

What to do if your assistive device is lost or broken

If your assistive device is lost or broken, contact the responsible health service, insurer, assistive-device provider, public authority, or disability organization to request assessment, repair, temporary replacement, fitting, training, and information on eligibility for a replacement device. This is what you can do:

1. **Tell staff right away.** Tell them if your device is lost, damaged or does not work well.
2. **Ask for a temporary replacement device to use for now.** You can borrow a device while you wait for a new one.
3. **Ask for fitting and training with your new device.** Fitting means the staff make sure the device is right for your body. Training means the staff show you how to use the device. Without fitting and training, the device can be hard or unsafe to use.

- 4. Keep your other assistive and medical devices with you all the time.** Do not leave them behind.
- 5. Write down what is lost or damaged.** Ask whether insurance, compensation, or other support is available to help replace or repair the device.

What to do if you lose your assistance animal

In an emergency, you might need to prove that your assistance animal is yours and that it is a working animal. Keep the papers that prove this and put them in your emergency plan. If your assistance animal gets lost, ask for help right away. This is what you can do:

- 1. Tell staff right away.** Tell the shelter staff or emergency workers.
- 2. Share information about your animal:**
 - 3. The name of your animal.**
 - 4. What your animal looks like.**
 - 5. The number on your animal's ID tag.**
 - 6. The phone number of your animal's vet.**
- 7. Ask people to help you find your animal.** You can ask shelter staff, your disability group or the local animal rescue services.
- 8. Ask for support while you wait.** Ask shelter staff what help they can give you. You need help to move around while you are without your assistance animal.
- 9. Check your animal when you find it again.** Look to see if it is injured. Use the supplies in your emergency backpack to take care of it. If needed, ask for a vet, food, or other supplies for your animal.

Returning home safely

Coming back home

When an emergency ends, going home can mean different things.

Your home might be damaged and it make take time for things to return to normal. You may also be unable to return home. Give yourself time to adjust to the new situation. If you are not safe at your home, do not stay there; ask your local authority, social services, or organization of persons with disabilities for a safe place, or go somewhere you planned before, like a friend's home. If you moved to a new area, sign up again with your local authority or disability organization to get the services you need.

5 main things you can do to make coming home easier and safer:

- 1.** Wait for local authorities to say it is safe before turning on utilities, and check all food, water, medicine, and equipment before using them.
- 2.** Take photos of all damage before cleaning up for insurance purposes.
- 3.** Contact your local authorities (police, town hall, hospital) to replace any lost documents.
- 4.** Let your support network know where you are and what support you might need.
- 5.** Reunite with your assistance animal and have them checked by a vet.

Feeling financially safe again

After a disaster, it takes time to feel safe with your finances again. Here are the most important steps to take:

- **Contact your insurance company as soon as you can.** Contact them in the first 60 days after the disaster. Do not throw anything away before the insurance company looks at the damage. Keep the receipts and proofs that shows what you paid for. For example, for the payment of the temporary place you stay, any repairs, food, and medicine.
- **Ask your local authority for an official paper about the disaster.** The paper says that the disaster happened. You will need this paper for your insurance.
- **If you can no longer live in your home, contact your water, electricity, and gas providers.** Tell them what happened, and ask them to stop pause your bills or payments. Most of them will help you find a solution.
- **Ask social services and disability organizations for financial help.**
- **Start saving a small amount of money for the future,** when you feel safe again.

Going back to normal

Recovery takes time. It is not a single moment. It can take months or even years. Going back to normal might also take a long time. For this to happen, you need to go back to your activities and routine.

In the weeks and months after an emergency, you do not have to recover alone. Local authorities, social services, and volunteers all play an important role, especially after a disaster or large-scale emergency. They can help you clean up your home, find supplies, get support, ensure the continuity of your care, reconnect with your family and assistance animals and rebuild daily routines. Reach out to your neighbors, community groups, and organizations of persons with disabilities. Tell them about your situation and ask for support.

- 1. Going back to your home:** Your home may be damaged or destroyed. Ask your local authority about rehousing options or repair and rebuilding programs. If your home needs accessibility adaptations, request that these are included in the repair plan from the start.
- 2. Going back to work or school:** When you feel ready, contact your workplace or school and ask about flexible arrangements. If their building is affected, find out whether you can connect remotely in the meantime.
- 3. Getting your support back:** Following an emergency, reconnect with your healthcare providers, rehabilitation services, or specialists to assess any impacts on your health. You also have the right to resume other support services you used before, such as personal assistance, transport, home care, disability benefits, and social services. If you lost your documents during the emergency, you can request help to replace them. If you got separated from your assistance animal, contact your animal's vet, local animal rescue or civil protection services, and use your animal's recent photo and identification details to assist in reunification.
- 4. Getting connected again:** During the emergency, you may lose your devices and the mobile network and internet might stop working. Replace or restore your phone, computer, internet connection, and assistive technology as soon as possible. However, radio stations will still work. All these are essential for accessing emergency information, using services, and staying in touch with your support network.



Module 6: Being prepared everywhere

Preparing together in advance helps everyone. Being prepared makes it easier in the event of an emergency. Where you are when an emergency happens, matters. It changes who is near you and what help you can get. This module helps you to be prepared everywhere.

Be prepared at home

You may live in the community, on your own or with family, in cities or in villages. Where you live affects how you experience an emergency: what type of emergencies can occur, how fast help can reach you, and whether people know about your disability. You may need to evacuate, manage your own medical needs, and make quick decisions about your safety.

Top 5 actions to take this week

- 1. Start your emergency plan.** Fill out the [Personal Emergency plan template](#) you can find in the “[Toolkit for the Guidelines](#)”. Include your medication, support contacts, and evacuation needs. Share it with someone you trust.
- 2. Build your support network.** Have a conversation with at least one neighbor. Tell them what support you might need and give them your phone number. Register with your local civil protection authorities or emergency services.
- 3. Prepare your household supplies.** Start gathering supplies and begin building your emergency backpack with essential items for 72 hours.
- 4. Check your building’s emergency plan.** Walk it through with your building manager, your family, friends or support person. Check your evacuation route and make sure it is accessible. Ask for emergency plans that are suitable for you and your accessibility needs.
- 5. Find out about risks and download alert systems.** Learn what hazards exist in your area. Download emergency apps that work for you, like the 112 app and local alert systems. Make sure you can receive warnings.

**Box 16**

If this is for you

- **You live far away from emergency services or in an area with bad infrastructure:** Focus on storing supplies for longer than 72 hours, register with emergency services, learn first aid, and build a strong local support network.
- **You live isolated in the community:** Prioritize registering with emergency services, including social assistance services, and connecting with organizations of persons with disabilities who can check on you and help you build a support network.
- **You have a low income or limited budget:** Check out the section “[How to adapt your emergency bag to your requirements](#). **How to prepare your emergency bag with little money**”.

Be prepared in a residential setting

If you live in a residential facility or care home, you may need help with daily activities, have complex health needs, or have limited support outside the facility. In an emergency, your wellbeing depends on the residential facility being safe and accessible, with the right equipment and supplies. It also depends on having well-trained staff and an emergency plan that takes your individual needs into account.

Remember, you have the right to choose where you live and to be involved in decisions about your care and emergency planning.

Top 5 actions to take this week

1. **Ask to see the facility’s emergency plan and request a copy.** Check that it includes a personal plan for you taking into account how you communicate, how you evacuate, your medication needs, and who is in charge of helping you in case of emergency. If you cannot

leave quickly on your own, ask what evacuation equipment is available and confirm that staff know how to use it.

- 2. Always keep your Personal Emergency Card with you.** Find a Personal Emergency Card template in the [“Toolkit for the Guidelines”](#). Fill it out with information about your communication needs, medication, and support persons. Keep it in your pocket or bag so that first responders can find it.
- 3. Get to know the staff.** Know which staff members work during the day and at night. Learn who is responsible for helping you evacuate. Learn how to ask for help in different situations: if you feel unwell, if you hear an alarm, or if something feels wrong.
- 4. Learn the building and evacuation routes.** Know how to leave the building, where to meet outside, and what to do if you cannot leave on your own. Practice your evacuation route with staff.
- 5. Ask to be included in evacuation drills and share feedback with staff afterwards.** If you have concerns about emergency preparedness, raise them with your family, organization of persons with disabilities, or a staff member.

**Box 17**

If this is for you

- **You have limited mobility or cannot move on your own:** Make sure your personal plan includes specific evacuation procedures for you. Ask what equipment is available and where refuge areas are if you cannot evacuate immediately. Practice with staff regularly.
- **You have family outside of the residential facility:** Give them a copy of your emergency plan and the facility's contact information. Make sure the facility has their phone numbers and knows how to contact them in an emergency.
- **You are in temporary care or going home for periods:** Keep your **Personal Emergency Card** with you always, even when you leave. Make sure both the residential facility and your family have updated copies of your emergency plan and medication list.
- **You are in a hospital:** Ensure you have your emergency plan and medication list with you at the hospital. Tell hospital staff about your requirements, needs, and preferences. Make sure someone from your support network knows where you are. Keep your phone with you.

Be prepared in the workplace

Work is an important part of life. You have the right to be safe at work. In Europe, about half of persons with disabilities do not have a job. This is often because of barriers and discrimination in the workplace.

Also, anyone can acquire a disability at work, through accidents or long-term illness. If this happens, you have the right to stay home until you recover. Your employer should make sure you are safe and have what you need to return to work.

Top 5 actions to take this week

- 1. Tell your employer or building emergency officer about your requirements.** Explain what you need to be safe during an emergency. This could include accessible alarms, evacuation assistance, or specific equipment. Ask them to conduct a risk assessment for you. Request all answers in writing.
- 2. Ask for a personal evacuation plan.** Your plan should explain how you will leave the building, who will help you, what equipment you need, and what to do if your usual exit is blocked. Make sure it is written down and shared with the building emergency officer.
- 3. Choose an evacuation buddy.** Find a trusted colleague who can help you in an emergency. Give them clear instructions on how to support you. Practice your evacuation route together. Make sure you have a backup buddy in case your main person is absent.
- 4. Check that alarms work for you.** Test if you can hear or see the emergency alarms. If standard alarms do not work for you, ask for accessible alternatives (visual alarms or a colleague to come find you).
- 5. Participate in safety drills.** Ask to be included in all workplace evacuation drills. Use these as opportunities to practice with your evacuation buddy and test your plan. After each drill, give feedback on what worked and what needs to improve. Your voice matters.

**Box 18**

If this is for you

- **Your employer has not responded to your requests:** Contact your organization of persons with disabilities for support. They can help you advocate for your rights and explain what accommodations your employer is legally required to provide.
- **You work from home or remotely most of the time:** You still need an emergency plan for your home workspace. Follow the guidance in “[Be prepared at home](#)” and make sure your employer knows how to reach you in an emergency.
- **You recently acquired a disability at work:** Inform your employer about what you need to return to work safely. Request a risk assessment. Ask for accommodations and updates to the emergency plan to include your requirements. “**Module 7: Guide for support persons and the community**” has guidance your employer can use.

Be prepared at school

School is where you spend a large part of your day learning and having fun. You have the right to be safe at school. Your school must have an emergency plan that includes your specific requirements: teachers must know how to support you and have the equipment to do so, alarms must work for you, evacuation routes must be accessible, and you must be able to participate in drills. You also need to be able to reunite with your family safely after an emergency.

This section is intended for children, young people, and other persons with disabilities who attend school and can participate in emergency planning. Those who are unable to participate independently, including younger children, should be supported by their parents, guardians, teachers, or support network. Additional guidance for support persons is available in “[Module 7: Guide for support persons and the community](#)”.

Top 5 actions to take this week

- 1. Tell your teacher about your requirements.** Explain what you need to be safe during an emergency. This could include help evacuating, accessible alarms, communication support, or a safe place to wait. Ask if the school has an emergency plan that includes you.
- 2. Create a Personal Emergency Plan with your teacher and parents.** Your plan should explain how you will leave the building, who will help you, what you need to communicate, and how to get in touch with your family and support network. Make sure both your teacher and your parents or guardians have a copy.
- 3. Choose a preparedness buddy in your class.** Find a classmate or friend who can help you prepare for and act in an emergency. Tell them what support you might need. Practice together.
- 4. Ask your teacher to help you check that alarms and evacuation routes work for you.** Test together if you can hear or see the school's emergency alarms. Walk your evacuation route with your teacher and make sure you can use it. Ask about accessible exits and equipment if you need them.
- 5. Enroll in school drills and preparedness activities.** Take part in every drill. Enroll in first aid classes and preparedness courses, if available. After each drill, tell your teacher what worked and what was difficult for you. Ask your parents or support persons to communicate with the school if drills and preparedness activities are not accessible or do not include you.

**Box 19**

If this is for you

- **You go to school on your own:** Know safe routes home and to safe places if an emergency happens during your walk. Have more than one route in case your usual path is blocked.
- **You live in a school dormitory:** Make sure the dormitory has an emergency plan for nights and weekends. Know who will wake you and help you evacuate at night. practice evacuating from your dorm room and make sure you can contact your family quickly.

Be prepared while travelling

You have the right to travel, rest, explore, and see the world, like everyone else. This includes accessible transport, accommodation, and emergency support wherever you go. When you travel, you face unfamiliar emergency systems, possible distance from your support network, and services that work differently than at home. This does not mean you must stay home. It means you must prepare before you go.

Top 5 actions to take before you leave

1. **Research your destination before you book.** Find out what emergencies are common in that area. Learn how emergency services work and what the emergency number is (112 in all European Union countries). Look for travel blogs by persons with disabilities and websites about accessible travel.
2. **Tell hotels or other accommodations, transport, and tour operators about your requirements when you book.** Ask for accessible rooms, evacuation support, and photos of the facilities before you arrive. For transport (planes, trains, buses), inform them of your requirements at least two days before travel. Request answers in writing.

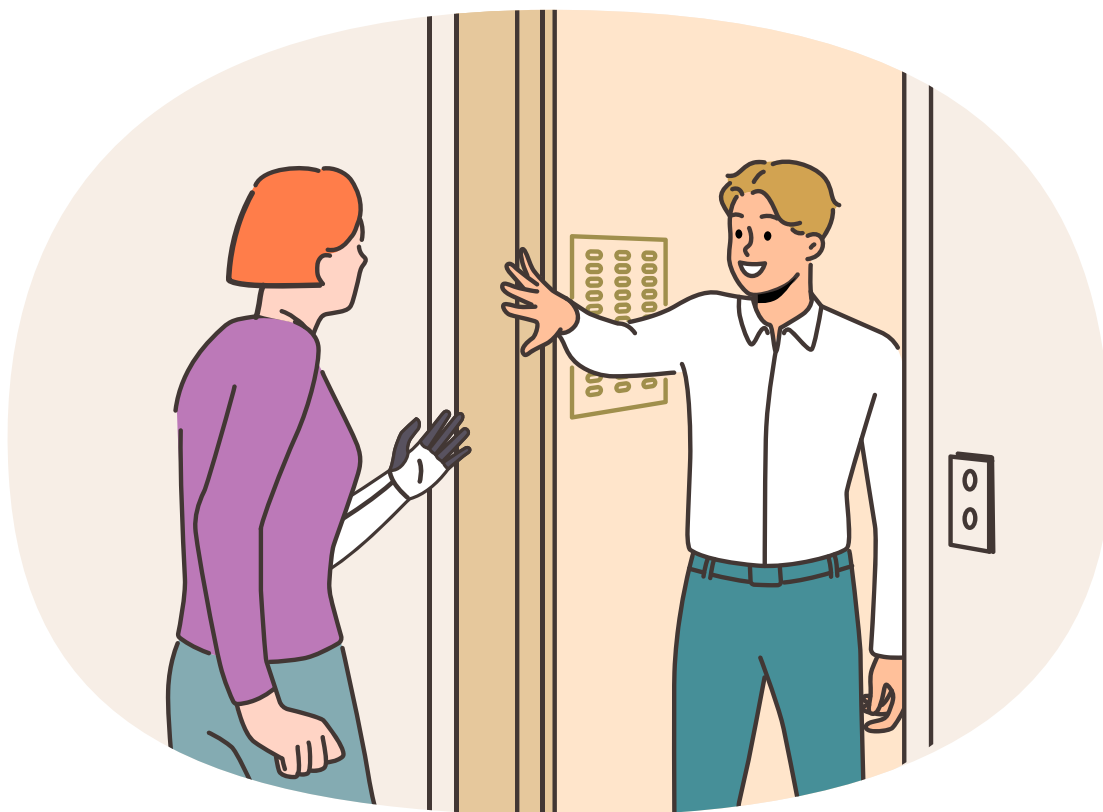
- 3. Prepare your travel emergency kit.** Pack extra medication (more than you need for your trip), copies of prescriptions in English or the local language, your Personal Emergency Card translated, if possible, as well as adapters, backup batteries or chargers for assistive devices. Check that your travel insurance covers your disability-related needs, health conditions, and assistive equipment.
- 4. Register your trip with your consulate or embassy.** Tell them in writing about your trip, where you are staying, and your disability or health conditions. They can help you if something goes wrong, find a doctor, or arrange to go home in an emergency.
- 5. Brief your travel companion on your emergency plan.** Make sure they know how to support you and communicate with local emergency services.



Box 20

If this is for you

- **You use medical equipment that needs electricity:** Bring adapters and backup power options. Know where the nearest hospital or medical facility is. Ask your hotel or other accommodation if they have backup power.
- **You take medication that needs refrigeration:** Confirm that your hotel room or other accommodation has a fridge. Bring a portable cooler for transport. Research pharmacies and hospitals at your destination.
- **You travel alone:** Share your itinerary with family or friends at home. Check in with them regularly. Register with your consulate. Make sure your hotel or other accommodation knows your requirements. Keep your **Personal Emergency Card** with you.
- **You are travelling to a country where you do not speak the language:** Translate your Personal Emergency Card and medication list into the local language. Download translation apps that work offline.



Module 7: Guide for support persons and the community

This section is for family members, personal assistants, support persons and staff, as well as community members who may support a person with disabilities. If you help someone prepare for emergencies, this guide shows you where to start. It helps you understand your role, learn what the person you support needs, and know what to do in an emergency. Study it together so everyone learns the same things and can work as a team.

For family members, relatives, and friends

You are often the closest support in the life of a person with disabilities. You may live together, or you may stay in close contact from a distance. You may be their first intervention when something goes wrong. Your role is to support without taking over. Every decision about their preparedness must be made with them, not for them. Many persons with disabilities can prepare and act independently with the right information and support. Others may need more support with specific tasks, such as shopping for supplies, filling out forms, or practicing evacuation routes. Your job is to find out what they actually require, need and prefer.

Where to focus:

› **Use the Toolkit that accompanies the Guidelines.** The Toolkit is the actionable part of the Guidelines because it gives you the tools to actually prepare and turn learning into life-saving action now. It has four tools you can already use: Personal Emergency Card, Personal Emergency Plan, communication cards and a checklist for your emergency backpack. You can start getting ready today by filling them out and sharing them with the people who can support you. **Getting started: Self-assessment** to start the preparedness journey according to their support needs.

- **Core guide: Essential actions for everyone** for the three essential steps.
- **Be prepared at home** for guidance on living in the community.
- **Personal Emergency Card** for templates you will use together.

What to do first

- 1. Create the emergency plan together.** Use the Personal Emergency Plan template in the “[Toolkit for the Guidelines](#)” and fill it in together. Explain how the person communicates, where to meet if separated, medication needs, and support network contacts. Keep copies in a waterproof container (such as a sleeve, bag, pouch, or box) in your emergency bag, on the fridge, or in a hallway drawer near the front door. Review together at least once a year.
- 2. Build the emergency backpack and supplies together.** Gather core items including disability-specific adaptations. Help with shopping and carrying but let them decide what goes in the bag. Check it together once a year and replace old items.
- 3. Build the person’s support network together.** Help the person identify at least three people: someone close by, someone far away, and someone who knows their needs well. Connect with neighbors (give phone number and spare key), building managers (for safer alarms and equipment), and social services and disability organizations. Share the plan with everyone and practice together.
- 4. Make the home and building safer together.** Check for obstacles blocking evacuation routes and test if the person can access and respond to alarms. If not, arrange for neighbors to warn the person in an emergency and ask the responsible authorities to make the alarms accessible. Identify a friend’s house they can stay with or find the nearest shelter and check if they can reach it independently.
- 5. Practice evacuation together.** Walk at least two escape routes to the meeting point, time how long it takes, and identify obstacles. Test alarms and practice regularly at different times of day with actual equipment. Advocate for accessible evacuation in the person’s building and arrange for reasonable accommodations.

- 6. Connect with emergency services:** Contact the local authorities, fire station, or civil protection services to learn about available preparedness support, assistance arrangements, and emergency planning measures in your area. Where a voluntary assistance or notification system exists, consider registering, together with the person with disabilities, after understanding its purpose, how personal information will be used, protected, and updated, and what support the system may provide. Registration should complement, not replace, a Personal Emergency Plan, a support network, and accessible public services.

Getting yourself ready to offer support

- 1. Make your own emergency plan and backpack.** Have your own emergency plan and supplies. In an emergency, you may be affected as well, but if you are prepared, you can help them better.
- 2. Know their medication and devices.** Learn what medication they take, when, how much, and what happens if they miss a dose. Learn how their assistive devices work, how to charge them, where backup batteries are stored, and where to get replacements if devices are lost or damaged.
- 3. Attend first aid and preparedness courses.** Sign up for first aid classes and emergency preparedness training offered by civil protection services, or the Red Cross.
- 4. Prepare the space where the person spends most of their time.** If you live together, stock up on the “The 7 basics of preparedness” from “Module 1: Home preparedness”. If the person lives in a residential facility or care home, ask the manager if their specific needs are included in the emergency plan and advocate for better planning if needed. If the person attends school, check with teachers that the school has a Personal Emergency Plan for them and that they are included in all drills. Keep communication open with all the places where the person spends significant time.

- 5. If you travel together:** When traveling together, carry the person's emergency plan, medicine list and health papers with you. Know how to help them leave a building in an emergency and how to communicate their needs to hotel or other accommodation personnel, transport staff, and emergency services. Help them research accessible travel options, ask hotels or other accommodation about accessibility in writing, notify transport staff at least two days before travel, and arrange travel insurance that covers their disability-related needs and health conditions.

For personal assistants and support staff

You might be a paid professional supporting persons with disabilities in their own homes and communities or in residential facilities, care homes and day centers. Your role is to work with them and their families to ensure they have an emergency plan that includes you with clear roles and responsibilities. Decisions about preparedness should be made together with the person, not on behalf of them. Support the person to make their own decisions, and help carry out the actions they have agreed to, rather than taking over.

Your responsibilities include knowing what the person needs, requires, and prefers in an emergency, their medication and treatment plan to ensure continuity of care, having backup plans for their medical and assistive devices, and knowing how to brief first responders and medical staff. During emergencies, you may be their primary source of safety, their connection with emergency services, and their link to family. Involve them in making their Personal Emergency Plan, practice and update it regularly.

Where to focus:

- **Use the Toolkit that accompanies the Guidelines.** The Toolkit is the actionable part of the Guidelines because it gives you the tools to actually prepare and turn learning into life-saving action now. It has four tools you can already use: Personal Emergency Card, Personal Emergency Plan, communication cards and a checklist for your emergency backpack. You can start getting ready today by filling them out and sharing them with the people who can support you. **Getting started: Self-assessment** to start the preparedness journey according to their support needs.
- **Core guide: Essential actions for everyone** for the three essential steps.
- **Be prepared at home** for guidance on living in the community.
- **Personal Emergency Card** for templates you will use together.

Read these sections together with the person you support.

What to do first

1. **Create a Personal Emergency Plan together.** Use the Personal Emergency Plan template in the “[Toolkit for the Guidelines](#)” and fill it in with the person. Explain how they communicate, how they evacuate, medication needs, and who their support persons are. Involve them actively in every decision. If the person lives in a residential facility, keep copies in their room, in their file, and with the facility’s emergency plan.
2. **Ensure the person has their emergency card and medication list.** Help them fill out the Personal Emergency Card template and keep it with them at all times (pocket, bag, or wheelchair). Include information about their communication needs, medication, allergies, and support persons. Laminate the card for protection, if possible.

- 3. Build their support network beyond the residential facility.** Help them maintain contact with family, friends, and disability organizations. Keep information about support persons up to date, and make sure everyone in their support network knows how to reach each other. You or the residential facility must get in touch with these contacts immediately in an emergency and keep them informed. Encourage residents to get to know their roommates and floor neighbors. If supporting someone in the community, check whether a voluntary assistance or notification system exists. If so, discuss with the person with disabilities whether registration would be helpful, after understanding its purpose, how personal information will be used, protected, and updated, and what support the system may provide. Registration should complement, not replace, a Personal Emergency Plan, a support network, and accessible public services.
- 4. If you work in a residential facility, check that the facility's emergency plans include everyone.** Review the emergency plan with your manager. Verify that it includes individual plans for every resident, evacuation equipment, accessible alarms, and staffing plans for nights and weekends. Check that there is a plan to keep residents safe inside if they cannot leave the building fast enough. Staff must have the right equipment (including refuge areas, evacuation chairs, fire extinguishers and more), know how to use it and maintain it regularly. If plans are inadequate, raise this with management and find inclusive solutions.
- 5. If you work in a residential facility, conduct regular drills and include everyone.** Every resident must participate in drills, to the extent to which their condition allows. If there are no drills happening, organize one and ask for support from civil protection authorities. Practice evacuating with mobility aids and assistive devices at different times of day and night, including when short-staffed. Residents who participate in drills are better prepared and safer. After each drill, ask what worked and what was difficult, then update plans based on feedback.

Getting yourself ready to offer support

- 1. Know each person's needs, medication, and devices thoroughly.** Know everyone's assistive needs, how to use their devices, treatment plans, medication schedules, what needs refrigeration, and how long supplies last without power. Know where backups are stored and how to get replacements. Make sure all responsible care staff know how each resident communicates, evacuates, and what their medication needs are.
- 2. If you work in a residential facility, make sure you know and understand your evacuation responsibilities.** Ensure that every resident has a designated staff member for evacuation, documented in writing. Know who you are responsible for and have backup assignments for staff absences. If you support someone in the community, know their evacuation plan, how they want to be supported, and who else can help you.
- 3. Know how to brief first responders and medical staff.** Practice explaining each person's disability, communication needs, medication, and how to help them safely. Keep their emergency card and plan accessible to show quickly.
- 4. Attend first aid and preparedness training.** Sign up for first aid classes and emergency preparedness courses offered by civil protection services, the Red Cross, or community groups.
- 5. Connect with emergency services and enforce safety rules.** If you are in an residential setting, ask your manager to invite fire services and civil protection authorities to meet residents, and train you and the residents. Practice drills together and improve based on feedback.

- 6. Prepare for relocation if needed (if you work in a residential facility).** If residents must evacuate to another facility, their medication, care plans, and assistive devices must go with them. Prepare emergency bags with care documentation and send information to receiving facilities ahead of time when possible. Have these arrangements in place especially for persons who need continuity of care and have very specialized requirements and needs.

For neighbors

You may be the closest person who can help a person with disabilities in an emergency. You might hear alarms they cannot hear, check on them when family cannot reach them, and act quickly when no one else is there.

Your role is to build trust now, understand what the person requires and be ready to help while respecting their dignity. You do not need medical training or disability expertise, but knowing a few things before an emergency helps you support them effectively according to their requirements, needs and preferences. Start by saying hello and getting to know your neighbors. You may not know who needs support until you ask.

Remember, persons with disabilities are active participants in emergency preparedness. They bring resilience, expertise, and resources to emergencies and can help you too. When included, they are valuable contributors to preparedness planning, training, and evaluation. Together, you can create a plan that works both ways and keep your community safer. Decisions about preparedness should be made with the person with disabilities, not for them. Support the person in making and communicating their own decisions, and help carry out the actions they have agreed to, rather than taking over.

Where to focus:

- **Use the Toolkit that accompanies the Guidelines.** The Toolkit is the actionable part of the Guidelines because it gives you the tools to actually prepare and turn learning into life-saving action now. It has four tools you can already use: Personal Emergency Card, Personal Emergency Plan, communication cards and a checklist for your emergency backpack. You can start getting ready today by filling them out and sharing them with the people who can support you. **Getting started: Self-assessment** to start the preparedness journey according to their support needs.
- **Core guide: Essential actions for everyone** to know more about preparedness in general and the three essential steps.
- **Module 1: Home preparedness** and **Be prepared at home** for guidance on how to prepare at home and in the community.
- **Personal Emergency Card** for templates you will use together.

Read these sections together with the person you support.

What to do first

1. **Introduce yourself if you have not already.** Knock on your neighbor's door, say who you are, and offer to help if they ever need it. Give them your phone number and ask for theirs. If you do not know your neighbors yet, start small. You can say hello when you come across each other.
2. **Explore how you can help each other in an emergency.** Have a simple conversation about what they might need: someone to warn them if alarms sound, help evacuate, check on them during power outages, or talk to emergency personnel. Check that the alarms work for them (some use sound or light). Also explore what they can do to support you. They might check on your children, warn you in different situations, or offer other support in other ways. Create a plan that works both ways.

- 3. Exchange keys if both you and them are comfortable.**
If your neighbor trusts you and agrees, exchange spare keys. This allows you to check on them if they cannot come to the door. Only do this if they are comfortable. Respect their privacy and boundaries.
- 4. Help them prepare their home and practice together.**
Help them check their home for things that could block evacuation routes. Walk escape routes together. Test the alarms together. Practice what you would actually do in different emergency scenarios (fire, power outage, evacuation order).
- 5. Know their support persons.** Ask for phone numbers of their family, friends or support persons. If something happens and you cannot reach your neighbor, you will know who to contact.
- 6. Check in regularly, before an emergency,** by saying hello, asking how they are doing, offering help with small things like carrying groceries. Building a relationship now makes it easier to help each other when emergencies happen.
- 7. Getting yourself ready to offer support**
- 8. Learn what your neighbor's needs, requirements, and preferences are.** Depending on what you decide your role is, understand their medication needs, accessibility requirements, and how they want to be helped. Get to know the local disability community and learn more about disability and inclusion. Practice your emergency plan together often. Review and update it as needed.
- 9. Stay alert to offer support.** Make sure you can reach them in time to warn them if that is what you decided your role will be, and that you have a signal and system in place. Make sure you have all the equipment in place if you need to support them with evacuation or transportation, and that you know how to communicate their requirements to emergency services if needed.
- 10. Attend first aid and preparedness training.** Sign up for first aid classes offered by civil protection services, the Red Cross, or community groups. Basic first aid knowledge can make a significant difference in an emergency.

- 11. Make your own emergency plan.** Have your own plan and supplies ready. In an emergency, you may be affected too. If you are prepared, you can help your neighbor better.
- 12. Advocate for accessibility and inclusion in your building and community.** Tell the building manager what needs to be changed and improved (e.g., better alarms, accessible evacuation routes, and equipment). Ask for common drills that include everyone. Advocate for a building where all residents can be safe.

For teachers and school staff

You teach or work in schools, preschools, or educational facilities where children and young persons with disabilities spend their days. During school hours, you are responsible for their safety. When emergencies happen, you may be the only adult they can rely on.

Your role is to ensure the school has an inclusive emergency plan that includes every student with a disability and that you know how to support them safely. Students with disabilities have the right to be safe at school. They must have access to alarms that work for them, accessible evacuation routes, necessary equipment, drills and preparedness activities. Decisions about preparedness should be made with the person and their parents or support persons. Support the person to make and communicate their own decisions, and help carry out the actions they have agreed to, rather than taking over. Preparedness also means building students' wellbeing and resilience alongside plans and procedures. When schools create calm, informed, and emotionally supportive environments, students are better equipped to cope with uncertainty and recover from difficult experiences.

Schools are often where preparedness begins. For many families, preparing at school happens before preparing at home. Schools are a great place to start and disseminate these Guidelines and preparedness information in general. By teaching preparedness at school, you help students and families get ready at home too.

Where to focus:

- **Use the Toolkit that accompanies the Guidelines.** The Toolkit is the actionable part of the Guidelines because it gives you the tools to actually prepare and turn learning into life-saving action now. It has four tools you can already use: Personal Emergency Card, Personal Emergency Plan, communication cards and a checklist for your emergency backpack. You can start getting ready today by filling them out and sharing them with the people who can support you. **Getting started: Self-assessment** to start the preparedness journey according to the person's support needs.
- **Core guide: Essential actions for everyone** to know more about preparedness in general and the three essential steps.
- **Module 6: Being prepared everywhere: Be prepared at school** for specific guidance on school settings.
- **Personal Emergency Card** for templates that you can use together to support the person's preparedness journey.

Read these sections together with the person you support.

What to do first

1. **Create Personal Emergency Plans with students and parents.** Use the [Personal Emergency Plan](#) template in the Personal Emergency Card and start filling it in together with each student and their parents. Include information about how they communicate, how they evacuate, what they need to feel safe, and how to reunite them with their family. Keep copies in student's file, and with the school emergency plan.
2. **Ensure each student has their emergency card.** Help students fill out the Personal Emergency Card template and keep it in their backpack at all times. Include information about their communication needs, medical requirements, and support persons.

- 3. Assign a buddy or a staff member to each student with disabilities.** Pair each student with a disability with a trusted classmate or a designated staff member. Train the buddy to help in an emergency and practice together. Make sure both students (or the staff member and student) understand the plan. Have a backup buddy or staff member in case the main person is absent.
- 4. Include all students in drills and preparedness activities.** Every student with a disability must participate in every drill. After each drill, ask students what worked and what was difficult, and update plans based on their feedback. Teach emergency preparedness to all students, either as part of the curriculum or, where those courses are not available, through courses organized by different organizations, such as the Red Cross, or local civil protection authorities.
- 5. Support students' emotional preparedness and resilience.** For students with developmental support needs, being prepared for emergencies is not only a matter of safety but also of self-confidence. Teach them to understand their own reactions, feel confident asking for help, and know how to protect themselves. Use adapted materials, practical skills, and structured support. Help all students recognize and manage emotional reactions like fear after stressful events by telling the truth, checking facts, offering encouragement and hope, creating space for discussion, normalizing different feelings, and letting feelings be expressed.

Getting yourself ready to offer support

- 1. Know each student's requirements, needs, and communication preferences, and how to keep them calm.** Know what helps each student feel safe, what triggers anxiety, and how they communicate.
- 2. Connect with parents and establish emergency procedures.** Keep updated information about support persons, work with parents to create emergency plans together, and establish reunification procedures after emergencies; Do not hand over a student to anyone not listed in their emergency plan.

- 3. Take part in designing the school's emergency plan and include students with disabilities.** Make sure their requirements are included and the school is inclusive and accessible (accessible alarms, evacuation routes with tactile carpets, signs and images, ramps, wide doors). If your school does not meet these standards, raise this with school leadership.
- 4. Attend first aid, preparedness, and mental health training.** Sign up for first aid classes and emergency preparedness courses offered by civil protection services, the Red Cross, or education authorities, as preparedness is not a formal requirement in initial teacher education (ITE) in many European countries. Also seek out training programs that strengthen resilience, inclusion, and mental health support to help you better understand what young people are going through and feel prepared to discuss difficult topics.
- 5. Ensure that alarms, evacuation routes, and evacuation responsibilities work for all students.** Test whether students can hear or see emergency alarms and arrange alternatives if needed. Ensure every student has a designated teacher or staff member for evacuation, have the necessary equipment in place, and practice routes and equipment together regularly.
- 6. Conduct regular drills and make preparedness part of school culture.** Practice together with emergency services by inviting local fire services and civil protection to visit, meet students, and train staff. Evaluate the school's emergency plan regularly through quality assurance systems.

For employers and colleagues

If you are an employer: The law requires you to keep all employees safe, including those with disabilities. This means making reasonable adjustments, ensuring workspaces, doors, hallways, and bathrooms are accessible, assessing risks for employees with disabilities, including their requirements in your emergency plan, and involving them in drills. This also applies to employees who acquired a disability through a work accident or long-term illness.

If you are a colleague: You may be the closest person available to help in a sudden emergency, and may be asked to act as an evacuation buddy. This means warning the person, helping them evacuate, communicating their needs to first responders, and contacting their family if needed. Understand their needs, practice together, and be reliable.

Decisions about preparedness should be made with the person, not for them. Regardless of your role, support the person to make and communicate their own decisions, and help carry out the actions they have agreed to, rather than taking over.

Where to focus:

- **Use the Toolkit that accompanies the Guidelines.** The Toolkit is the actionable part of the Guidelines because it gives you the tools to actually prepare and turn learning into life-saving action now. **It has four tools you can already use: Personal Emergency Card, Personal Emergency Plan, communication cards and a checklist for your emergency backpack.** You can start getting ready today by filling them out and sharing them with the people who can support you. **Getting started: Self-assessment** to start the preparedness journey according to their support needs.
- **Core guide: Essential actions for everyone** to know more about preparedness in general and the three essential steps.

- Module 6: Being prepared everywhere: **Be prepared in the workplace** for specific guidance on workplace settings.
- **Personal Emergency Card** for templates that you can use together to support their preparedness journey.

Read these sections together with the person you support.

What to do first

For employers:

- 1. Check risks and create Personal Emergency Plans.** Conduct risk assessments for each employee with a disability as required by law. Work with the building emergency officer to create personal evacuation plans covering how they leave, who helps them, what equipment they need, and what to do if routes are blocked. Answer all requests in writing and on time.
- 2. Make the workplace accessible and safe.** Ensure workspaces, doors, hallways, stairs, and bathrooms are accessible. Check that alarms work for employees with disabilities and provide accessible alternatives if needed (visual alarms or colleague alerts). Remove obstacles that could block evacuation routes.
- 3. Provide necessary equipment and assign support colleagues.** Make sure evacuation equipment is in place (evacuation chairs, refuge areas, accessible exits). Ensure every employee with a disability has a designated support colleague, provide clear instructions, and give them time to practice.
- 4. Include employees with disabilities in all safety drills.** After drills, ask them to join discussions about what worked and what needs improvement, and use their feedback to update plans.
- 5. Plan for business continuity that includes employees with disabilities.** If the workplace closes in an emergency, have plans for how work can continue and whether employees can work from home in accessible ways.

For colleagues:

- 1. Learn your colleague's personal emergency plan and what they need from you.** Ask to see their plan, if it includes you, and understand what you are expected to do. Know how they want to be supported, how they communicate, what equipment they use, their medication needs, their preferred evacuation route, and their support persons.
- 2. Know how to support them in different emergency scenarios.** Know how to warn them if alarms are not accessible, help them evacuate, assist with accessibility issues, communicate their support and medical requirements to first responders, and reach their family or support persons. Be prepared to advocate for them, if needed.
- 3. Practice together regularly.** Walk the evacuation route together, identify obstacles, and practice at different times of day. Practice helping with medication if needed, communicating their needs to first responders, and contacting their family in emergencies.

Getting yourself ready to offer support**For employers:**

- 1. Understand your legal obligations.** Know that the law requires you to keep employees with disabilities and all employees safe, conduct risk assessments, provide accessible emergency plans, and include them in drills. Consult your national occupational health and safety authority and organizations of persons with disabilities to ensure compliance.
- 2. Establish communication channels with employees with disabilities.** Create safe channels for employees to request accommodations and raise safety concerns. Respond to all requests in writing and on time, and involve the employees in designing solutions.

- 3. Offer training to building emergency officers and support colleagues.** Support colleagues are employees who have agreed to support the person in an emergency. Ensure building emergency officers know how to create personal evacuation plans for employees with disabilities. Train support colleagues on how to help safely and communicate medical needs to first responders. Make sure training is ongoing and renewed appropriately.
- 4. Evaluate and improve workplace accessibility regularly.** Conduct regular safety audits that include accessibility. Check that evacuation routes, alarms, equipment, and refuge areas work for everyone and fix gaps immediately.

For colleagues:

- 1. Take your support role seriously and know the medical and accessibility needs of your colleagues with disabilities.** Understand that being a support colleague is a responsibility. Know the person's medical requirements, medication, what happens if they miss a dose, how their assistive devices work, and what accessibility barriers they face.
- 2. Know how to communicate their needs to first responders.** Practice explaining their condition, communication needs, medication, and how to help them safely. Keep their emergency card and plan accessible to show first responders quickly and know how to contact their family or support persons.
- 3. Attend first aid and preparedness training.** Sign up for first aid classes and emergency preparedness courses offered by your employer, civil protection services, or the Red Cross.

Toolkit for the Guidelines

How to use this Toolkit

This Toolkit contains practical tools to help you prepare for an emergency. Print and keep them somewhere easy to reach, and share them with your support network. Use the tools that work best for you.

What's inside

- 1. Personal Emergency Card Template:** This is a card with essential information about you. You can keep it in your wallet or bag and have it with you always.
- 2. Personal Emergency Plan Template:** This is a full plan to help you prepare. The plan is for you. The plan is also for the people you live with. The plan is also for your support network and care staff.
- 3. Communication cards:** These cards are ready to use. You can add your own details. The cards help you share your requirements. You can give them to first responders or other people who want to help you.
- 4. Checklist for your emergency backpack:** A list of items to help you pack the right supplies for your needs and requirements in your emergency backpack.
- 5. Personal Emergency Card:** This Personal Emergency Card contains key information that can help others support you if you are unable to communicate your needs during an emergency. In these situations, the card can “speak” on your behalf. Carry it with you at all times in your wallet, wheelchair bag, or other easily accessible place. This card is designed to share essential information with first responders and other emergency personnel. A separate guide “How to act in emergencies: Guidelines for first responders” provide guidance on how responders should use Personal Emergency Plans and communication tools.
- 6. Print the card or fill it in on a computer.** Ask your family, friends or support person to help you if you need it. Fill it in now, before anything happens.

Personal Emergency Card

This **Personal Emergency Card** contains key information that can help others support you if you are unable to communicate your needs during an emergency. In these situations, the card can “speak” on your behalf. Carry it with you at all times in your wallet, wheelchair bag, or other easily accessible place. **This card is designed to share essential information with first responders and other emergency personnel.** A separate guide “How to act in emergencies: Guidelines for first responders” provide guidance on how responders should use Personal Emergency Plans and communication tools.

Print the card or fill it in on a computer. Ask your family, friends or support person to help you if you need it. Fill it in now, before anything happens.

Personal Emergency Card	
<p>If you found this card</p> <p>I may need your assistance. Please keep this card private. Only show it to emergency staff, doctors, or nurses.</p>	<p>For the person who owns this card</p> <p>Keep this card with you at all times, especially when going outside. You can keep it in an easily accessible place, such as your wallet, purse or wheelchair bag.</p>
<p>1 This card belongs to me</p>	
<p>My name: _____</p>	
<p>My address: _____</p>	
<p>My phone number: _____</p>	
<p>Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call</p>	
<p>National Sign Language: _____</p>	
<p>Sign Language Interpreting service/ VRS phone number: _____</p>	

Personal Emergency Card

2 What you need to know about me

My functional requirements:

Other support needs:

My doctor's name:

My doctor's phone number:

My treatment facility:

My medication (name, dose, frequency, refrigeration required):

My devices (assistive or medical):

My assistance animal (name and species):

Do not pet, feed, or play with my assistance animal. It is working and is trained to support me.

3 How you can support me

Instructions:

Personal Emergency Card

4 Who to contact in an emergency

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Address: _____

How I know this person: _____

This card was last updated on: _____

Personal Emergency Plan

This emergency plan is made together with the people close to you, such as your family, friends, neighbors, or support staff. Share it with everyone who agreed to help you in an emergency and make sure they understand it.

Keep at least one printed copy in a waterproof container (sleeve, bag, pouch, box) in your emergency backpack, on your fridge or in a drawer in the hallway near your front door. First responders are trained to look in these places. A printed copy is also useful during a power cut.

Fill in the plan now, before an emergency happens, and update it every year or when anything changes.

Personal Emergency Plan

For the person this plan belongs to

Fill in this plan with your family or support persons. Share it with your support network. Keep a copy in a waterproof container (sleeve, bag, pouch, box) in your emergency bag, on your fridge, or in a drawer in the hallway near the front door. Check the plan once a year.

For the support person filling in this plan

Ask the person and respect their answers and preferences. Use their words. Write what they need and how they want to be assisted.

1 Who lives here with me?

Person 1: _____ Year of birth: _____
 Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Person 2: _____ Year of birth: _____
 Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Person 3: _____ Year of birth: _____
 Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Pets

Pet 1: _____ Good to know: _____

Pet 2: _____ Good to know: _____

Personal Emergency Plan

2 What you need to know about me

My functional requirements:

Other support needs:

My medical diagnosis (such as disability, rare disease or allergies):

My medication (name, dose, frequency, refrigeration required):

My devices (assistive and medical):

What to do if they stop working or get lost:

Sign language interpretation service/ VRS:

Phone number:

My assistance animal

Name:

Species:

Do not pet, feed, or play with my assistance animal. It is working and is trained to support me.

Personal Emergency Plan

3 How can you support me?

Include any relevant information, including how others can communicate with you, guide or assist you safely, support you during an evacuation, meet any medical or support needs, and help you stay calm and safe during an emergency.

4 Where do I live and how do I get out of the building?

My address:

Where I keep my emergency plan:

How I can get out of my home safely:

What to do if the main way out is blocked:

5 Where to meet in an emergency?

Meeting place 1: Close to home

Name of place:

Location:

Instructions:

Personal Emergency Plan

Meeting place 2: Far from home

Name of place: _____ Location: _____

Instructions:

6 How to get information?

How we will share news with each other in case normal channels (internet, TV, etc.) do not work.

Be careful: some news on the internet is not true. If you are not sure if something is true, do not share it.

7 Who can support me?

Person 1 lives close to me. Contact when: There is an emergency. Someone needs to come for me fast.

Name of place: _____ Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Address: _____

Personal Emergency Plan

Person 2 lives far from me. Contact when: You cannot reach person 1. Or I need a safe place to stay away from my area.

Name of place: _____ Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Address: _____

Person 3 knows me well. Contact when: You want to know what I need and how to support me.

Name of place: _____ Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Address: _____

Personal Emergency Plan

8 Important phone numbers

Emergency number: 112

Family doctor:

Specialist doctor:

Vet for my assistance animal:

Sign language interpreter:

Insurance:

Work:

School / Childcare:

Other contacts

Name:

Phone number:

Communication preference:

☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Name:

Phone number:

Communication preference:

☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Name:

Phone number:

Communication preference:

☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

9 Important agreements with my support network

Think about various situations where you might either require or offer support (how to receive alerts, exit a building, communicate, share support and supplies, etc.).

Personal Emergency Plan

This plan was last updated on: _____

After you fill in this plan: Talk about it with your family and support network. Give a copy to each member of your support network. Check and update the plan every year or when anything changes.

Communication cards

Print the cards that fit your situation. You can carry more than one card if you have more than one functional requirement and various support needs. Laminate them or protect them by placing them in clear plastic sleeves or waterproof pouches, and keep them in your wallet and emergency backpack. You can also attach them to a lanyard to wear around your neck when you go out.

Show the cards to first responders or anyone who wants to help you. They help others understand your needs and communicate with you efficiently and respectfully when you cannot communicate on your own.

Card 1**I require visual and orientation support**

I can speak and hear you. Explain what is happening and help me orient myself to my surroundings.

My name: _____

1. Speak directly to me. Tell me your name, role, and what you are going to do before you act.
2. Describe directions and obstacles clearly. Do not say “over there” or “that way”.
3. Ask how I prefer to be guided. Offer your elbow if needed. Do not grab, push, or pull me.
4. Keep my white cane, assistance animal, phone, and other assistive devices with me at all times.
5. If I am moved, describe the new space and never leave without telling me what happens next or who will assist me.

Assistance animal name: _____

Support person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Other support needs: _____

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Card 2

I require hearing and information support

I cannot hear you properly or at all. Speak directly to me using my preferred communication method. Explain what you are doing before you do it and confirm important information before acting.

My name: _____

1. Face me directly. Do not turn your back on me without notice.
2. Keep your face visible and well-lit. Do not cover your mouth.
3. Use facial expressions, natural gestures, pointing, showing, pointing, pictograms, writing, and visual information. These are all valid ways to communicate.
 - **If I use sign language:** Contact a qualified sign language interpreter or video relay service before important decisions are made. While waiting, use writing, gesture, pictograms, or other communication methods I can access.
 - **If I lip-read:** Keep your face visible, well-lit, and uncovered. Do not shout or exaggerate mouth movements. Speak at a normal pace. Confirm understanding and repeat or rephrase if needed.
 - **If I prefer writing:** Use a phone, tablet, whiteboard, or paper. Keep sentences short and simple. Ask one question at a time. Use pictograms or visual aids if helpful. Give me enough time to read and respond.

I communicate using:

☐ Sign language ☐ Lip-reading ☐ Writing

☐ Other: _____

National Sign Language: _____

Sign Language Interpreting Service: _____

Support person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

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Card 3

I require speech and communication support

I can understand you. Ask how I prefer to communicate. Please be patient and use my preferred communication method.

My name: _____

1. Give me time to respond. Do not interrupt or finish my sentences.
2. Speak clearly and ask one question at a time. If needed, use yes/ no questions or offer a small number of clear options.
3. Never pretend to have understood. Ask again, repeat or rephrase as needed. Explain what you are going to do and confirm important information before acting.
4. Do not remove, switch off, or separate me from my communication device, such as my phone, whiteboard, pictograms or other communication aids.
5. If I cannot communicate at all right now, contact my support person and check my Personal Emergency Card or Plan for additional information.

I communicate using:

- ☐ Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device
- ☐ Writing ☐ Pictograms ☐ Sign language
- ☐ Other: _____

Support person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Other support needs: _____

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Card 4

I require psychosocial support

I may feel overwhelmed, anxious, distressed, confused, or disoriented during an emergency. Please stay calm and speak respectfully.

My name: _____

My address: _____

1. Speak calmly and at a normal pace. Not too fast, not too slow. Use short, simple sentences and repeat information as needed.
2. Give me time to understand and respond. Do not overwhelm me with information or too many choices at once.
3. Explain what is happening, what you are doing, and what will happen next.
4. Do not argue with me, correct me, or dismiss my experience. Redirect gently if I am distressed.
5. Do not leave me alone. I may get lost. Contact my support person as soon as possible.

How to calm me down in a crisis:

Support person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Co-occurring conditions: _____

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Card 5**I require sensory and self-regulation support**

I may have a meltdown or shutdown when overwhelmed. Turn off sirens and bright lights, be predictable and avoid crowds.

My name: _____

1. Communicate calmly and clearly using my preferred communication method. Give me one instruction at a time and confirm understanding.
2. Ask how I prefer to communicate and use that method. Writing, gestures, pictograms, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), pointing, and speech are all valid.
3. Explain what you will do before you do it. Do not make promises you cannot keep and tell me if plans change.
4. Allow me to use self-calming behaviors, such as rocking, flapping, fidgeting, or stimming, unless there is an immediate safety risk.
5. Do not leave me alone. I may get lost.

I communicate using:

- ☐ Speech
- ☐ Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device
- ☐ Pictograms ☐ Gestures
- ☐ Other: _____

Comfort object or calming support: _____

What triggers strong reactions: _____

Support person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Confidential · You can find my Personal Emergency Card in my wallet or purse, and my Personal Emergency Plan in my emergency backpack, in a hallway drawer near the front door, or on the fridge.

Card 6**I require cognitive processing support**

Please use simple language and give me time to understand and respond. Treat me respectfully, like you would any adult.

My name: _____

1. Speak directly to me. Introduce yourself, explain why you are here, and tell me what will happen next.
2. Use simple words and short sentences. Give me one piece of information or one instruction at a time.
3. Always check understanding. Do not assume I understand because I am nodding. Check by asking differently. Ask closed questions, with yes/no answers.
4. Offer choices, rather than commands. Explain your actions before you do them and involve my support person if I wish.
5. If possible, use cards with pictograms or illustrations to help me understand what you are trying to communicate.
6. Do not leave me alone. I may get lost.

Support person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Any other information: _____

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Card 7**I require medical and life-sustaining support**

I rely on medication, medical equipment, assistive technologies, or ongoing treatment to maintain my health and safety.

My name: _____

- 1.** Keep my medication, medical equipment, assistive devices, and portable back-up supplies with me at all times.
- 2.** Never disconnect, switch off, or move my medical or assistive devices unless you understand how they work or have received appropriate instructions.
- 3.** Ask me what I need to maintain my health and safety, including any treatment, medication, power supply, or support requirements
- 4.** If I have to evacuate or be transferred, help ensure continuity of care and communicate my support and treatment requirements to the receiving service or facility.
- 5.** Contact my specialist, treatment facility or support person, as soon as possible if additional information or support is required

Card 7**I require medical and life-sustaining support**

I rely on medication, medical equipment, assistive technologies, or ongoing treatment to maintain my health and safety.

My medical diagnosis:

Other support needs:

My attending doctor:

Phone number:

My treatment facility:

Phone number:

My medication (name, dose, frequency):

Medication requires refrigeration: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Instructions if my medication is unavailable:

My equipment or assistive devices:

Requires electricity: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Backup power available: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Support person's name:

Phone number:

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Confidential · You can find my Personal Emergency Card in my wallet or purse, and my Personal Emergency Plan in my emergency backpack, in a hallway drawer near the front door, or on the fridge.

Card 8**I require mobility and physical support**

I rely on medication, medical equipment, assistive technologies, or ongoing treatment to maintain my health and safety.

My name: _____

1. Ask how I prefer to be assisted and what I can do independently. Do not assume I need help.
2. Never disconnect, switch off, or move my medical or assistive devices unless you understand how they work or have received appropriate instructions.
3. Always ask before touching, moving, or transferring me, my wheelchair, or other mobility device.
4. If evacuation is needed, identify accessible routes and the equipment required to move me safely. Do not use stairs or transfer me unless it is safe and necessary.
5. Consider any medical equipment, power supply, or accessibility requirements that may affect my evacuation, transfer, or shelter arrangements.

I use:

- ☐ Manual wheelchair ☐ Powered wheelchair ☐ Walker ☐ Cane
- ☐ Crutches ☐ Prosthesis ☐ Mobility scooter
- ☐ Other: _____

Requires electricity: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Backup power available: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Instructions if my assistive device is lost or damaged:

Other support needs: _____

Support person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Confidential · You can find my Personal Emergency Card in my wallet or purse, and my Personal Emergency Plan in my emergency backpack, in a hallway drawer near the front door, or on the fridge.

Card 9

I am a child with a disability

This card was prepared by my parent or support person. If you have found this card, I may be separated from them and be frightened.

My name: _____

Date of birth: _____

My address: _____

1. Please do not leave me alone. Stay with me until you reach my parent or support person.
1. Communicate with me calmly and simply, using short sentences, gestures, and visual cues.
1. Find my emergency card or plan. They must be in my backpack.

My assistive requirements: _____

Other support needs: _____

How to communicate with me: _____

Parent's or guardian's name 1: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Parent's or guardian's name 1: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Support person's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Communication preference: ☐ Audio call ☐ SMS ☐ Video call

Confidential · You can find my Personal Emergency Card in my wallet or purse, and my Personal Emergency Plan in my emergency backpack, in a hallway drawer near the front door, or on the fridge.

Checklist for your emergency backpack

Adapted emergency backpack checklist

Your emergency backpack contains everything you need for at least 72 hours, that is 3 days.

How to use this checklist: Start with core Items, which apply to everyone. Then follow the sections that match your functional requirements. Check your backpack every six months, replace anything that has expired, and update it when your situation changes.

Part 1: Core items for everyone

Category	Items to pack
Water and food	☐ Water ☐ Non-perishable food for 72 hours ☐ Adaptive hand-operated tin opener
Warmth and clothing	☐ Warm blanket, emergency survival blanket, or sleeping bag ☐ Rechargeable or battery-powered fan and towel ☐ One change of seasonal clothing, waterproof jacket, and shoes ☐ Warm socks, hat, and gloves
Hygiene	☐ Wet wipes and hand sanitizer ☐ Toothbrush and toothpaste ☐ Toilet paper ☐ Diapers, continence pads and menstrual products ☐ Waste bags

Adapted emergency backpack checklist

Medicine and first aid	☐ Medication and prescriptions in a waterproof bag ☐ First aid kit
Communication and light	☐ Battery or solar-powered radio ☐ Fully charged power bank and car charger ☐ Torch with spare batteries or rechargeable LED headlamp ☐ Pen and paper or whiteboard with erasable marker ☐ Whistle and flashlight for signaling
Documents and cash	☐ Photo ID and copies in a waterproof bag ☐ Personal Emergency Plan ☐ Cash in small notes ☐ Spare keys to your home ☐ Printed list of key contacts and services, including interpreting, video relay, mobility, assistive device repair, medication, and home care services
Practical	☐ Matches in a waterproof box ☐ Dust mask
My own additions	☐ ☐ ☐

Adapted emergency backpack checklist

Part 2: Adaptations for your requirements

If you require...	Additional items to pack
Communication support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spare hearing aid, cochlear implant batteries, and charging equipment ● Assistive communication devices such as pictograms, whiteboard with erasable marker, or tactile and haptic tools depending on your needs ● Communication card stating your requirements, including interpreter or VRI/VRS contact ● Identification wristband ● Backup phone and charger
Vision or orientation support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spare white cane ● Spare glasses or contact lenses and supplies ● Powerful wide-beam torch or flashlight ● Labels or tactile markers for key items in the bag ● List of bag contents in Braille ● Backup phone and charger
Mobility and physical access support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wheelchair tire repair kit including pump, work gloves, and extra cushions ● Backup wheelchair batteries and charger ● Catheter, incontinence, or other personal care supplies ● Written instructions for how to be moved safely and respectfully

<p>Health and medical support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prescriptions and medication reserves in a waterproof bag ● Ice packs for medication requiring refrigeration ● Chargers, power banks, and spare batteries for medical devices ● Portable reserves of medical supplies such as catheters and shunts ● Medical information including doctor's and treatment facility's contacts
<p>Psychosocial support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prescriptions and medication reserves in a waterproof bag ● Instructions for how to get help and calm down during a crisis
<p>Sensory or cognitive support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comfort and calming items such as weighted blanket, sensory toys, noise-cancelling headphones, or ear plugs ● Communication cards, pictograms, writing boards, and other augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices ● Instructions for how to get help and calm down during a crisis
<p>Decision-making support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communication card, pictograms, writing boards, and other augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices ● Instructions for how to be supported in taking decisions
<p>Guide or assistance animal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food, water, and feeding bowl ● Collar, lead, and ID tag ● Animal passport and certification papers ● Medication, as prescribed by the vet, when applicable ● Blanket or familiar comfort item ● Waste bags
<p>Last reviewed on:</p>	

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