



How to stay safe in an emergency

A guide for people with disabilities,
their families and support persons

Easy-to-read version



CONTENTS

Who we are.....	3
What this booklet is about	4
How to get ready before an emergency	6
Get to know the first responders	6
Make your emergency plan.....	8
Make your home ready	9
Prepare your emergency backpack.....	11
Make your evacuation plan	12
Prepare your support network.....	13
Know the risks in your area.....	14
Prepare your way to safety	14
Be prepared at work.....	15
Be prepared at school.....	16
Be prepared when you are traveling	16
What to do in an emergency	17
How to communicate with a first responder.....	17
What to do when you arrive at a shelter	18
How to not get bored or stressed	19
What to do after an emergency.....	20
Dealing with hard feelings	20
Getting your life back together	21
How support persons can help.....	23
Extra tools for you	24
Explanation of difficult words	25

WHO WE ARE

We are 3 organizations who decided to work together to help countries face disasters.

These organizations are:

- **The European Commission**

This is the office that suggests laws and runs the day-to-day work for the **European Union**.



- **The World Bank**

This is a big world organization that gives money and other support to poorer countries to help make life better for people.



- **The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery**

This is an organization that helps poorer countries to prepare for disaster and recover after they happen.



Together, we made a group that is called 'TAFF'.

TAFF stands for 'Technical Assistance Financing Facility for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness'.

This is the symbol of our group:



As a group, we work together to help countries:

- Prepare for disasters and risks;
- Share ideas and learn from each other.



WHAT THIS BOOKLET IS ABOUT

We made a guide to help people with disabilities prepare for emergencies.

Emergencies are serious situations that happen suddenly and put people's lives at risk.

For example:

- **Floods**

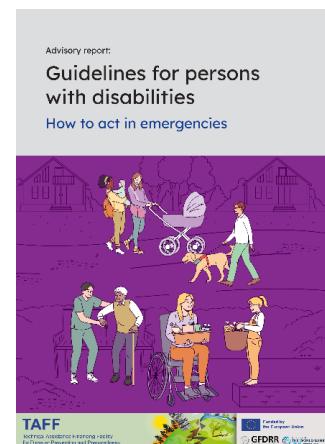
When too much water cover houses and roads.

- **Fires**

When a fire spreads and puts people's lives and homes at risk.

- **Extreme weather**

Very hot weather or long periods without rain.



Today, these dangerous situations happen in Europe much more than in the past.

So countries in Europe must be ready to protect people from these dangers and keep everyone safe.

In emergencies, people with disabilities are at higher risk than other people.

This is why we made a guide to help people with disabilities be ready in case an emergency happens.

Our guide is a long document

This is a shorter and simpler version of the guide.

In the next few pages, you will learn more about:

- How to get ready before an emergency;
- What to do in an emergency;
- What to do after an emergency.

Some difficult words in the text are written in **bold black letters**. You can find out what they mean at the end of this booklet.



HOW TO GET READY BEFORE AN EMERGENCY

Get to know the first responders

First responders are people who are trained to help you in an emergency.

It is important to know who these people are, how they look and how they can help you.

These are first responders you may meet in an emergency:

- **112 operators**

They are the people who answer when you call 112 to ask for help.

112 is the number that everyone in the **European Union** can call in an emergency.

112 operators will ask you questions and decide which service to send for help.

For example, the police, an ambulance, or firefighters.



- **Firefighters**

They are the people who come for the rescue in fires, road accidents, floods and other emergencies.

They can also help you if cannot leave a building on their own.



- **Mountain rescuers**

They are trained to find people who are lost, hurt, or in danger in mountains, forests or other difficult places to reach.



- **Police officers**

They help you leave unsafe places, control traffic, and look for missing people.



- **Medical emergency personnel**

They work in ambulances and hospitals to help you if you are sick or injured.



- **Social workers**

They are trained to help people when they have problems or need support. In an emergency, social workers can help you find a safe place to stay, contact your family and get the medicine and support you need.



You can look for photos and videos of these people online.

If you are part of a group of people with disabilities, you can also ask your local first responders to meet you and explain what they do.

Make your emergency plan

An emergency plan is a document with important information about you and your needs during an emergency.

Among other information, it says:

- Who you are;
- What your disability is;
- Where you will go;
- Who will help you;

if something bad happens.

You can fill it in alone
or together with someone you trust.

Keep your emergency plan
where you can easily find it.
For example, on your fridge
or in a drawer by the front door.

Check your plan every year to see
if any information has changed.



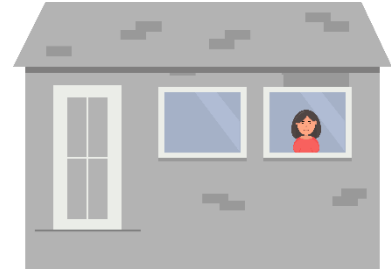
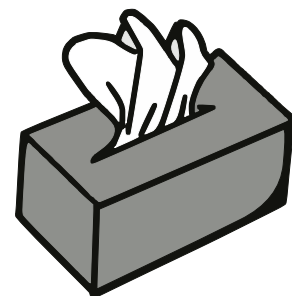
Make your home ready

In an emergency,
you may not be able to leave your home
for some days.

So always have the things you need
for at least 3 days.

Think of:

- Food that does not go bad easily.
Like food in cans.
- Water for drinking and cooking.
At least 3 liters per day.
- Blankets and warm clothes
in case electricity is out.
- Wet wipes, garbage bags, buckets
and other things to keep your toilet clean
in case the water is out.
- Extra medicine for at least 3 days.
- Spare **assistive devices** and batteries.



- Around 100-euro cash in small bills and important documents, like copies of your ID card, **emergency plan** and bank papers.
Keep them in a plastic case somewhere you can get them easily.
Like on the fridge
or in a drawer by your front door.



- Radio that works with batteries
This way, you will be able to listen to the news even if there is no electricity.
- A whistle
so people know where to find you, if needed.



If you live in a block of flats,
check that your building has an emergency plan.
Make sure this plan takes your needs
into account too.



If you live in a care home
with other people with disabilities,
ask the staff to practice what to do in case of an emergency.
They have a duty to help you and keep you safe.

Prepare your emergency backpack

When an emergency happens,
you may need to leave your home
and go somewhere safer.

This can be a friend's house or a **shelter**.

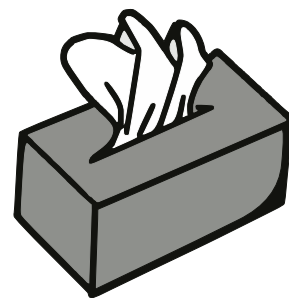
You may not be able to return home for a while.

This is why you should have
an emergency backpack ready at all times.

This is a bag with all the thing you will need
for at least 3 days.

Among other things,
your emergency backpack should have:

- Important documents
like your ID card, **emergency plan**
and prescriptions.
- Enough food and water for 3 days.
- Clothes and things to keep you warm
like blankets and gloves.
- Things to help you keep clean,
like wet wipes, toothbrush, toothpaste
and toilet paper.
- Radio and torches that work with batteries.
- Pen and paper.



- Medicine and other things you need in case you get hurt or sick.

You do not have to buy all these things at once.

You can do it step by step over time.

Remember to keep your emergency backpack where you can get it easily and fast.



Make your evacuation plan

When an emergency happens, you may need to leave your home and go somewhere safer. This can be a friend's house or a **shelter**.

This is called 'evacuation'.

To be prepared for an evacuation, you should make an evacuation plan.

Among other information, this plan should say:



- What types of alerts there are where you live and what will happen in case you cannot get these alerts.



- Who will help you evacuate if you cannot do it alone. This can be a friend, neighbor, colleague or another person you trust.

- Different ways to get out of your building.



- What the nearest **shelters** are.



You can fill it in alone
or together with someone you trust.

Keep your evacuation plan
where you can easily find it.
For example, on your fridge or in a drawer
by the front door.



Check your plan every year to see
if any information has changed.

Prepare your support network

Your support network is people you know
and they have agreed to help you
in an emergency.

Your support network should have
at least 3 people:



1

A person who knows you well
and knows how to help you.

2

A person who lives very close to you
and can come fast to help you in an emergency.

3

A person who lives far away
and can take you to their home if needed.

You can also help other people in an emergency.
For example, a neighbor or a friend.

Know the risks in your area

Different places in Europe may be at risk of different types of emergencies.

For example, some areas are at higher risk of floods and others of extreme heat and fires.

You should know the risks in the area you live and take the alerts seriously.

You can use warning apps and sign up for alerts.

If you are part of a group of people with disabilities, you can ask them to help you understand these alerts.



Prepare your way to safety

If an emergency happens, it may be harder than usual to move around and find **shelter**.

Your normal routes may be blocked.

This is why you should prepare in advance:

- Check different routes to go to a safe place. This way, if one of these routes is blocked, you can take the other. Learn these routes well.
- Download on your phone maps that work without internet. Or keep a paper map at home and learn how to use it.



- Check the nearest **shelters**.
Time how long it takes you to go there.
- If you have a car,
make sure it always has enough petrol.



Be prepared at work

You have the right to be safe at work:

- Tell your workplace what help you need in an emergency;
- Check for different ways to leave the building safely;
- Choose a colleague who can help you leave the building in an emergency;
- Test that alarms work for you.
- Practice what to do if there is an emergency.



Be prepared at school

Everyone has the right to feel safe at school:

- Tell your teacher what help you need in an emergency;
- Make an **emergency plan** with your teacher and family;
- Choose a friend who can help you in an emergency;
- Practice how to leave the school safely in case of an emergency.

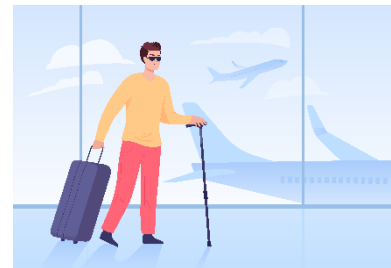


Be prepared when you are traveling

You have the right to travel and explore the world like everyone else.

But before you go:

- Check how to get help in an emergency;
- Tell your hotel and transport staff what support you need;
- Pack extra medicine and important information;
- Make sure the person you travel with knows how to help you if something goes wrong.



WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

These are 5 steps you can follow in any emergency:

- 1 Stay calm**
Take a breath and check what is happening around you.
- 2 Protect yourself**
For example, move away from windows, cover your head or get down.
- 3 Go to a safe place**
If you are not safe at home, take your emergency backpack with your important things and go to a safe place.
This can be a friend's house or a **shelter**.
- 4 Ask for help**
Call 112 and tell them where you are, what is happening and what help you need.
- 5 Follow the news**
If there is no electricity, use a radio with batteries to get information about what is happening and what to do.
Do not trust information from people you do not know on social media or information that tries to make you panic.

How to communicate with a first responder

If a **first responder** comes to help you, make sure they are who they say.

Ask them to show you their badge.

This is a card with their name and job.



If you are not sure, call 112 to check that these people are sent to help you.

Once you know they are who they say,
it is your turn to tell them about you.
For example:

- What is your name?
- What help do you need?
- Do you use any **assistive devices**?

You have the right to ask to communicate
in the way that works for you.
For example, you can ask
for a sign language interpreter.



What to do when you arrive at a shelter

A shelter is a safe place where you can stay
during or after an emergency
if your home is not safe.

When you arrive at a shelter:

- Tell the staff your name
and give them information
about your disability and the support you need.
- Get familiar with the space of the shelter.
Find where the toilets and exits are.
- If the shelter cannot support your needs,
ask to move to another shelter, if possible.



- Ask the staff to help you contact your family, friends or other people you trust.
- Stay close to people you know and trust.
- Keep your daily routine the same as much as you can.
- Tell the staff right away if you feel unsafe or unwell.

How to not get bored or stressed

In an emergency, you may have to spend much time at home or in a **shelter** away from home.

These are some ideas that could help you stay calm and pass the time:

- Read or listen to books;
- Play card games;
- Do sports;
- Draw, knit or do other things you like;
- Spend time with your family and friends.



WHAT TO DO AFTER AN EMERGENCY

Dealing with hard feelings

After an emergency,
you may feel lonely, scared or angry.

You may have trouble sleeping
and feeling happy or close to other people.

This is normal.

It does not mean you are weak.

Feeling better after an emergency takes time.

These are some things you can do to feel better:

- Let yourself feel these feelings.
Say "I feel angry", "I feel sad", "I feel scared".
Do not be hard on yourself
for feeling this way.
- Do small things that make you feel good
like taking a walk.
- Try to rest, eat, drink water
and go outside every day.
- Share your feelings and thoughts
with people you trust.
Ask for help when you need it.
Help other people too.



If you still feel sad or worried after a while, you can ask a professional for help.

Every country in Europe has helplines you can call and ask for support in the way that works best for you. For example, in simple language.



Getting your life back together

Getting your life back together after an emergency can take time.

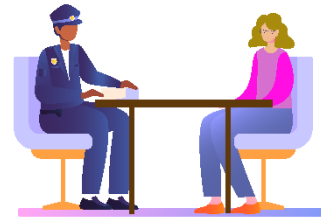
Many things you had may now be lost or damaged.

Step by step, you can go back to normal:

- Get the medicine and **assistive devices** back. Ask doctors and support persons to help you replace them as fast as possible.
- If you lost your **assistance animal**, ask emergency staff to help you find it. Ask for support while you are without your animal.
- Take photos of any damages in your home caused by the emergency.
- Check if you can get money to fix those damages.



- Start saving money to feel safe again.
- Contact your city hall or police to get back any documents you lost.
- Go back to your activities and routine.
- Reach out to organizations of people with disabilities. Tell them about your situation and ask for advice and support.



HOW SUPPORT PERSONS CAN HELP



This part is for families, friends, neighbors, colleagues, teachers and support persons.

If you help a person with disabilities prepare for emergencies, this part is for you!

It shows you where to start, and it helps you understand your role and know what to do in an emergency.

Depending on the role you have in the person's life, you can help the person to:



Make their own decisions.



Make their '**personal emergency plan**'.



Make their '**personal evacuation plan**'.



Prepare their emergency backpack and plan how to leave a building safely;



Prepare the place where the person spends most of their time;



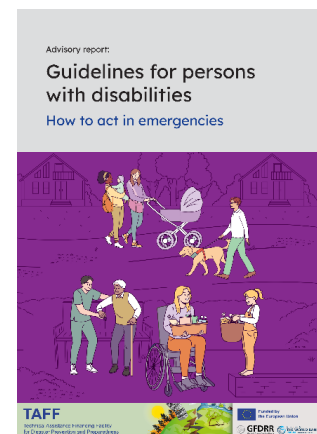
Check that alarms work for them and practice what to do in an emergency.

Remember to always work together,
listen to the person's needs and respect their choices.

EXTRA TOOLS FOR YOU

Download and fill in these forms
together with your support persons:

- Template for an **emergency plan**
- Template for an **evacuation plan**



For more information, check our full guide.

EXPLANATION OF DIFFICULT WORDS

Assistance animals

Assistance animals are specially trained animals that help people with disabilities and other people in their daily lives.

For example, a guide dog that helps a blind person to find their way.

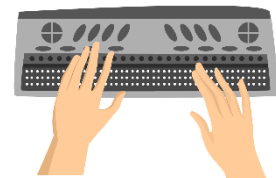


Assistive devices

Assistive devices are things that that can help people with disabilities and other people do things that would be hard or impossible otherwise.

For example:

- Wheelchairs that people who cannot walk use to get about.
- Hearing aids that people who do not hear well use to hear better.
- Braille keyboards that blind people use to type.



European Union

The European Union is a group of 27 countries in Europe.
These countries work together to make things better for their people.



First responders

First responders are people who are trained to help you in an emergency.

For example, police officers and firefighters.



Personal emergency plan

A personal emergency plan is a plan that explains how a person can stay safe during an emergency.

It can say what help the person needs, how they communicate, and who to contact.



Personal evacuation plan

A personal evacuation plan helps a person plan how to leave their home safely during an emergency.

It says who can help the person and how to reach the nearest shelters.



Shelter

A shelter is a safe place where you can stay during or after an emergency if your home is not safe.

It could be a friend's house, a school, a sports hall or a special building where people can stay until it is safe to go home.



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