

# Disaster Preparedness for People Who Have Limited Speech: Taking Responsibility for Your Safety

*Are you prepared for an emergency? Are the people you care about ready?  
Is your "go bag" packed? Do you always carry a paper communication display with you?*

Disasters happen everywhere. Sometimes there is a warning, but not always. Types of disasters include floods, tornados, tsunamis, earthquakes, extreme temperatures, chemical leaks, terrorist attacks on people, contamination of the water supply and so on.

*In emergency/disaster situations, there are no guarantees. BE PREPARED!*

YES	NO	Check List for People with Limited Speech and Those Who Care About Them
		1. Do you have a support team? Does everyone know what to do?
		2. Do you have an evacuation plan in case you need to leave home or work in an emergency situation? Do you know: (a) Where you will go? (b) How you will get there? (c) Who will transport you/come with you? (d) What you will take with you? (e) What your rights are in a shelter?
		3. Is your "Go Bag" packed?
		4. Do you have paper (laminated) communication display(s) with you <u>at all times</u> ? Do your displays include vocabulary for emergencies? Do you have written instructions about how to communicate with you with you <u>at all times</u> ?
		5. Do you always carry a copy of your health information in a water proof bag in case of an emergency? Insurance card? Prescriptions? Other critical medical information?
		6. Are you prepared to remain at home or work during an emergency? Do you have enough water and food stored for 7 days? A radio with extra batteries? Flashlights with extra batteries? Medical supplies? Enough of your own medicines for 7 days? A way to communicate? A way to call for help.
		7. If you think, "Never mind....this won't ever happen to me?" THINK AGAIN. Emergencies can (and do) happen to anyone. Be PREPARED, <u>not</u> sorry.

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## 1. Do you have a support team? Does everyone know what to do?

**EVERYONE** needs a support team. Most rescues are done by friends and neighbors. Your chances of getting the help you need may depend on your support team.

- a. Train as many people as you can (at least three). Each team member needs to know how to help.
- b. Put the plan in writing and practice with your team. Update your plan quarterly.
- c. Include information about how you will be evacuated, sheltered and how you will communicate in your plan.
- d. Prepare Your Go Bags so you will have all necessary items available.
- e. ALWAYS HAVE A BACKUP PLAN. Not everyone may be able to get to you.
- f. If you cannot take advantage of TV, radio alerts because of hearing or vision problems, plan how you will be alerted.

Resources: Go to [http://www.cdihp.org/products.html#evac\\_guide](http://www.cdihp.org/products.html#evac_guide) to access the [Emergency Evacuation Preparedness Guide](#). Accessed on 7/15/08.

## 2. Do you have an evacuation plan in case you need to leave home or work in an emergency situation? Do you know: (a) Where you will go? (b) How you will get there? (c) Who will transport you/come with you? (d) What you will take with you? (e) What your rights are in a shelter?

**You need to make arrangements in advance. First, identify your support team (see #1 above). They need to be informed and updated quarterly.**

- a. Put your plans in writing. Make sure each member of your support team has a copy.
- b. Do not assume you will have electric power. Plan accordingly.
- c. Practice the plan. Do a trial run of evacuation procedures to work out the quirks. Then practice regularly.
- d. You have the right to bring a service animal, your communication tools and accessories (switches, battery pack, mount) with you. You also have the right to bring someone who understands your communication/basic needs with you if you are evacuated.
- e. Plan for elevators being 'out' if you live/work in a multi story building

Resources: Go to [http://www.cdihp.org/products.html#evac\\_guide](http://www.cdihp.org/products.html#evac_guide) to access the [Emergency Evacuation Preparedness Guide](#). Accessed on 7/15/08.

## 3. Is your "Go Bag" packed?

**You need to have a "Go Bag" packed and located where you can get it quickly in case you need to leave your home/workplace. Note: You may need more than one "Go Bag."**

- a. You will NOT have time to "throw things together" or quickly access everything you will need in an emergency. You MUST prepare in advance.

- b. Don't forget to include specific equipment, such as feeding equipment, batteries, switches, chargers, a laminated communication display so you can access pertinent vocabulary.
- c. Make sure you label all items because things get lost easily in shelters.
- d. Consider making a small manual with photos to provide instructions about how you need to be lifted and seated, how you sleep and eat. Be sure to include information about how you communicate, how to maintain your equipment, etc.

**GO BAGS**

*"I keep a Go-Bag in a closet near an exit. It includes a change of clothes, copies of my paper communication displays, medication, medical supplies, food and dog food in sealable, watertight containers."*

*Pamela Kennedy, AAC-RERC Writers Brigade*



Resources: "Google" Go Bags. For example, <http://www.redcrossstore.org/shopper/ProdList.aspx>  
 Accessed on 7/15/08.

**4. Do you have paper (laminated) communication display(s) with you at all times? Do your displays include vocabulary for emergencies? Do you have written instructions about how to communicate with you at all times?**

**Communication is an important key to survival, safety and well-being during any emergency. Do not take chances.**

- a. ALWAYS have a laminated paper communication display with you. Include key vocabulary items (e.g., ways to ask questions, express basic needs, pain, medication, emotions, etc).
- b. If possible, make sure someone who understands how you communicate stays with you.
- c. If you use an electronic speech generating device, take it with you if possible. However, be aware that shelters may or may not have electricity.
- d. Don't forget to take other accessories with you (e.g., batteries, charger, switches, mounts, software, etc.).

	A	B	C	H	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
L	si yes	beber drink	cuándo when	dónde where	doctor doctor	enfermera nurse	no no																				0
o	frío cold	dolor pain	picon itch																								1
g	calor hot	dolor de cabeza headache	mareado dizzy																								2
o	Fiebre temperature	problemas de corazón heart problem	ahogar choke																								3
	baño bathroom	bañina bedpan	botella urinal	compresas sanitary napkins	pañal diaper	cepillar los dientes brush teeth	lavar wash																				4
																											5
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Resources: Appendix A has some examples. [Please consider sharing your personal displays.]

## 5. Do you always carry a copy of your health information in a water proof bag in case of an emergency? Insurance card? Prescriptions? Other critical medical information?

In a waterproof bag/container, you need copies of your important medical information, insurance cards, accommodation requirements, emergency contacts, doctor's names, instructions for activities of daily living, allergies, inhalers and medications

- a. Make multiple copies of your emergency health information to keep at work, in your wallet, wheelchair pack, or purse with your primary identification card.
- b. Put a copy in your Go-Bags.
- c. Review and update this information whenever your medications or other information changes, but no less than twice a year.

Resources: See Appendix B for Emergency Health Information Form you can fill out and keep with you.

## 6. Are you prepared to remain at home or work during an emergency? Do you have enough water and food stored for 7 days? A radio with extra batteries? Flashlights with extra batteries? Medical supplies? Enough of your own medicines for 7 days? A way to communicate? A way to call for help?

If you plan to stay at home/work, plan for the likelihood that telephones, power and transportation services may not function. Make sure you have enough food and water for at least seven days and that someone will periodically check on you.

## 7. If you think, "Never mind....this won't ever happen to me?" THINK AGAIN. Emergencies can (and do) happen to anyone. Be PREPARED, not sorry.

The best preparation for most emergencies and all disasters is advance planning. For people with disabilities and activity limitations, it is absolutely essential to have a plan in place that includes, at the very least, a support team, 'go bags', and communication tools.

# Appendix A. Examples of Personal Communication Displays

1. From Pam Kennedy: These displays were developed and used during a flood by a young man who was evacuated to a shelter.

I/me/my	you/your	dog	soldier	family	friend	man/he	woman/she	mom	dad
home	present	happy	done	eat	drink	go	hi/bye	arm	loud
want	past	sad	move	sandwich	soda	question	thank you	hand	help
don't	future	angry	chair	soup	water	front	on	head	stink
toilet	hurt	afraid	bed	bread	back	down	off	stomach	yuck
good	wrong	bad	pillow	more	inside	up	sick	foot	very
yes	wait	no	blanket	flood	outside	okay	medicine	leg	next page

I/me/my	you/your	dog	soldier	family	friend	man/he	woman/she	mom	dad
home	present	happy	who	book	TV	hi	bye		
want	past	sad	what	paper	music	please	thank you	you're welcome	
don't	future	angry	where	pen	movie	dislike	okay		
toilet	hurt	afraid	when	computer	like	call			
good	wrong	bad	why	read	write				
yes	wait	no	how	flood	outside	tired			next page

2. From Pam Kennedy: Pam Kennedy developed and used these displays during a flood when she was evacuated to a shelter with her service animal/dog Jessie. She always carries them with her

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Hi	Bye	How are you?
H	I	J	K	L	M	N	Sorry!	Wait.	please
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	Thank you!	You're welcome	listen
V	W	X	Y	Z	Space	.	blanket	pillow	computer
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	paper	pen	a drink
7	8	9	Jessie	I, me, my	you, your	he, him, his	oops!	OK	soup
yes	no	know	don't know	want, need	help	bathroom	seizure	?	I can't swallow that.

I'm Pam Kennedy.	I can't speak but can understand you.	They're looking for a place for me.	Jessie needs to go out.	Jessie is out of food.	Are access roads still flooded?	Any new updates?	did	and	backside
Please ask questions when you need to.	I have family in Bismarck.	I don't know how much I lost yet.	Jessie needs water.	My chair needs to be charged.	Any refugees found homes since I was on?	hurt, hurts	shoulder	chest	thigh
I have cerebral palsy and epilepsy.	My vital info is on my PC. I'll get it.	The basement was flooded.	Jess is confused, stressed out.	Has anyone else been found?	Has anyone called regarding my status?	head	arm	ribs	knee
I, my	need	wrist splints	am/feel	nauseous	dizzy	eyes	wrist	stomach	shin
pen	morning meds	pain meds	like	pain meds	swelling	ear	hand	back	ankle
paper	evening meds	inhaler	seizure	headache	double vision	nose	finger	waist	foot
yes	no	OK	Oops!	Wait.	computer	mouth	left	right	bad, badly

## APPENDIX B.

Sample Emergency Health Information					
Kailes, J.I. (2004) <i>Emergency Evacuation Preparedness: Taking Responsibility For Your Safety: A Guide For People with Disabilities and Other Activity Limitations</i> , p.40. <a href="http://www.cdihp.org/evacuation/att_b.html#ehi_form">http://www.cdihp.org/evacuation/att_b.html#ehi_form</a> Accessed on 7/15/08					
<b>Emergency Health Information</b>	<b>Date:</b>			<b>Updated:</b>	
<b>Name</b>					
<b>Address</b>					
<b>City</b>				<b>State</b>	<b>Zip</b>
<b>CONTACT METHOD</b>		<b>HOME</b>		<b>WORK</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>					
<b>Cell:</b>					
<b>Fax:</b>					
<b>E-mail:</b>					
<b>Birth Date</b>		<b>Blood Type</b>		<b>Social Security No.</b>	
<b>Health Plan:</b>		<b>Individual #:</b>		<b>Group #:</b>	
<b>Emergency Contact:</b>					
<b>Address</b>					
<b>City</b>				<b>State</b>	<b>Zip</b>
<b>CONTACT METHOD</b>		<b>HOME</b>		<b>WORK</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>					
<b>Cell:</b>					
<b>Fax:</b>					
<b>E-mail:</b>					
<b>Primary Care Provider:</b>					
<b>Address</b>					

<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Zip</b>
<b>Phone</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>E-mail</b>
<b>Disability / Conditions:</b>		
<b>Medication:</b>		
<b>Allergies:</b>		
<b>Immunizations</b>	<b>Dates</b>	
<b>Communication / Devices / Equipment / Other:</b>		
<small>Excerpted from <b>Be a Savvy Health Care Consumer, Your Life May Depend on It!</b> by June Isaacson Kailes, For more information about this guide, contact <a href="mailto:jik@pacbell.net">jik@pacbell.net</a> or visit <a href="http://www.jik.com/resource.html">http://www.jik.com/resource.html</a>.</small>		