



Disaster Preparedness for People Who Have Limited Speech: Taking Responsibility

*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. Have you contacted your local fire department/first responders, and let them know your address, along with your mobility and communication requirements?
		3. 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?
		4. Is your “Go Bag” packed?
		5. 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> ?
		6. 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?
		7. 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.
		8. 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.

2. Have you contacted your local fire department/first responders, and let them know your address, along with your mobility and communication requirements?

Please contact your local fire department and/or first responders and let them know that you exist! Allow them to get to know your specific needs BEFORE an emergency occurs.

3. 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 (communication device, 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.

4. Is your "Go Bag" packed?

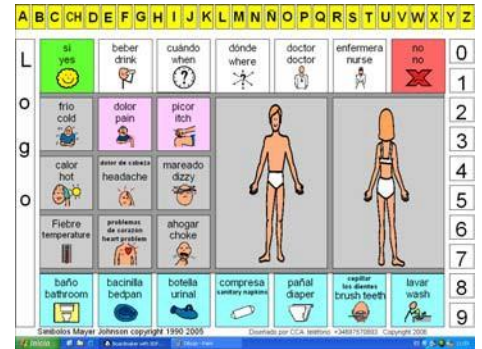
You need to have a "Go Bag" packed and located where you can get it quickly in case you need to leave your home/workplace. Note: You may need more than one "Go Bag."

- You will NOT have time to “throw things together” or quickly access everything you will need in an emergency. You MUST prepare in advance.
- Don’t forget to include specific equipment, for communication, feeding, including chargers, batteries, and a laminated communication display so you can access pertinent vocabulary in any situation.
- Make sure you label all items because things get lost easily in shelters.
- 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.

5. 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.

- 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.
- If possible, make sure someone who understands how you communicate stays with you.
- 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.
- Don’t forget to take other accessories with you (e.g., batteries, charger, switches, mounts, software, etc.).



6. Do you always carry a copy of your health information in a waterproof 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

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

7. 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.

8. 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 tool.**

This resource was adapted and updated from the AAC RERC on Communication Enhancement, funded by NIDRR from 2008-2013. <http://aac-rerc.psu.edu/index.php/pages/show/id/16>

For more information on customizing your communication strategies in an emergency in British Columbia, please contact your CAYA SLP or SLP Assistant

<https://cayabc.net/contact-caya/>

