

Emergency Preparedness For

PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY DISABILITIES



If you are a person who uses crutches, a walker, wheelchair, or other mobility aids, you may find the following information especially helpful.

CUSTOMIZING YOUR EMERGENCY KIT . . .

- Include a pair of heavy gloves in your supply kit to use while wheeling or making your way over glass and debris, and wear shoes with hard soles.
- If you use a motorized wheelchair/scooter, consider how you will deal with a battery-emergency. If possible, have an extra battery available. A car battery can be substituted for a wheelchair battery but this type of battery will not last as long as a wheelchair's deep-cycle battery.
 - Have a lightweight manual chair available for emergencies.
 - Know the size and weight of your wheelchair.
 - If your wheelchair is collapsible, have printed instructions or be able to explain how to collapse it in case it has to be transported.
- In the event of loss of electricity, you may be able to charge batteries by either connecting jumper cables to a vehicle battery or by connecting batteries to a specific type of converter that plugs into an automotive vehicle's cigarette lighter. Check with your vendor.
- Damage from an earthquake or other disaster may include broken glass. Be prepared to deal with a flat tire. Keep a patch kit or can of "seal-in-air product" to repair flat tires and keep an extra supply of inner tubes.
- Ensure that dentures, hearing aids/cochlear implants, prosthetic devices, mobility aids, canes, crutches, walker, respirator, nebulizer, service dog harness or leash, augmentative communication device or electronic communicator, artificial larynx, wheelchair, sanitary aids, batteries, eye glasses, contacts including cleaning solutions, or other optical aids, etc., are secured when not in use.

STORAGE OF EMERGENCY SUPPLIES . . .

- Following an earthquake, you may be unable to reach a particular closet or cupboard, so store your most critical emergency supplies in a pack or backpack that may be attached to your walker, wheelchair, scooter, etc.
- **Mobility aids such as canes, crutches, walkers, and wheelchairs should be kept close to you.** When not in use, keep them in a consistent, 57 convenient, and secure location. Keep extra aids in several locations, if possible.

EVACUATION PLAN . . .

- Arrange and secure furniture and other items so that you will have a clear, barrier free path of travel to the door.
- **Think about where you spend your time.** If you are often above the first floor of a building, plan and practice alternate methods of evacuation. Be sure that you talk about building evacuation procedures with your employer, building security, floor wardens, and colleagues, especially if you may need to be lifted or carried.
- **Always participate in emergency drills, training and exercises offered by your employer, building manager or government agency.** If necessary, enlist the help of your colleagues or personal support network.
- **Request a copy of the evacuation plan** from your employer and ensure that the plan addresses your needs. If it does not, alert your employer and/or the building manager.
- **If you cannot use stairs,** discuss appropriate safe lifting and carrying techniques with those who might provide assistance. In some cases, wheelchair users will need to leave their chair behind in order to safely evacuate a structure.
 - Request to have an evacuation chair located at or near your workstation.
 - The traditional “**firefighters carry**” **may be dangerous** for someone with respiratory weakness, a spinal cord injury or other conditions. **Be prepared to provide first responders, including the public, brief instructions** regarding how to move you and your mobility aid(s) or equipment.
 - **Laminate communication cards with pre-printed instructions and keep them with you.**
- It could take two or more people to assist and carry someone using an evacuation chair up or down stairs.

REMEMBER: DO NOT use an elevator during a fire, earthquake, or other emergency. The elevator may not work and you could become trapped.