

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

2024



*A Guide for Older Adults, Individuals with Disabilities,
and People with Access and Functional Needs*





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The Emergency Preparedness Guide and Toolkit was developed by the [California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services \(Cal OES\)](#), the [California Department of Rehabilitation \(DOR\)](#), and the [California Department of Aging \(CDA\)](#).

This guide provides information that [people with disabilities](#) and older adults can use to [increase readiness](#) before, during, and after disasters. The guide is intended to support you to:

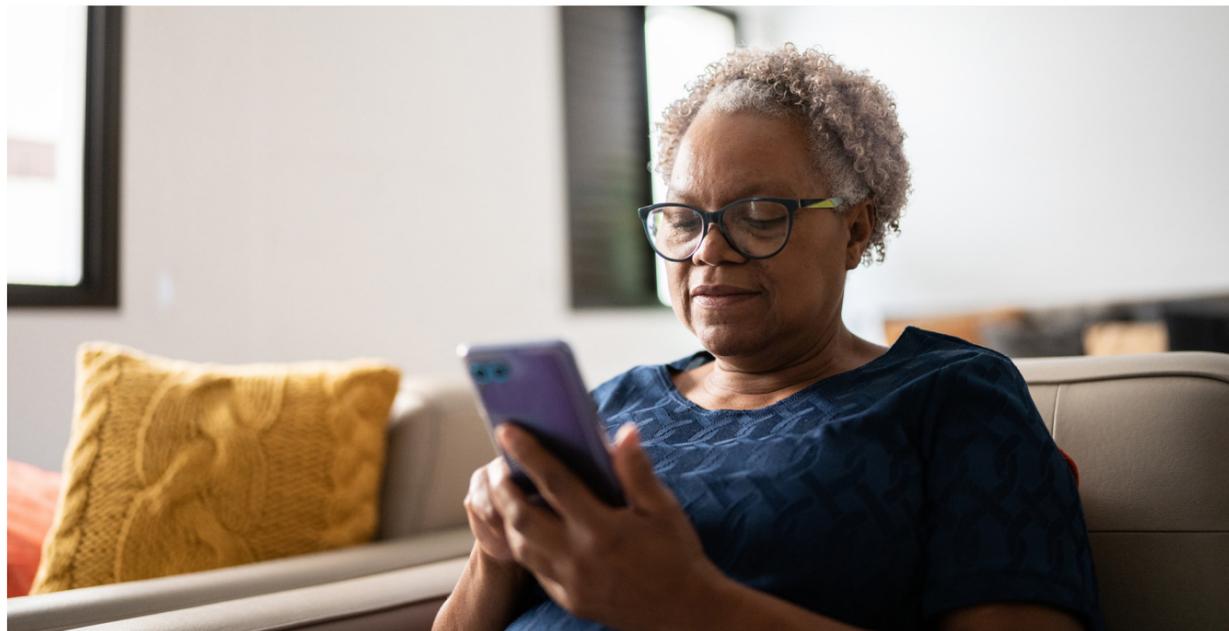
- Get emergency alerts
- Make an evacuation plan
- Pack a Go Bag
- Build a Stay Box when you can’t leave
- Help family, friends, and neighbors get ready for disasters

Get Alerts to Know What to Do During Disasters and Emergencies

In an emergency, you need to know what’s going on. You also need reliable information on disasters in your area to make the best possible decisions to stay safe. Know what disasters could affect where you live, how to get [emergency alerts](#), and where to go if you need to leave or evacuate to be safe. Make sure you have a plan and practice it regularly.

Be Informed

- Go to the website [CalAlerts.org](https://www.calalerts.org) and sign up for free emergency alerts.
- Calling 2-1-1 may provide important emergency information.
- [Know what disasters can happen where you live and work](#), which disasters could require you to leave to be safe, and when you might need to stay where you are.
- Watch or listen to local news for reports on disasters.
- Radio and TV stations will share important information through the Emergency Alert System.
- Find your local [Emergency Radio Station for Emergency Alerts](#).
- Follow trusted news sources on social media, such as your County Office of Emergency Management and fire and law enforcement agencies.
- Use the following online websites to get additional alerts and safety information:
 - Sign up for earthquake alerts and information using the [MyShake app](#).
 - [News.caloes.ca.gov](https://www.news.caloes.ca.gov) has the latest emergency information.
 - [Response.ca.gov](https://www.response.ca.gov) has information about active wildfires, power shutoffs, shelters, and road closures.
 - [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) has safety information for individuals and families.



What are the Different Evacuation Emergency Notifications?

Evacuation Warning: An evacuation warning alerts you of a potential imminent danger in your area. Individuals who receive an evacuation warning should make preparations to evacuate their dwellings and be in a position to do so on short notice. If you receive an evacuation warning, you should prepare to evacuate your dwelling unit and be in a position to do so on short notice. Older adults, people with disabilities, and people who need extra time to evacuate their dwellings should leave as soon as possible.

Evacuation Order: Requires people to leave an area immediately due to extreme danger.

Shelter in Place: This is an order to remain in your dwelling due to danger posed by weather or disaster events outside of your dwelling unit. In the event a Shelter in Place order is issued, individuals should stay inside, shut and lock doors and windows, and not leave your unit until informed it is safe to do so by an emergency worker.



Connect With Your Neighbors

Neighbors need to help each other to prepare and respond to disasters. Talk to your neighbors about what they might need in an emergency, and if they can help other neighbors.

Do you know:

- Who is at home in your neighborhood that might be available to help you during the day, at night, or on a weekend?
- Who in your neighborhood might need help?

Think of the people you would want to talk to during an emergency. These people might be your family, neighbors, friends, or caregivers. It could also be groups you belong to or volunteer with such as volunteer programs, faith-based or church groups, local Independent Living Centers, local Area Agencies on Aging, and neighborhood groups, etc.



Make an Evacuation Plan

Create a List of Phone Numbers

Make a list of phone numbers and email addresses with your friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, or others numbers. These are the people who can help you evacuate to a safe place. Keep this list in a waterproof container in your emergency kit, Go Bag, and Stay Box. Make sure contact information is saved on your cellular phone or other devices that you can take with you. Talk with your friends and family about what you will do in a disaster. Ask them to help you create your plan if you need assistance.

How To Evacuate

Think about any challenges you may have evacuating during a disaster and make plans.

- Follow the directions of police, firefighters, and other local authorities.
- Evacuate early if you need extra time or help to get out.
- [Learn the different roads](#) or freeways to leave your community.
- Make a plan that will work for you to get out of danger quickly and safely.
- Ask friends, family, caregivers, and neighbors to help you evacuate.
- Have a paper map. The internet and cell phone services may not be working.

How To Evacuate (Continued)

- Get a county Evacuation Planning Area Map, if one is available.
- Practice evacuating using the car, bus, or transportation you would take in a disaster. Practice evacuating with the people you would leave with in a real emergency.
- Keep your car's fuel tank filled with gas.
- If you don't have a car, identify someone who can drive you.
- Be ready by having your Go Bag of emergency supplies packed.

More Planning Tips

- Police, firefighters, and other emergency workers will try to keep you and your family or friends together during an evacuation. They will work to keep your service animal, the people who help you and provide care, or your assistive technology devices and supplies with you during an evacuation.
- Identify what your transportation needs could be before the emergency. This could include Paratransit and accessible transportation, public transit, or friends and neighbors.
- Contact local services, public transportation, or paratransit to identify all accessible transportation options.
- Know the evacuation routes from your home, work, school, neighborhood, city, or area and travel to them before a disaster or emergency so you know the routes well.
- Consider giving someone you trust a key to your home.

- If you need dialysis or other medical treatments, know more than one place where you can get your treatment.
- If you use medical equipment in your home that needs electricity, talk to your doctor, health care provider, local aging and disability organizations, or power utility companies about how you can prepare for power outages.
- Write down the best way to communicate with you and identify your preferred language.
- If you use communication devices or technologies, keep model numbers, make note of where the equipment came from (e.g. Medicaid, private insurance, etc.), and plan for how you will communicate if the equipment stops working.

Finding Shelter

In the event of an evacuation or to find emergency shelters and other local services, call 2-1-1 on your phone, check the [American Red Cross shelter locator](#), or call the California Aging and Adult Information Line at 1-800-510-2020 to be linked to a local Area Agency on Aging for information and assistance in your own area.

If you are worried about seeking shelter, please know:

- Emergency shelters are available to everyone.
- California law requires all public shelters be accessible to people with disabilities.
- Service animals are allowed inside public shelters.

Emergency Shelters and Places to Stay

If you need to evacuate, plan to go to a hotel, a friend or family member's home, or a shelter. Emergency shelters can be at schools and community buildings and provide:

- Food, water, and basic supplies.
- Items you need, including medical equipment.
- Access to services and people to help you during an emergency.

Medical Equipment, Supplies, and Assistive Devices

- Whenever possible, take your medical devices and assistive technology with you if you have to evacuate. Attach instruction cards to medical devices and assistive technology on how to use and move each item in case of evacuation.
- Identify important medical supplies (such as incontinence products, catheters, colostomy supplies, etc.) that must be taken with you during an evacuation. While these, and other supplies, can be requested at community shelters set up by the government – it is always best to bring them with you.
- If you depend on assistive devices or medical equipment that uses electricity, ask your medical supply company and utility provider about back-up batteries or other power sources.

Go Bag vs. Stay Box: What's the Difference?

Go Bags should include the items you will need if you are ordered to evacuate. By packing a Go Bag in advance of an emergency, you'll have it ready whenever disasters strike.

Go Bag items include:

- Important documents
- Maps
- Medications

Stay Boxes can help meet your needs during an emergency if a disaster requires you to stay in your home. Your Stay Box should include things you need each day that you can set aside or store in case of an emergency.

Stay Box items include:

- Water
- Non-Perishable Food
- Lights
- Batteries

Learn more about Go Bags and Stay Boxes on page 13.



Planning for Your Needs

Disasters are hard for everyone. You can help make things easier when you know what you need to do and how to help your friends and neighbors. Review the tips below to [increase your preparedness](#).

Older Adults

- Clear your home of clutter to prevent falls and to maintain a clear path.
- If you receive home care services, ask about plans for [continuity of care](#) in cases of emergencies.
- If you live in a retirement community, learn about their emergency plan.
- Consider medical alert systems or processes you can use to call for help.
- Practice your disaster plan with your family, friends, and neighbors. Identify the people or organizations you will contact to help you during a disaster.
- Bring medications with you if evacuated. Create a list of your medications, dosages, and pharmacy contact information.
- If you use a cane, walker, or wheelchair, review the section on People with Mobility or Other Physical Disabilities.

People with Pets

- Plan for your [pet's care](#) in an emergency.
- Get your pet an identification tag. Free or discounted microchipping may be available. Ask your vet how to get your pet microchipped.
- Pack food, water, medicine, and proof of rabies and other shots for each of your animal(s).
- Prepare your pet by teaching them to be in a crate.
- Make a plan for your pet if you cannot bring it with you to a shelter. Some shelters do not allow pets.
- Check with your local county animal response team (CART).

People Living in Rural Communities

- Share emergency alerts through phone trees, social platforms, or ham/amateur radio networks.
- Meet with neighbors to plan how to help each other in case of an emergency, evacuation, or disaster.
- Plan for the [evacuation of large animals](#).

People with Developmental Disabilities

- Practice your disaster plan with your family, friends, and neighbors to help you feel safe.
- Keep a gaming device or tablet charged and loaded with videos and games. Buy spare chargers for gaming device or tablet and keep them charged.
- Include blankets or a small pop-up tent to create an area with less noise and distractions when you need it.
- Pack headphones to reduce noise.
- Identify your network that you can contact to help you during a disaster.



People with Speech or Communication Disabilities

- Carry an instruction card that tells people how to communicate with you.
- Carry communication devices, phrase cards, or picture boards. If you use communication devices, plan how you will evacuate with them.
- Understand how to replace your assistive device if damaged.
- Keep model information of any assistive equipment.
- Keep a pen and paper or whiteboard and marker with you.

People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Have a weather radio with text display and a flashing alert.
- Keep extra batteries or a portable battery charger for hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- Pack pen and paper as another method of communication.
- Have your cell phone charged and ready to go along with extra charging cords and backup batteries. Set up your cell phone to flash or vibrate when you get a notification.
- Install smoke alarms that provide sound and light signals when possible. At least one smoke alarm should be battery operated.
- Pack zip lock bags, dry sacks, and a drying case for hearing aids and cochlear implants.
- Download a speech-to-text app on your cell phone.

People with Mobility or Other Physical Disabilities

- Identify paratransit or other accessible transportation resources.
- Plan how you will evacuate if there are broken ramps, rails, or elevators.
- If you use a power wheelchair, have a lightweight manual chair available as a backup, if possible.
- If you use a power wheelchair or other powered device, pack your charging cords.
- Keep an extra mobility device, such as a cane or walker, if you use one.
- Know how to get to the first floor when the elevator is not working.

People with Mental Health Disabilities

- Bring medications with you if evacuated. Create a list of your medications, dosages, and pharmacy contact information.
- Create a list of your medical providers and their contact information.
- Connect with your mental health provider.
- Know where to get accurate emergency information you can depend on.
- Bring items with you that make you feel safe such as a journal, spiritual materials, or other items.
- Connect with members of any support group(s) you belong to.



Individuals who are supported by Caregivers

- [Talk with your caregiver](#) about your emergency plan, including what to do in a disaster, how to connect after the initial event, your communication style, medical needs, independence levels, and what might be needed if you are away from the house for a long time.
- Talk to your caregiver about how you respond to stressful situations and plan for how you need to get communication during an emergency.
- Write down what you might need in an emergency shelter situation and prepare accordingly with your caregiver. If your caregiver does not live in the home, they might not be able to reach you in an emergency so make a plan for reaching them during incidents and events.
- Connect with your caregiving company if applicable to communicate your current information during an emergency. If you receive private or public care services, ask them about plans for your care in emergencies.



For Family Caregivers

- Assess and understand your loved one's needs.
- Stay informed and sign up for local alert systems to receive guidance from emergency management agencies.
- Make sure you have legal and financial documents in order before a disaster happens. This includes a power of attorney, advanced healthcare directives, and access to information about financial accounts. Having these documents available can help make decision-making easier during emergencies.

People who are Blind or who have Low Vision

- Mark emergency supplies with Braille or large print.
- Keep a list of your emergency information in an electronic format you can access online, on a portable flash drive, or make an audio file and keep it in a safe place.
- Keep an extra cane, eyeglasses, or magnifying devices in your emergency supply kit as needed.

- Place security lights in each room to light paths of travel if there is a loss of power.

People with Sensory-related Disabilities

- Keep a gaming device or tablet loaded with movies or games.
- Pack a small pop-up tent or blanket to provide an area with less noise, distractions, and privacy in busy places.
- Pack headphones to reduce noise.
- Keep a pair of dark glasses to reduce bright and flashing lights.
- Include fidget toys, chewable jewelry, stress balls, or bubbles.

People Experiencing Homelessness

- Listen to police, firefighters, and local officials and determine risks in your area.
- Identify your transportation needs, and how to connect with a local shelter.
- Prepare a bag with your essential items in case of evacuation.



A [Go Bag](#) should include the items you will need if you are ordered to evacuate. By packing a Go Bag in advance of an emergency, you'll have it ready whenever disasters strike.

Pack Ahead

- Include your important documents including copies of identification and insurance cards.
- Bring a map and contact lists. In case you're not able to access maps on your phone or device, you'll need your map marked with evacuation routes and locations of shelters.
- Include a list of important phone numbers such as those of your family, friends, caregiver, and doctors.
- If possible, carry cash money (Get money in 20s, 10s, 5s, and 1s)
- Make a list of:
 - All prescriptions taken by you and family members.
 - Names and numbers of your doctors and your pharmacies.
 - Other important medical information.

Things to Pack as You Leave

- Keys, wallet, or purse
- Phones and chargers
- Medications (including extra eyeglasses, dentures, etc.)
- Portable radio
- Flashlights
- First-aid supplies
- Your laptop or tablet
- Food for your pets

In addition to having your basic survival supplies, an [emergency kit](#) should contain items to meet your individual needs in various types of disasters. Consider the items you use daily and which ones you may need to add to your kit.

Build a Stay Box

If a disaster requires you to stay in your home, a Stay Box can help meet your needs during an emergency. Your Stay Box should include things you need each day that you can set aside or store in case of an emergency.

Water

You want a gallon of water for each person in your home per day. Buy water at the store every few weeks to avoid large up-front costs. Store your water in a cool, dark place.

Non-Perishable Food

You know what your family likes to eat, so stock up on those foods. Think about what you could eat if there was no power and build up your food supply a little at a time.

Important Items

- Set aside items such as canned goods and food you can keep in the cupboard for yourself and your pets or service animals to eat during emergencies.
- Stock up on portable lights, such as flashlights, and extra batteries. If the power is out, avoid candles! They are a fire hazard and can be extremely dangerous if there has been a gas leak from the disaster.
- Your Stay Box is a great place to keep emergency items, such as a first aid kit or battery-powered radio.

Preparedness Checklist:

- Have you identified your contact list and support network?
- Do you have a Go Bag?
- Do you have a Stay Box?
- Do you have items prepared for service animals or pets in case of an evacuation?
- Do you have any transportation needs? How will you evacuate?
- Do you have your Vial of Life filled out? Don't forget to include your medication in case you have to evacuate in a hurry.

VIAL OF LIFE

Medical Information Form

Please record all information in a manner easy to read by emergency medical personnel.

Name _____ Date of Birth _____ Male
Female

Blind Deaf Alzheimer's Disease or Related Dementia

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone Number _____

SSN (last four digits) _____ Medicare # (last four digits) _____ Other Insurance _____ Policy Number _____

Do you have an Advance Health Care Directive? Yes No

Do you have a "Do Not Resuscitate Order"? Yes No

Backup batteries/electricity needed for medical equipment? Yes No

Do you have a service animal who must evacuate with you? Yes No

Emergency Contacts

Name _____ Relationship _____ Phone & Email _____

Name _____ Relationship _____ Phone & Email _____

Pet's Information

Name & Type _____ Veterinarian _____ Phone Number _____

Medical Information

Primary Doctor _____ Phone Number _____



Hospital

Phone Number

Height

Weight

Blood Type

Normal Blood Pressure

Allergies to drugs or foods

Please list any medical conditions that apply (ex: cardiac, diabetes, hypertension, stroke)

Surgeries (type and date)

Do you?

Wear dentures? Yes No

Wear contacts? Yes No

Wear glasses? Yes No

Wear hearing aids? Yes No

Use oxygen? Yes No

Use a wheelchair? Yes No

Where do you keep your medications?

To help calm me during an emergency:

Medications (Prescriptions, OTC drugs, Vitamins, Herbal Supplements)

Name

Dose/Frequency

Purpose

Name

Dose/Frequency

Purpose

Name

Dose/Frequency

Purpose

Name

Dose/Frequency

Purpose

Please attach a complete list of medications if more than four.

