



# Persons with Disabilities Guide

Emergency preparedness information for people with disabilities or special needs and for first responders who might be assisting a person with disabilities or special needs during an emergency or disaster.



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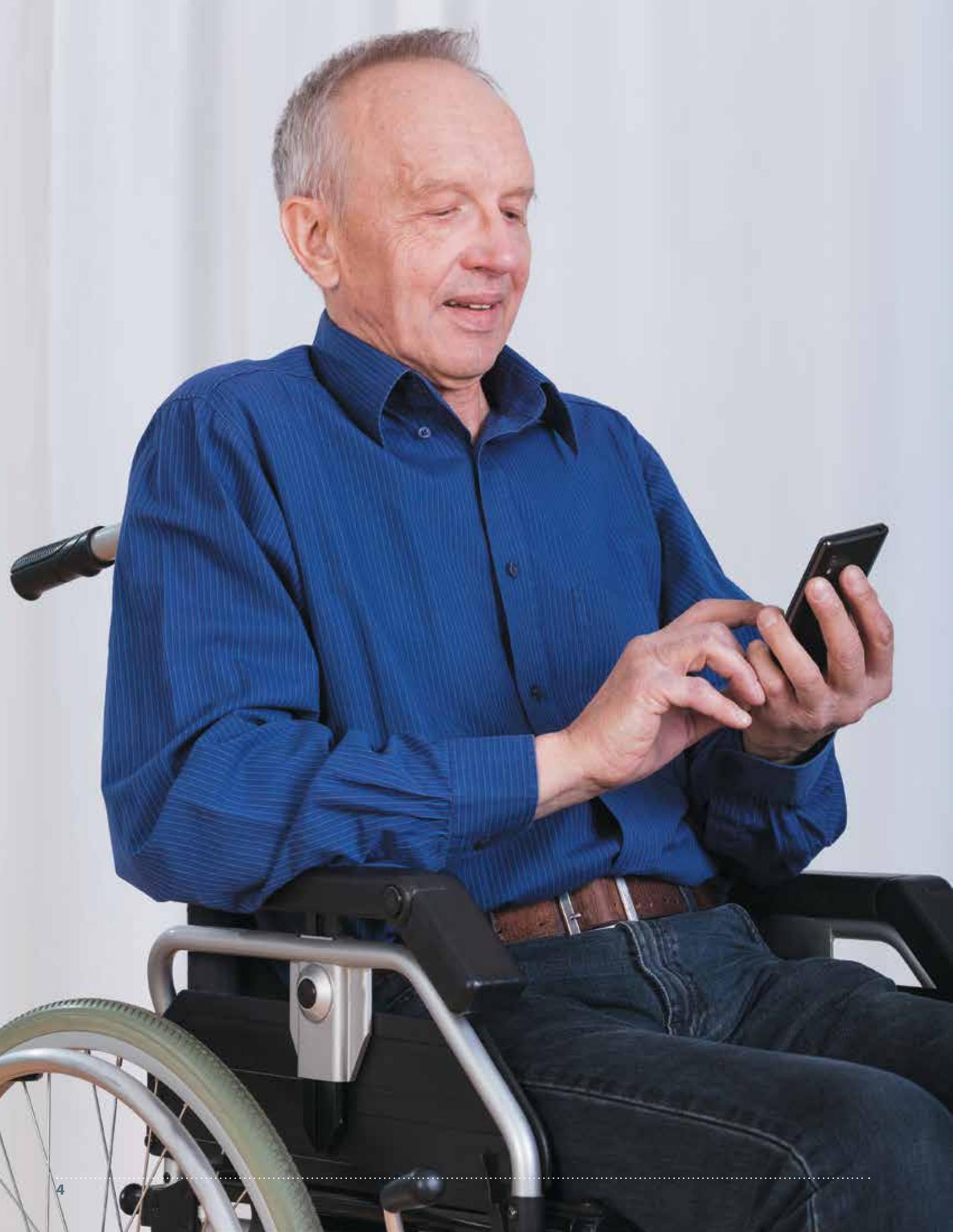
# Introduction

This guide provides emergency preparedness information for people with disabilities or special needs, and for first responders and others who might be assisting a person with disabilities or special needs during an emergency or disaster.

While emergencies and disasters affect everyone, their impact on people with disabilities or special needs is often compounded by factors such as reliance on electrical power, accessible transportation and communication, or access to medication – all of which can be compromised during an emergency event.

While emergencies and disasters affect everyone, their impact on people with disabilities/special needs is often compounded.





# Know the risks

It is important to know what types of emergencies are likely to affect your region. To educate yourself about specific risks that could affect Calgary, visit:

**calgary.ca** (search term *know the risks*)

The most effective way for emergency services to communicate information about an emergency or disaster is through mass communication, including traditional means, like radio and television, and social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.). You can get emergency alerts sent to your smart phone by signing up for the Alberta Emergency Alert app (**emergencyalert.alberta.ca** for more information).

It is important to stay informed about current weather conditions and situations with the potential to escalate into an emergency or disaster.

If you are blind, deaf or hard of hearing, plan for someone to convey essential emergency information to you. Learn about devices (pagers, text radio) that can assist you in receiving emergency information from local officials.

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# Planning for emergencies

- Self-identify to your support network, neighbours and building management.
- Be prepared to provide clear and concise instructions to emergency services personnel and others who may be assisting you in an emergency. If you have difficulty speaking, consider having this information available on a printed card.
- Locate escape routes, emergency exits and safe places such as muster points (or emergency assembly area). If you live in an apartment, ask the management to identify and mark accessible exits and access to areas designated for emergency shelter or safe rooms. Learn about your building's evacuation procedures and plans for alerting and evacuating those with sensory or mobility disabilities.
- Teach those who may need to assist you – such as a co-worker or caregiver – how to operate necessary equipment. Let people know which evacuation technique you prefer.
- Label equipment and attach laminated instructions for equipment use.
- Create an emergency contact list of relatives and out-of-area contacts who can be contacted in the event of an emergency (see Additional Resources).



- Make a Household Emergency Action Plan (see Additional Resources).
- Build a basic 72-hour emergency kit. A kit includes supplies that you may need in an emergency or disaster and helps you to take care of yourself for 72 hours (three days) (see Additional Resources).
- Complete a personal assessment sheet. Provide a copy to your designated network(s). Keep copies in your 72-hour kit.
- Make sure you can be alerted and located in an emergency. Consider carrying a personal alarm or whistle that emits a loud noise to draw attention. Consider getting a medical alert system that will allow you to call for help if you are immobilized in an emergency.

# Emergency Preparedness for those with Special Needs

## People with hearing loss

In addition to a basic 72-hour emergency kit, recommended additional kit items include:

- Writing pads and pencils for communication.
- Pre-printed phrases you would use during an emergency such as “I use American Sign Language”.
- Additional hearing aid (if you have one) and extra batteries.
- Portable visual notification devices to know if someone is knocking on the door or calling on the telephone.
- If you have a cochlear implant, consider having MedicAlert® identification that an MRI or CAT scan must be avoided due to the damage they can cause these devices.
- Visual cue cards in case there is no electricity available for portable visual notification devices.

Consider registering for the Text with 9-1-1 service at <http://textwith911.ca/how-to-make-a-t9-1-1-call>. (Availability can vary in other centers. The 911 call centre in Calgary and the surrounding area supports this service; however, users must register through their wireless provider. Please note this service is available only with registration and only to people who are deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or speech impaired.)

## People with vision loss

Ensure that your 72-hour kit is easily identified and accessed – consider labelling emergency supplies with large print, fluorescent tape or Braille. In addition to the basic items, ensure your 72-hour kit includes:

- A talking or Braille clock.
- Assistive technology you use to access information such as emergency alerts.
- Spare glasses.
- Extra white cane.
- A 72-hour emergency kit for your service animal (see Service Animal Emergency Kit Checklist).

## Know your escape routes

Knowing all your escape routes at home and at work will ensure that you can exit the building quickly and safely in an emergency. **Develop your home escape plan** and learn more about **apartment building fire safety** from the Calgary Fire Department. ([calgary.ca/fire](http://calgary.ca/fire))

## People with mobility disabilities

In addition to a basic 72-hour emergency kit, recommended additional kit items include:

- A tire patch kit, seal-in-air product, inner tubes, a backup battery and spare catheters if you use a wheelchair.
- A lightweight, manual wheelchair as a backup to a motorized chair.
- A power outage backup plan.
- Heavy gloves for making your way over glass and debris.
- The make, model and battery type of a power chair (if you use one), and contact information for battery suppliers.

## Planning for an evacuation with a mobility disability

- Familiarize yourself with all escape routes, emergency exits and emergency equipment in your home. If you live in an **apartment building**, try to live on the lower floor.
- If you are in a wheelchair, know if it can be easily transported. Be aware of several different ways to exit a building in the event that elevators are not working or your main route is blocked.
- Have alternate evacuation assistance devices such as a lightweight chair that can be used if you have to leave a wheelchair behind.
- Be prepared to give brief instructions regarding how to move you, should it be required.
- Check with 311 to find out if emergency shelters in your area are wheelchair accessible

## People with non-visible disabilities and medical needs

In addition to a basic 72-hour emergency kit, recommended additional kit items include:

- A list of your medications (name, dose, frequency, and the name of the prescribing doctor).
- Written information about how to administer your medications, what equipment you use, allergies, and your emergency medical contacts.
- Supply of food items appropriate to your dietary restrictions.
- At least a 3-day supply of medication and medical supplies readily available. Replenish your 72-hour kit with a fresh supply of medications before they expire. Be sure to ask your pharmacist how best to store your medications.

Always carry MedicAlert<sup>®</sup> identification if you have it.

## Life support and essential medical devices

- Contact your local electric company about your power needs for life-support devices in advance. They might be able to make your power reconnection a priority. Even so, it is essential that you have power backup options for your equipment, such as batteries or a generator.

## Medication and treatments

- Make a list of your medications (name, dose, frequency, and the name of the prescribing doctor) and store it in your 72-hour kit (see the Personal Assessment Sheet and Checklist).
- If you receive medical treatments from a clinic or a hospital, ask your health care provider what you should do in the event of an emergency.



# Assisting People with a Disability or Special Needs

## When assisting somebody with a disability:

- Ask if the person wants your help, and how you may best assist them. Do not assume they need help or that you know how to help them.
- If someone refuses your help, wait for first responders to arrive, unless it is a matter of life and death.
- Do not touch the person, their service animal or equipment without their permission, unless it is a matter of life and death.

- Follow instructions posted on special needs equipment.
- Use latex-free gloves to reduce the spread of viral infection or to prevent an allergic reaction to latex.
- Do not try to move someone unless you are trained in the proper techniques.
- If the person has a service animal, it is the animal owner's responsibility to assess whether or not it is safe for the animal to work through the emergency situation.

If the person has a service animal on duty, ask them where you should walk to avoid distracting the animal. Do not separate the service animal from its owner.



# Tips for assisting a person with a disability

## Hearing Loss

- Get the person's attention with a visual cue or a gentle touch on their arm. Do not approach the person from behind.
- Face the person; make eye contact when speaking to them as they may rely on lip reading and communication in close proximity.
- Use gestures to help illustrate your meaning.
- If supplies are available, write a message.
- Be aware that some people may be deaf-blind.

## Mobility Limitations

- Try to ensure that the person's wheelchair is transported with the person.
- If this is not possible, employ evacuation techniques as appropriate, such as the use of an evacuation chair, shelter-in-place, or lifts and wait for trained personnel to arrive.
- Do not push or pull a person's wheelchair without their permission, unless it is a matter of life or death.
- Mobility limitations can create difficulty in using stairs, moving quickly or travelling long distances. Individuals may rely on a cane, wheelchair, crutches or a walker. Be aware that people who are pregnant, have heart conditions or respiratory difficulties may also have limited mobility.

## Vision Loss

- For people who are deaf-blind, draw an "X" on their back with your finger to let them know you can help them
- To communicate with someone who is deaf-blind, trace letters in their hand with your finger
- To guide a person, keep half a step ahead, offer them your arm and walk at their pace.
- Never grab a person with vision loss, unless it is a matter of life or death.
- Do not assume that the person cannot see you.
- Describe precise positions, such as, "to your right/left/straight ahead/behind you," or by using clock face positions.
- If the person has a service animal on duty, ask them where you should walk to avoid distracting the animal. Do not separate the service animal from its owner.
- People with reduced vision may struggle with reading signs or moving quickly in unfamiliar areas. They may rely on others for direction and guidance.
- Ask what tasks for which the service animal can assist.

## Non-visible disabilities and medical needs

Individuals with non-visible disabilities may have difficulty performing some tasks even though their condition is not apparent. Non-visible disabilities can include communication, cognitive, sensory, mental health, intellectual disabilities or medical conditions which may impair an individual's ability to respond to an emergency.



# Personal Assessment Sheet and Checklist

During an emergency, this checklist will enable emergency responders to assist you with your specific needs.

My name is:

I live at:

My phone number is:

My emergency kit can be found :

I am able to:

- Hear
- See
- Walk without help
- Walk with help
- Prepare my meals
- Feed myself
- Dress myself
- Sit without help
- Sit with help
- Wash/bathe without help
- Wash/bathe with help
- Sanitary needs without help
- Sanitary needs with help

I will need specific help with:

Prescription name and #:

Dose/Frequency:

Purpose:

Prescription name and #:

Dose/Frequency:

Purpose:

Special equipment I use:

Allergies:

Special diet:

Other special needs:

I have a service animal, his/her name is:

He/she helps me:

His/her emergency kit can be found:



# Service Animal Emergency Kit Checklist

- Minimum 72-hour supply of bottled water and pet food
- Food and water bowls
- Paper towels
- Medication with a list identifying medical condition, dosage, frequency and contact information of prescribing veterinarian
- Medical records including vaccinations
- Leash and collar
- Blanket and toy
- Plastic bags
- Bandages
- Up-to-date ID tag with your phone number and the name/phone number of your veterinarian
- Recent photo of your service animal in case they get separated from you
- Name of the animal's training centre and qualifying number
- Copy of licence

# Available Resources

## **Emergency Contact Sheet:**

[calgary.ca/cema](http://calgary.ca/cema) and search  
“Emergency Contact Sheet”

## **Household Emergency Action Plan:**

[calgary.ca/cema](http://calgary.ca/cema) and search “Household  
Emergency Action Plan”

## **72-hour Emergency Preparedness Kit:**

[calgary.ca/cema](http://calgary.ca/cema) and search “72-hour kit”

## **Calgary Police Service – Vulnerable Persons Self-Registry:**

The Calgary Police Service has a Vulnerable Persons Self-Registry that allows people to voluntarily submit their own information if they have a physical, mental or medical condition that means they may require special attention in an emergency.

[Calgarypolice.ca](http://Calgarypolice.ca) (search “vulnerable person self-registry”)

