

Provisions for Family Members With Special Needs

Some disabled and elderly citizens may have special needs that restrict them from being physically able to evacuate during emergencies or hinder them from being able to comprehend the seriousness of an emergency situation. Government and emergency personnel recognize these needs.

HOW YOU CAN HELP CARE FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AT HOME

You can be a part of a care program to offer assistance to those family members who are in need or who cannot help themselves by:

- Educating and physically helping them prepare their homes and properties for emergencies such as hurricanes.
- Helping them shop for necessary supplies.
- Helping them create and post their evacuation plan (see page 11) in a visible location as a reminder to them and others.
- Helping them shop for necessary supplies.

HOME HEALTH CARE AND HOMEBOUND LIFE-SUPPORT PATIENTS

During high winds and severe weather, most emergency vehicles cannot assist those with special needs. Please make your arrangements early. These arrangements should include the following:

- Notify your health agency where you will be during a hurricane and when care can be re-established.
- Contact your physician if you are homebound and under the care of a physician, but not a home health agency.
- If you require respirators or other medical equipment that requires electrical power, you should make prior medical arrangements with your physician.
- If you require oxygen, check with your supplier about emergency plans.
- If you evacuate, remember to bring medications, written instructions regarding your care, your walker, wheelchair, cane, or special equipment, along with your bedding.
- If you do not evacuate, keep a list of the names and phone numbers of friends or family so you can make quick arrangements to stay with them in the event of a power interruption.

POWER

During a time of a citywide outage from a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, utility companies may not be able to give priority to special needs of all customers because of the extent of damage and the order in which power must be restored.

If you plan to use a generator as a power backup, follow the safety tips on page 16 for safe operation. In addition, power inverters that can be plugged into the outlet in your car may provide short-term solutions in an emergency, but should not be used as primary planning tool for backup power in case of an emergency.

TIPS TO REMEMBER

Special needs family members in nursing homes also need assistance in preparing for disasters. You can ensure the safety of your family members by inquiring if their healthcare providers are adequately prepared for disaster or emergency situations. These agencies should have the following:

- A disaster plan that is reviewed annually by administration and staff.
- Policies that provide for in-house emergency preparedness training for their employees.
- Identification procedures for patients, such as bands or cards that indicate names, ages, medical conditions, and current medications.
- Transportation agreements for evacuations that are renewed annually.
- Agreements with other healthcare providers that are renewed annually.
- A list of items to accompany your special needs family member if they are evacuated, including an adequate supply of medications and special foods.
- Maps with evacuation routes highlighted.
- Transfer forms readily available authorizing admissions into hospital facilities when necessary.
- A list of friends and family who have agreed to help in emergency situations.
- The best and safest arrangements for special needs family members may be to bring them with you when you evacuate. We suggest keeping these considerations in mind if either you or your loved one has special needs. Also, remember to bring your vital information and documents with you when you evacuate.