

What do You Wear to a Disaster?

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What should you wear to a disaster? What will you keep on hand? Let's create a plan!

Creating a disaster plan is literally **saving and budgeting resources** for a proverbial rainy day so financial preparedness is a crucial part of your household planning. Write it down and treat it just like a part of your overall budget plan. **Written plans and instructions** can be more easily shared with household members, reviewed regularly to keep up with changes.

Start with a list of medical providers, medications and pharmacies and your network of family, friends and support personnel. The contact information should be written plainly and protected in plastic sleeves or lamination. This is vital contact information in an emergency that does not rely on electricity or cellular infrastructure. Distributing copies of the list within your home, household and workplaces will support you in case of emergency, day or night. It can also be photographed and put on your phone and/or computer or in a cloud.

Be sure that any **disability funding and medical consultation** considers emergency preparedness. Ask your doctor about Rx flexibility too in order to respond to emergency conditions. Attention to medical equipment and supplies/suppliers should also be a part of plans for evacuation vs sheltering in place. You also need the same contact information for your property and health insurance, including your Medicaid Waiver providers, DME provider, therapists, etc. See Document Bag listed below for specific things to keep with you.

Use the basic list of materials to keep ready and helpful hints listed below and customize to organize for your individual household needs. If you have pets, be certain to include them as you customize the list with good plans for them. Be sure to prepare variations on your plans or a backup plan so that you are flexible enough to respond to a real-life emergency. Prepare mentally and spiritually for the possibility of either being displaced from home or unable to get out of your home or move around freely in case of emergencies that may occur at a moment's notice.

Emergencies may be complicated by lack of easy access to transportation so planning ahead for accessible transportation for evacuation or getting to a medical clinic is an important arrangement to make. Consider joining local mutual aid societies and buy-nothing groups. Doing so may help you prepare for an emergency while you bolster your network of friends and resources. Often shared resources gathered in a localized sharing ecosystem can become crucial in an event such as the recent power and water catastrophe. Ideally marshalling local community including nondisabled peers, disabled peers, neighbors and friends to meet needs in the moment of crisis these groups are intentional and may help you to further build sustained networks for the reliable supports that are so essential.

Mutual aid societies may help build the habits of preparedness too. Talk with case workers, connect with local services, public transportation or paratransit to identify local or private accessible transportation options in case of emergency.

Food & Water

- ✓ Lack of clean water and/or electricity for refrigeration access is a circumstance to prepare for in emergencies. **Water** needs = one gallon per person (and pet) per day for at least three days; for drinking, medication and **sanitation**
- ✓ Emergency supply on hand of **non-perishable food to last for at least 3 days** is recommended; manual can opener

Medications, DME, Medical Supplies, Hygiene Supplies

- ✓ Maintain a **supply of vital medications in advance of an emergency** event when possible. Collect ice and coolers in case refrigeration needed to store medications is compromised. And after a natural disaster, inspect all drugs in case they have been affected by fire, flooding or unsafe water or loss of refrigeration
- ✓ Wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, canes (Durable Medical Equipment – DME)

If your DME requires electricity, either from batteries or by plugging into the wall, additional planning is needed for power outages:

- 1) Texas has a STEAR database to register for future emergencies, but many counties do not utilize this data so continue below....
- 2) Call your power company long before the next power event, to either be placed on their **critical care** or **chronic care** lists. For critical care, they may require a form signed by your physician. Beyond DME, your need may be to regulate your child's temperature or to keep medical things in freezers, all explainable by a physician.
- 3) Next, as there is no guarantee of ANY power, it is suggested that people store 72 hours of backup power. This can be as simple as purchasing spare DME batteries and keeping them charged.
- 4) Beyond spares, there are large batteries (similar to boat batteries) to provide electricity. Another choice is to purchase a generator, IF you have a way for it to run outdoors. Generators require more skill than batteries, as gasoline and propane are the usual fuel and ventilation is critical.

TxP2P is part of the Governor's Committee on People with Disability **Power DME Task Force**, who plans to publish more-detailed options, costs and grant programs (currently unfunded). More on this from TxP2P in 2021-22.

- ✓ Medical supplies like oxygen, glucose, syringes, glucose monitoring strips, communication devices, etc.)
- ✓ Food for special diets
- ✓ Toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc.
- ✓ Hearing aids & chargers, glasses, reading glasses, sunglasses, contacts and contact solutions
- ✓ Diapers, personal hygiene supplies, wipes

First Aid Kit and Cleaning Supplies

- ✓ First Aid Kit that includes **bandages, antiseptic cream and fever reducing medications** are important because disaster emergencies are conditions ripe for injuries.

- ✓ **Face masks** which are newly recommended and even mandated for COVID infection control but have long been recommended in preparation for emergencies because many types may affect air quality such as in the case of chemical explosions.
- ✓ Keep several pairs of **gloves for your household** members and care teams to use in regular household tasks, care giving task and as protection from all manner of toxic substances.
- ✓ **Extra clothing** can help maintain sanitation under difficult circumstances.
- ✓ **Hand soap** in liquid or bar form is an important infection control tool. Dish soap is a good product to add to your emergency preparation tool kit. ***Please note that antibacterial products will not destroy viruses and they apply only to skin; not surfaces.*** While soap and water are the most effective hygiene infection control measure, **hand sanitizers or wipes with isopropyl alcohol** may be used as safe and effective substitutes when water isn't easy to access.
- ✓ ***Beware and avoid methanol-based hand sanitizing products. The FDA has recalled such products, labeling the active ingredient methanol as potentially toxic. Many of these recalled products are imported and originate from Mexico.***
- ✓ Keep a **supply of cleaning and disinfection products to include bleach, hydrogen peroxide and isopropyl alcohol and/or other EPA listed products.** These will help you to respond to emergencies and create or maintain a healthy environment in such an event.
 - *Note that cleaning and disinfection are 2 distinct processes. Cleaning prior to disinfection is an important step that conserves disinfectants and allows them to be effective. Excess surface dirt and soil break down and expend disinfecting power.
 - Effective disinfection requires** the disinfectant remain wet or “dwell” on a surface so be certain to follow product guidelines. *For example, bleach solution needs anywhere from 30 seconds to 10 minutes to deactivate viruses.* Bleach has a shelf life of about 1 year and bleach solutions should be used within 24 hours to assure potency. **Boil water notices** are common in cases of flood or earthquake. Plan for them with supplies for safely boiling, cooling and storing treated water. Also keeping supply of bottled water and clean vessels for water collection is a good measure.
- ✓ **In case you cannot boil water** when an order is issued, you can use regular unscented plain bleach, not color safe or with added cleaners and measured using a standard medicine dropper **to purify drinking water.**

Volume of Water Amount Bleach to Add**

1 quart/liter 2 drops

**If water is cloudy, let it settle and filter it through a clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter.

Stir and let stand for 30 minutes. The water should have a slight chlorine odor. If it doesn't, repeat the dosage and let stand for another 15 minutes before use.

If the chlorine taste is too strong, pour the water from one clean container to another and let it stand for a few hours before use.

Safe handling of chemical agents is important to avoid compounding a disaster emergency with preventable accidental injury.

Remember:

Bleach solutions **sanitize surfaces with ratio of 1 tablespoon of household chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of cool clean water.** *Hot water deactivates bleach on surface applications.

Do not mix bleach with ammonia which may be present in products such as glass cleaners.

Do not mix bleach with acids such as urine or glass and window cleaners, some automatic dishwasher detergent rinse, some toilet bowl cleaners, some drain cleaners, some lime, calcium and rust removal products, certain types of brick and concrete cleaner because dangerous fumes may result.

- ✓ Rubbing alcohol alone can be used for cleaning (<https://www.insider.com/does-alcohol-kill-germs>) and in hand sanitizers, but it is flammable and can be dangerous, especially if mixed with bleach.
- ✓ **Lysol and bleach should not be mixed nor should 2 different types of toilet bowl cleaner.**
- ✓ Cleaning and disinfection practices become very important information in emergencies such as floods and in event of displacements especially now since Texans are asked to remain vigilant against coronavirus, even as emergencies unfold. Learn more about disinfection product here: <https://cfpub.epa.gov/giwiz/disinfectants/index.cfm>
- ✓ Garbage bags, paper towels, toilet paper
- ✓ Sunscreen, insect repellent

Communication

- ✓ Cell phone with charger, fully charged external batteries
- ✓ Crank flashlight or flashlight with extra batteries
- ✓ Crank radio or radio with extra batteries in case cell towers are down
- ✓ Matches or lighter in waterproof bag
- ✓ Communication devices, batteries and possible alternatives

Document Bag (Borrowed from Texas Ready website – PDF of their list with checkboxes - <https://texasready.gov/resources/assets/TexasReady-Build-a-Disaster-Kit-English.pdf>)

Get a document bag to hold the following:

- ✓ Current photo IDs, driver licenses, birth records, Social Security cards, passports (always keep your social security number separate from other documents to decrease the risk of identity theft)
- ✓ Current photos of family members, in case you get separated
- ✓ Health insurance and prescription cards
- ✓ Medical records, medications, and dosages
- ✓ Phone numbers (family, friends, doctors)
- ✓ Bank account information
- ✓ Wills
- ✓ Insurance documents (homeowner, renter, flood, life)
- ✓ Property deeds, leases, mortgages
- ✓ Vehicle titles, insurance, leases, loan documents

- ✓ Inventory of household possessions and their value (take photos of every room, every drawer, every closet)
- ✓ Backup computer files on a USB drive
- ✓ Copies of important keys
- ✓ Utility bills (to prove where you live)

Add These Items for Evacuating by Car (Borrowed from Texas Ready website – PDF of their list with checkboxes - <https://texasready.gov/resources/assets/TexasReady-Build-a-Disaster-Kit-English.pdf>)

You may have to leave in a hurry to get to a safe place. Keep these supplies near your car. When it's time, grab them and go.

- ✓ Road maps *try not to rely solely on power reliant navigation
- ✓ Car repair items (tools, spare tire, tire patch kit, oil)
- ✓ Food and water
- ✓ Plastic plates, cups, utensils
- ✓ Tent, blankets, pillows
- ✓ Clothes and sturdy shoes
- ✓ Rain gear and towels
- ✓ Books, games, toys

Before you leave home:

- ✓ Fill your gas tank, and check your spare tire
- ✓ Take cash, checkbook, and credit cards
- ✓ Call your family emergency contact
- ✓ Charge your mobile phone
- ✓ Get a map of your route

Add These Items for Sheltering in Place (Borrowed from Texas Ready website – PDF of their list with checkboxes - <https://texasready.gov/resources/assets/TexasReady-Build-a-Disaster-Kit-English.pdf>)

When staying home is your safest choice, add these items to your kit and stay tuned to the news.

- ✓ Smoke detectors with extra batteries
- ✓ Carbon monoxide detector (if using generators, charcoal grills, or camp stoves)
- ✓ Fire extinguisher
- ✓ Plastic sheeting and duct tape (to seal doors, windows, and air vents from contaminated air or to build an emergency shelter)

Pet Supplies (Borrowed from Texas Ready website – PDF of their list with checkboxes - <https://texasready.gov/resources/assets/TexasReady-Build-a-Disaster-Kit-English.pdf>)

- ✓ 3-day supply of pet food, water, and bowls
- ✓ Pet medications and first-aid kit
- ✓ Vaccination records
- ✓ Crate or carrier (may be required in shelters or where you spend the night)
- ✓ Leash and toys

- ✓ Cat litter and box
- ✓ Photo, in case pet gets lost
- ✓ Service animal documentation

Homeowner/Renters, Auto, Health, Life and Flood

Insurance is an important financial preparedness tool. Personal **Insurances are an integral part of financial planning** for disasters. Keep your documents in a safe container and online in email or document cloud.

Myth:

A renter insurance policy will cover me and my family in case I get flooded out.

Fact:

Renters insurance is a form of homeowner insurance that covers the contents of your rented home or apartment in case of fire and other peril, **but flood is likely specifically excluded. Flood insurance is the better choice for the scenario.**

Myth:

My home is not in a flood zone, so flooding isn't a concern.

Fact:

Floods can happen anywhere. More than half of homes flooded by Hurricane Harvey were outside of designated flood zones. Texas is particularly prone to floods.

Renters/tenants and homeowners alike can purchase the protection of flood insurance.