

# DCAP EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

For District of Columbia Families of Children  
Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Provided by:  
DC Autism Parents  
P.O. Box 60417  
Washington, DC 20039-0417  
202.271.9262  
[www.dcautismparents.org](http://www.dcautismparents.org)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose	3
Why Prepare?	3
What You Need to Do	4
Be Informed	4
Make a Plan	5
Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit	6
Maintian and Plan Your Kit	8
Practice Calm	8
If Disaster Strikes	8
Resources	10

# PURPOSE

Hurricanes, acts of terrorism, and floods are in our minds today. But, even though we all know what *can* happen... are we prepared? Would we know what to do to prepare for a hurricane or winter storm? For families of autistic children planning becomes even more difficult. Knowing how you will respond is critical. It means extra attention to details and needs that typical families may not have to worry about. This guide provides suggestions to help District of Columbia families prepare for emergencies before they happen. The Resources section provides links to the important agencies and organizations involved in emergency preparedness.

# WHY PREPARE?

You are in the best position to plan for your own safety as you are best able to know you and your family's functional abilities and possible needs during and after an emergency or disaster situation. You can cope with disaster by preparing in advance with your family.

The District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) has identified three specific types of hazards which the District of Columbia is vulnerable:

**Natural:** Natural hazards threaten lives, property, other assets and often can be predicted. A natural hazard tends to occur repeatedly in the same geographical location because it is related to weather patterns or physical characteristics of an area. Natural hazards include:

- Hurricane
- Flood
- Nor'easter
- Thunderstorm
- Winter/Ice Storm
- Tornado
- Extreme Heat
- Earthquakes

**Acts of Terrorism:** Terrorism hazards are intentional events to instill fear and bring harm to people and places. Terrorists may use technologies, chemicals, materials and equipment to produce the desired result and these hazards usually occur with little or no warning. Terrorism hazards include:

- Biological Attack
- Chemical Attack

- Cyber Attack
- Nuclear Blast
- Radiological Dispersion Device or “Dirty Bomb”
- Active Shooter/Mass Casualty Incident
- Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Incident

**Technological:** Technological and human caused hazards can range from something as simple as a power outage, to something as serious as a chemical spill or explosion at a nearby industrial plant. Types of technological hazards include:

- Power Outages
- Hazardous Materials Incident
- Nuclear Power Plant Incident
- Chemical/Fuel Explosions
- Water Contamination

Each of these hazards presents different challenges, so you and your family need to be prepared. Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

At a minimum, you should follow the five preparedness steps listed below:

1. Be informed
2. Make a plan
3. Assemble a disaster supplies kit
4. Maintain your plan and kit
5. Practice calm

## BE INFORMED

The first thing you need before, during and after an emergency is reliable information and/or instructions. To ensure that each member of your family knows how to get official information during an emergency, you and your family can:

**Sign up for Alert DC:** AlertDC is the official District of Columbia communications system that sends emergency alerts, notifications, and updates to your devices. This system enables the District to provide critical information in situations such as traffic conditions, government closures, public safety incidents and severe weather. Sign up [here](#).

**Download the free District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) app:** Available for iPhones/iPads and Android devices through the Apple App or GooglePlay Stores, this app ensures no matter where you are or what you're doing, you'll be prepared.

**Listen to the radio:** Tune in to local radio stations which will broadcast official information and instructions from the District Government.

**Watch local TV news:** Tune in to the District of Columbia's Cable Channels 13, 16, or your favorite local news station for alerts and updates.

**Emergency Alert System:** The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is the national public warning system. Through EAS, the District can deliver important emergency information, such as AMBER alerts and weather information on local broadcast television stations, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio service providers, and direct broadcast satellite. The District can also send emergency alerts directly to cellphones using the Commercial Mobile Alert System.

**Reverse 911:** Allows emergency personnel to call telephones in specific neighborhoods to notify you of an emergency and tell you what to do to protect yourself. All landline telephones in the District are automatically signed up.

**Social Media:** HSEMA maintains a Facebook page, Twitter feed and Instagram profile. Follow them on Twitter at [@DC\\_HSEMA](https://twitter.com/DC_HSEMA) for important emergency preparedness information and updates. Like them on their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/HSEMADC](https://www.facebook.com/HSEMADC) or follow them on Instagram at [www.instagram.com/dchsema](https://www.instagram.com/dchsema).

## MAKE A PLAN

When you have an autistic child and/or children, disasters and emergencies can present disruptions to daily routines. So being prepared before, during and after any type of disaster or emergency is important. Here some things you can do:

Create a network of family members, neighbors, and coworkers who can be on-call to help you should a disaster or emergency arise.

Make a list of all the things you use daily and think about what you would do if they are in limited supply or not available. Here are some other things to consider:

- Does your child and/or children use assistive technology devices, such as an iPad or iPod?
- Does your child and/or children require special medication or supplements?

- Does your child and/or children regularly need assistance with personal care, such as bathing and grooming?
- Does your child and/or children use a shower chair, tub-transfer bench or other similar equipment?
- Does your child and/or children use special utensils that help him/her eat independently?
- How will you continue to use equipment that runs on electricity? Do you have a safe back-up power supply and how long will it last?
- Does your child and/or children need a specially equipped vehicle or accessible transportation?
- Will you be able to care for your child's and/or children's service animal (provide food, shelter, veterinary attention, etc.) during and after a disaster?
- Do you have another caregiver for your animal if you are unable to meet its needs?
- Do you have the appropriate licenses for your service animal so you will be permitted to keep it with you should you need or choose to use an emergency public shelter?

Write down the name, model and serial number of any medical equipment/devices used and store this information in your kit.

Obtain a medical ID for your child and/or children; this may help in case of an emergency.

Prepare a list of your child's and/or children's triggers and helps for behavior issues.

Prepare a list of the names and contact information for all doctors and therapists.

Make a complete copy of your child's and/or children's health records. Also include a list of all prescription medications, and dosages.

## **ASSEMBLE A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT**

In the event you need to evacuate at a moment's notice and take essentials with you, you probably will not have the opportunity to shop or search for the supplies you and your family will need. Every household should assemble a disaster supplies kit and keep it up to date.

A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items a family would probably need to stay safe and be more comfortable during and after a disaster. Disaster supplies kit items should be stored in portable container(s) in a handy location. Review the contents of your kit at least once per year or as your family's needs change. Also,

consider having emergency supplies in each vehicle and at your place of employment.

The following should be included in your **basic** disaster supplies kit:

- Food: Three-day supply of nonperishable food and a manual can opener.
- Water: Three-day supply of water (one gallon of water per person per day).
- Portable, solar, battery-powered or hand-crank radio and extra batteries.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- First aid kit and manual.
- Sanitation (garbage bags and plastic ties) hygiene items (hand sanitizer, moist towelettes, and toilet paper).
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air.
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place.
- Photocopies of identification and credit cards.
- Important documents such as: insurance policies, copy of driver's license, Social Security card, birth certificate, and bank account records
- Cash and coins.
- Prescription medications (3 to 7-day supply of all medicines), eye glasses, contact lens solution, and hearing aid batteries.
- Items for infants, such as formula, diapers, bottles, and pacifiers.
- Tools, a map of the local area, and other items to meet your unique family needs.
- A list of emergency contacts with phone numbers.
- If you have a service animal, you will need:
  - Canned/dry food for 3 to 7 days (get pop top cans or have a manual can opener)
  - Water to last for 3 to 7 days.
  - Pet feeding dishes.
  - An extra muzzle, harness, or collar and leash.
  - Potty pads and waste bags or a Litter box and pet litter.
  - Proper pet identification including health/immunization records (stored in a waterproof container).
  - Your pet's ID tag should contain his/her name, telephone number, and any urgent medical needs.
  - A list of emergency contacts with phone numbers.
  - Current photos of your pets in case they become lost.
  - A two-week supply of any medicine your pet requires.
  - Pet beds and toys, if you can easily take them with you.
  - A first aid kit.
  - Paper towels and trash bags.

## MAINTAIN AND PLAN YOUR KIT

Review your plan every six months and quiz your family about what to do.

Check food supplies for expiration dates and discard, or replace stored water and food every six months.

## PRACTICE CALM

Your autistic child and/or children may be particularly in tune with the moods of the adults around them and may sense stress, confusion, anxiety, and frustration, and then mimic the mood or behavior. You and your support network should practice a sense of calm, even if you are not feeling it!

Your child and/or children are watching you. If you are in control of your emotions, you will transfer that calm to your child and/or children. Regularly reaching out to your support network for assistance will help you practice in case of an emergency.

Being prepared, staying focused, and having a plan, automatically will lower stress and keep you calm in an emergency.

## IF DISASTER STRIKES

In the event of an emergency, listen to the radio or watch local television news and follow the directions of emergency officials. If you are instructed, by emergency officials, to take shelter immediately– **do so at once**. Local officials are the best source of information when determining whether to evacuate or shelter-in-place. In general, sheltering-in-place is appropriate when conditions require that you seek immediate protection in your home, place of employment, school or other location when disaster strikes.

If you are instructed, by emergency officials, to evacuate, your first option and plan should always be to family or friends first; they can accommodate you, and help you and your child and/or children be most comfortable in a stressful situation. If that is not possible, emergency public shelters will be available, and can provide a safe place to stay and meals while you are there.

- Listen to the radio or watch local television news for the location of emergency shelters.
- Shut off water, gas and electricity, only if instructed to do so and if time permits.
- Wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes.



- Take your disaster supplies kit.
- Lock your home.
- Use travel routes specified by local authorities and don't use shortcuts because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous.
- Inform members of your support network and out-of-town contact(s) of your location and status.

# RESOURCES

The resources provide comprehensive guidance on topics such as general safety, emergency preparedness and prevention, and risk management. They should be your source of information as you begin your emergency preparedness planning.

[American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

[American Red Cross](#)

[Autism Society](#)

[Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response](#)

[Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#)

[“Prepare for Emergencies Now: Information for People with Disabilities”](#)

[“Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and other Special Needs”](#)

[District of Columbia Department of Health and District of Columbia Office of Disability Rights “A Path to Preparedness”](#)

[District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency People with Disabilities and/or Access and Functional Needs](#)

[National Fire Protection Association](#)

[PEPCO®](#)

[Sesame Street Let’s Get Ready: Planning Together for Emergencies](#)

