



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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### Office of Integrated Health Health & Safety Alert/Information

## Emergency Preparedness Health & Safety Alert Part 1: Planning Tips & Resources

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### Emergency Preparedness: Part 1 Introduction

Emergencies and disasters can strike when least expected, and without warning, forcing individuals to evacuate quickly. The increasing frequency of natural disasters in this country presents a serious challenge for millions of individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers. Emergency preparedness refers to a framework of steps designed to help ensure an individual's safety before, during and after an emergency or natural disaster.

### Disasters and Disability

Individuals with any type of disability are at a much higher risk of injury or death than the general population during a natural disaster (10) (14) (28) (33). Individuals with disabilities are often the ones who are left behind and frequently the last to be rescued (11) (25). Although there is scant research specifically on individuals with intellectual and developmental disability (IDD), some evidence reveals the risk of injury or death to those with disabilities (in general) may be as much as two to four times the risk of individuals within the general population (14). Individuals with disabilities also lack social supports and experience poverty on much higher levels than their peers without disabilities, which also increases their vulnerability during disaster events (24).



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## **Lessons Learned from Previous Disasters in the U.S.**

The collapse of the infrastructure in the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack, Hurricane Katrina and the Paradise, California wildfire, revealed the weaknesses in planning for special needs populations which exists in this country. International evidence and research obtained from the aftermath of the earthquakes in Japan in 1994, and 2011, and the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, has also increased awareness and emergency preparedness efforts for individuals with disability (1) (12) (28) (17).

The data gained was consistent. individuals with disabilities, including those with IDD and/or with physical disability, experienced much higher rates of injuries, suffering and deaths, than their peers without disabilities. In addition, the United States Government Report (2006) titled, *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned*, further emphasized the need for citizens to understand the limitations of government and stressed the importance of emergency preparedness in communities and among individuals and their caregivers.

## **Lowering Risk of Injury for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disability in Disasters**

Although little formal research exists specifically evaluating the risk levels of individuals with intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) during disasters, when compared to other types of disabilities, we do know individuals with IDD are at great risk for injuries and death, due to a variety of reasons:

- Some individuals are unable to cognitively understand danger or threats to their well-being. As a result, they may be unable to save themselves when told to do so, even if they have no mobility impairments.
- Other individuals may understand danger, but may have sensory deficits which prevent them from hearing or seeing a threat and make it extremely difficult for them to evacuate.
- Some individuals, even after they have been safely evacuated, may be unable to follow a caregiver's directions, and may re-enter an unsafe dwelling.
- Other individuals, upon hearing a smoke alarm or other alert system, may run and hide under a bed or in a closet, which may delay their rescue by first responders.
- Some individuals who are unable to ambulate independently, may perish because they have no means to evacuate.
- Other individuals may not be able to evacuate quickly enough and may perish due to building collapse, excessive heat, smoke inhalation, or drowning before first responders can rescue them.

- Due to their increased vulnerability, some individuals with IDD may survive the initial disaster, but may perish post-disaster, due to a lack of electricity, food, medications, and access to healthcare services.

Individuals with IDD and physical disabilities are less likely to evacuate from their homes, and wait longer to do so, due to both a lack of accessible transportation and concerns that evacuation shelters will not accommodate their needs (5). Due to this, evacuation planning must address their specific needs. This includes mobility assistance, accessible evacuation shelters and reliable power sources to run equipment such as power wheelchairs and communication devices post-disaster.

## Person-Centered Emergency Preparedness

Individuals with disabilities are often treated as a single group with similar needs and capabilities when various authorities or localities are constructing emergency preparedness plans (17). Research studies also confirm the exclusion of those with disabilities from the emergency preparedness planning process to be the primary reason for the disproportionate impact of disaster events on their lives (14) (26).

The evidence is clear, emergency preparedness plans should be developed with a person-centered approach, and should be an on-going process, that is ever-evolving and changing based on the individual's special needs, abilities, health conditions, durable medical equipment, assistive technology devices, and much more.

Emergency planning for individuals with IDD is not a one-time planning event. Emergency preparedness plans should be reviewed, updated, and communicated at regular intervals with all care team members, including the individual (34).

In disaster situations, individuals with disability are:

- Less likely to receive timely warnings before an event.
- Often unable to evacuate due to a lack of accessible transportation.
- Frequently evacuated to emergency shelters that are inaccessible or unable to accommodate their needs (18).

## Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Framework

The Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction or DIDRR, is a new framework for planning which includes the needs of individuals with disabilities in evacuation planning (29). Similarly, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is the first international framework to also include the needs of people with disabilities in evacuation planning (2) (30).

To date, there is limited research available which investigates the lived experience of individuals with disabilities and their evacuation experiences during natural disasters, which could offer additional, practical advice on how to prepare and what to expect.

Based on research studies which include examination prior natural disasters, the individuals who fared well, were those who had a personal support network of neighbors, friends, family, and/or other service providers committed to helping them.

Will anyone be able to perfectly plan for every disaster event? No, but the goal is to be better prepared than before!

- Talk and collaborate with your neighbors.
- Share emergency plans with all care team members.

## Personal Emergency Evacuation Planning (PEEP)

The National Fire Protection Agency's (NFPA's), *Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities* can provide caregivers with the useful tips, tools and resources needed to develop a person-centered emergency evacuation plan (22). The guide has practical tips to address all types of impairments including:

- Mobility impairments.
- Visual impairments.
- Hearing impairments.
- Speech impairments.
- Cognitive impairments.





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The NFPA's Personal Emergency Evacuation Planning Checklist or "PEEP" is a downloadable fillable Word Document.

The first page of the PEEP offers a section for the following types of disasters: fires, earthquakes, floods, storms, and attacks (terrorist, active shooter, etc.) and gives you the option to add additional lines for other types of emergencies which may occur in your area.



**PERSONAL EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLANNING CHECKLIST**  
(REV. 5-18)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Building (home, office, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Floor: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Service Animal: Yes ☐ No ☐

**OCCUPANT NOTIFICATION**

Type of Emergency	Is there Method or Device for Notification?			Comment
	YES (✓)	NO (✓)	N/A (✓)	
Fire				
Earthquake				
Flood				
Storm				
Attack				
Other (specify)				

The PEEP can help lower the risk of serious injuries & fatalities to individuals with IDD, pre-disaster, during a disaster/evacuation, and post disaster. The PEEP can also help you to:

- Individualize and personalize emergency evacuation plans.
- Include individuals in plan-making.
- Have multi-layered emergency evacuation plans.
- Develop succession plans for staff caregivers.
- Have honest conversations with staff caregivers.
- Collaborate with all care team members.
- Share emergency-related information with others.
- Plan, prepare, practice and revise emergency evacuation plans on a regular basis.
- Collaborate with local community preparedness members, friends, families and staff.

## The Commonwealth of Virginia's Emergency Operations Plan

For planning purposes in Virginia, the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities fall under the umbrella of those who have **access and/or functional needs (AFN's)** and are addressed through the **Commonwealth of Virginia's Emergency Operations Plan**.

These individuals may require additional assistance before, during and after an emergency. Vulnerable populations include, but are not limited to, individuals who have one or more of the following AFN's which may be temporary or permanent:

- Physical, mobility, sensory, intellectual, developmental, cognitive, or mental disabilities.
- Advanced age (age 60 and up).
- Members of the LGBTQ population.
- Chronic or temporary health conditions.
- Pregnancy.

*Please Note:* Individuals who have access or functional needs in multiple categories are at a much greater risk than those who do not (7).

<b>Population Sub-Group</b>	<b>Number of People in Virginia</b>
<b>Individuals with a hearing-related disability</b>	<b>275,121</b>
<b>Individuals with a vision-related disability</b>	<b>184,833</b>
<b>Individuals with a cognitive-related disability</b>	<b>401,182</b>
<b>Individuals with an ambulatory difficulty</b>	<b>558,760</b>
<b>Individuals with a self-care difficulty</b>	<b>211,238</b>
<b>Individuals with any type of disability</b>	<b>1,010,197</b>



## Caregiver Planning Tips

### Plan for Likely Events in Your Area

Everyone in Virginia should have a plan which addresses likely disaster events in their area.

- Floods.
- Extreme Temperatures (Hot or Cold).
- Tornadoes.
- Fire Prevention and Evacuation.
- Health Threats.
- Hurricanes.
- Lightning + Thunderstorms.
- Radiological + Nuclear + Chemical + Hazmat.
- Extended Power Outages.
- Terrorism/Active Shooter Incidents.



When considering which disasters could affect your area, find out which disasters would likely prompt an evacuation and which would likely result in the need to shelter in place. Part two of our Emergency Preparedness series will offer more in-depth information relating to how to prepare, and what to do, for specific emergencies or disaster situations.

### Collaborate with Local Authorities

Ask questions at the local city, or county level, where you live to find out how local authorities will render assistance to those with accessibility or functional needs. Asking questions and collaborating with others, can identify gaps in state & local emergency plans which can then be addressed pre-disaster. Find out how local authorities will:

- Warn you about an impending disaster.
- Provide you with ongoing information before, during, and after a disaster.
- Assist you with evacuation, if and/or when, it is needed.

Collaborating with other agencies and organizations within your community can ultimately promote a more integrated response for everyone.

## Special Needs Registries

- Some localities in Virginia have Special Needs Registries. If you care for more than one individual with specific needs be sure to provide information for each individual in your care.
- Ask if there is a formal process or form you need to fill out or file.
- Be sure to let them know if the individual is “ambulatory” or “non-ambulatory” (whether they have the ability to evacuate independently or not).
- Let them know if the individual uses a DME device to ambulate and what type.

## Building an Emergency Preparedness Kit

An emergency evacuation kit is a collection of basic items an individual would probably need to stay safe and be more comfortable during and after a disaster. Disaster supplies kit items should be stored in a portable container(s) as close as possible to the exit door. Be sure to:

- Store items in waterproof containers.
- Purchase containers with tight-fitting lids. (Lids with latches may work best.)
- Make sure you don’t pack the container so full that you cannot lift it.
- Make sure the containers will fit in the vehicle you will use to evacuate.

Review the contents of the kits at least once per year or as the individual’s needs change. In addition to having your basic survival supplies, an emergency kit should have items to meet the individual’s needs in various emergencies. Consider the items the individual, or their caregivers, may use on a daily basis. Be sure to include the following in your emergency kits:

- ✓ Foods that need no cooking or refrigeration.
- ✓ Flashlights.
- ✓ Blankets.
- ✓ A 3-day supply of water.
- ✓ Prescription medicines.
- ✓ Battery operated radio.
- ✓ Batteries.
- ✓ Cell phone chargers.





## Caregiver Planning Tips

### Service Animals

- Be sure to pack pet food, extra water, a collar with their ID tag, medical records and other supplies for your service animal.

### Vehicle Preparedness

- Stay up-to-date on vehicle maintenance per the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Prepare your vehicle with emergency supplies.
- If an extreme weather event is expected make sure your vehicle has a full tank of gas beforehand.
- It's a good idea to have an emergency evacuation plan in place which addresses what to do for vehicle-related emergencies!
- Keep portable phone chargers with you in case you are stuck in traffic or the vehicle breaks down.

You should keep the following in your vehicle in case of an emergency:

- ✓ Flares.
- ✓ Fire Extinguisher.
- ✓ Jumper Cables.
- ✓ Window Breaker.
- ✓ Call Police Banner.
- ✓ Gloves.
- ✓ Flashlight.
- ✓ Tri-fold shovel.
- ✓ Ice Scraper.
- ✓ Cell Phone Charger.
- ✓ Portable battery pack with a USB port.
- ✓ A map of Virginia and surrounding states in case the damage from the disaster is widespread.



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## Caregiver Planning Tips

### When You Must Evacuate

- Shut off water, gas and electricity if instructed to do so & if time permits.
- Make sure appliances, such as the stove, etc. are turned off. (If you were using them when power/gas was interrupted, when it comes back on, it could cause a fire.)
- Make sure the individual is wearing appropriate clothing & sturdy shoes when evacuating. They may need to walk through glass or other debris.
- Use travel routes specified by local authorities. Don't use shortcuts because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous.
- Be sure to grab your portable MAR and each individual's emergency kit.

### Hotel Accommodations

- Remember, hotels will fill up fast.
- You may have to travel a great distance.
- Make sure your vehicle has plenty of gas.
- Make reservations before you leave.
- Look for accommodations in the opposite direction of the impacted area.
- Buy a printed map of Virginia beforehand, in case there is no cell service or your GPS is not working.
- Buy a printed map of the Mid-Atlantic region (VA, PA, MD, NY, NJ, WV, DE, DC). If the disaster is widespread, you may have to travel across state lines to find accommodations.

### Emergency Shelters

- Emergency officials will provide information to the general public about the location of open shelters through local radio and television stations.
- Make note of the shelters that are accessible to those with physical disabilities, if needed.
- Upon arrival at an emergency shelter, confirm it can meet the individual's special care needs.
- Shelters can fill quickly, and shelter information may change frequently, so stay alert.
- All shelter information is available by calling 2-1-1.
- If you are out of state, using a videophone, or a disposable cell phone, 2-1-1 in

Virginia can always be reached by dialing: 1-800-230-6977.

- Notify members of the individual's support team of your new location as soon as possible.
- Give parents and legal guardians updates on the individual's status, location & contact information on an ongoing basis, if possible.

### **Health-Related Emergency Preparedness Items**

- Have on hand three to seven days' worth of prescription medicines.
- A list of all medications, dosage and any allergies. (This can be kept in a portable Medication Administration Record (MAR) binder.)
- Extra eyeglasses, or old eyeglasses.
- An extra portable oxygen tank if the individual is receiving oxygen therapy.
- A list of the brand, model, and serial number of any medical devices, including special instructions for operating the individual's equipment if needed.
- Copies of medical insurance and Medicare cards. This can be kept in a portable Medication Administration Record (MAR) binder.
- Contact information for the individual's PCP, medical specialists, relatives, legal guardians, etc. who should be notified if the individual is injured or ill.

### **Individuals Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

- Consider obtaining a weather radio with a text display and a flashing alert for the individual, especially if they live independently.
- Include extra hearing-aid batteries in their emergency preparedness kit if they use one.
- Consider obtaining A TTY/TDD assistive device, which allows individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired to communicate with others on the phone.
- How does TTY/TDD work? Messages are typed and sent through the phone using a special keyboard/communication device.
- Ask the individual's PCP for an order for an evaluation by an audiologist (a hearing specialist) if you think the individual might have an undiagnosed hearing impairment. An audiologist can make recommendations on which type of assistive devices would be best for the individual.

The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) offers telecommunication equipment and assistive technology through their Technology Assistance Program (TAP). Assistive devices available through TAP include:

- Amplified telephones.
- Captioned Telephones.
- Personal FM Systems.
- Signalers.
- Other devices are available by special request.
- For all types of hearing-related accessibility information, please visit [VDDHH.org](http://VDDHH.org) or contact the VDDHH Central Office at 804-662-9502 or 1-800-552-7917. (Note: relay users; please dial 7-1-1 before dialing the number).
- Contact the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Specialist's nearest you. [Click here for a list of office locations](#) or call 1-800-552-7917.

### **Individuals Who are Blind or Have Low Vision**

- Mark emergency supplies with Braille labels or large print.
- Keep a Braille or deaf-blind communications device in their emergency supply kit.
- Pack an extra assistive cane.
- Make sure all exits are accessible and practice emergency evacuation drills with individuals.
- Identify accessible transportation beforehand that can accommodate mobility aids, communication devices, service animals or other assistive devices the individual may need.

### **Individuals with Communication Issues**

- Consider medical alert tags or bracelets for individuals with life-threatening allergies, diabetes or other conditions. Discuss with the individual's Care Team
- If an individual has any communication difficulties, make sure their emergency information lets first responders know how to best communicate with them.
- If an individual uses an augmentative communications device, plan how you will replace the equipment if lost or destroyed. Keep model numbers and note where the equipment came from (Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, etc.).
- Have an alternative communication plan if the equipment is not working, including laminated cards with phrases, pictures or pictograms.
- Keep Braille/text communication cards, if you provide care for anyone who is legally blind.

## Individuals Who May Become Over-Stimulated in Chaotic Environments

- Develop plans which include measures to calm individuals in unfamiliar or chaotic environments like emergency shelters. This may include the use of:
- Handheld electronic devices (iPad, tablets, etc.) loaded with movies and games.
- Portable battery packs with a USB port.
- Spare chargers for electronic devices.
- Small pop-up tents can decrease visual stimulation in a busy room, and can provide instant privacy for changing briefs, etc. (Most fold-up to the size of a frisbee when not in use.)
- Consider purchasing noise cancelling headphones to decrease auditory distractions for individuals who can tolerate wearing them.
- Toys (to meet needs for stimulation).
- Sensory items, such as fidgets or spinners, etc.

## Serious Medical Conditions Certification Form

The Serious Medical Condition Certification Form gives priority to those who are medically dependent on utilities, but it does not guarantee utilities will continue to work during or after a natural disaster. Caregivers should file a Serious Medical Condition Certification Form if they provide care for anyone dependent on any utility (water, electricity, gas, etc.) to survive. This will help keep utility companies in Virginia well-informed about all those with special medical needs.

- The Serious Medical Condition Certification Form is included with the downloadable resources for this training.
- The form must be signed by the individual's PCP.



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**Serious Medical Condition Certification Form**

Form SMCC (01/2017)

To Be Completed by the Customer:

Customer Name:			Electric Account Number:
Customer Address:			Water Account Number:
			Contact Telephone Number:
City:	State:	Zip Code:	Alternate Telephone Number:

*I certify that the information above is accurate and the patient is the customer or a family member of the customer residing at this residence.*

Customer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To Be Completed by the Patient/Legal Guardian/Power of Attorney:

Patient Name:	Patient Relationship to Customer:
Contact Telephone Number:	Alternate Telephone Number:

*I hereby authorize my physician to release the following information about the above-named patient to the utility's representatives and/or the State Corporation Commission and to answer related questions to help determine if the identified medical condition(s) meets the definition of a serious medical condition which is defined below. I certify that the patient lives at the address listed above and that all information provided is accurate.*

Patient/Legal Guardian/Power of Attorney Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To Be Completed by the Physician: (M.D. or D.O.)

Physician Name:			Contact Telephone Number:
Physician Office Address:			Alternate Telephone Number:
City:	State:	Zip Code:	Fax Number:
Current License Number:			Licensing State:

Patient's Diagnosis/Serious Medical Condition:

Required Treatment for Condition:

Equipment prescribed and/or required treatment for conditions (If any): (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Ventilator	<input type="checkbox"/> CPAP Machine	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Feeding Pump	<input type="checkbox"/> Nebulizer	
<input type="checkbox"/> Infant Apnea Monitor	<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital Bed	
<input type="checkbox"/> Continuous Oxygen	<input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration	
<input type="checkbox"/> Home Dialysis	<input type="checkbox"/> HVAC	

Expected Duration of Condition:

*I certify that the above patient has a serious medical condition which is defined as a physical or psychiatric condition that requires medical intervention to prevent further disability, loss of function, or death. Such conditions are characterized by a need for ongoing medical supervision or the consultation of a physician. A serious medical condition carries with it a risk to health beyond that experienced by the majority of children and adults in their day-to-day minor illnesses and injuries. Individuals with a serious medical condition may require administration of specialized treatments and may be dependent on medical technology such as ventilators, dialysis machines, enteral or parenteral nutrition support or continuous oxygen. Medical interventions may include medications with special storage requirements, use of powered equipment, or access to water. I certify that the preceding information is correct.*

Physician's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_


This form was developed pursuant to: 20VAC 5-330 "Limitations on Disconnection of Electric and Water Service"



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## Caregiver Planning Tips

### Dealing with Lost Electronic Health Records

- [Having access to health records](#)  is a powerful tool in staying healthy. With access to health information individuals and their guardians can make better decisions in order to be healthy. Since many medical records are now stored electronically, they can usually be retrieved in post-disaster situations.
- [The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act](#), or HIPAA, for short, gives everyone the right to see and get copies of their health information.

### Individuals with a Mobility Impairment

- If an individual you provide care for uses a power wheelchair, consider having a lightweight manual chair available as a backup.
- Note the weight of the individual's wheelchair, in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be carried by first responders. The weight of the wheelchair is usually on a sticker on the wheelchair frame.
- Make sure multiple caregivers know how to operate the individual's wheelchair and use the collapsible feature. In an emergency situation, every second counts.
- Purchase an extra battery for power wheelchairs or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices. If you can't purchase an extra battery, find out what agencies, organizations or local charitable groups can help you acquire one post-disaster. Keep extra batteries on a charger, if possible.
- Make sure local authorities in your city or county know how many individuals you care for who will need an accessible vehicle for evacuation.
- Consider keeping a patch kit or a can of sealant for flat wheelchair tires.
- If an individual you care for must be evacuated without their wheelchair, at least try to take their seat cushion, which may be customized and more difficult to replace in a timely manner.

### Replacing Durable Medical Equipment

#### **Medicare**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) provides information on coverage exceptions during a declared disaster and information on DME replacement during or post-disaster. CMS also provides a list of DME suppliers that is searchable by zip code, in order to help you replace damaged DME. Individuals covered by other insurance would need to check with their insurance company for more information.

You can find more information about replacing DME here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FIGFKks1Zc>

### **Medicaid**

Medicaid-covered individuals who live in areas declared by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia as a disaster or emergency in accordance with § 44-146.16 of the Code of Virginia, who need to replace DME and supplies previously approved by Medicaid, which was damaged as a result of the disaster or emergency, may contact a DME provider of their choice to obtain a replacement.

You can find more information about replacing DME here:

<https://www.dmas.virginia.gov/media/3424/dme-chapter-iv-updated-05-14-2021.pdf>

### **CCC+**

You can find the Commonwealth Coordinated Care Plus MCO contract for managed long term services and supports here:

<https://www.dmas.virginia.gov/media/3864/final-ccc-plus-contract-renewal-effective-july-1-2021.pdf>

## **Dealing with Electrical Outages Post Disaster**

### **Generators**

Generators are a great alternative to supply electricity after a disaster, but can be dangerous if not used properly. To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, which can be fatal, use generators, grills, and other similar items which cause combustion outdoors only. Generators should be used at least 20 feet away from your home and should never be placed near a heat pump (the heat pump intake will suck the deadly gas into your home), any window, or any basement or cellar door opening.

There are three basic types of home generators:

- Inverter Generators.
- Portable Generators.
- Stand-By Generators.

For general information on various types of generators, there is a great article on them at:

<https://www.forbes.com/home-improvement/electrical/types-of-generators/>



## **Snowstorms and Gas Furnace, Gas Fireplace, and Gas Clothes Dryer Vents**

### **Carbon Monoxide Poisoning - WARNING**

- Be sure to clear the intake and exhaust pipes for gas furnaces and dryer vents, Blockages will result in carbon monoxide poisoning, which can be fatal.



## **Snowstorms and Vehicles**

### **Carbon Monoxide Poisoning – WARNING**

- If stranded on the highway during a snowstorm, or there is an electrical outage, and you are forced to use a vehicle as a source of heat, please make sure the exhaust pipe (tail pipe) of the vehicle you are using, is not blocked by deep or blowing snow in the roadway, driveway, etc. If it is, carbon monoxide will back up into the vehicle's heating or cooling ventilation system and the results can be fatal.



## **Food Safety During Electrical Outages**

- If the power is out for less than 4 hours, food in your refrigerator and freezer will be safe to consume if you keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed. Visit the CDC's [Keep Food Safe After a Disaster or Emergency](https://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/food/index.html) for more information.

## **Getting Benefits Paid Electronically, Post-Disaster**

If an individual depends on Social Security or other regular benefits and receives them via the United States Postal System, switching to electronic payments may be the simplest way to protect their well-being when disaster strikes. The U.S. Department of the Treasury recommends two safer ways to get federal benefits:

- Instead, request that their funds be deposited into a checking or savings account. They can sign up by calling 800-333-1795 or sign up online.
- The Direct Express® prepaid debit card is designed as a safe and easy alternative to paper checks. Call toll-free at 877-212-9991 or sign up online.

## Resources

### Staying Well-Informed About the Situation

- Download the FEMA app and get weather alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five different locations anywhere in the United States.



### Follow Disaster-Related Social Media Accounts

**STAY INFORMED**

## WHO TO FOLLOW

Make sure your household members with social media, phone and email accounts are signed up for alerts and warnings from their individual school, school system, workplace and local government agencies including: police, fire, ambulance services, public health department, public works, public utilities and your local emergency management office.

<b>Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>vaemergency.gov</li><li>VAemergency</li><li>@VDEM</li></ul>	<b>Virginia State Police (VSP)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>vsp.state.va.us</li><li>VirginiaStatePolice</li><li>@VSPPIO</li></ul>	<b>Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>www.fema.gov</li><li>www.ready.gov</li><li>FEMA</li><li>@FEMA</li><li>@FEMARegion3</li></ul>
<b>Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>511Virginia.org</li><li>VirginiaDOT</li><li>@VaDOT</li></ul>	<b>National Weather Service (NWS)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>@NWSWakefieldVA</li><li>@NWS_BaltWash</li><li>@NWSBlacksburg</li><li>@NWSCharlestonWV</li><li>@NWSMorristown</li></ul>	

## Smart 911

- Ask Local Authorities if Your Locale has Smart 911.
- Smart 911 is an enhanced 911 registry.
- Proven tool to save lives.
- Not available in all areas of Virginia.
- If available in your locale, consider developing a policy to include a Smart 911 application at intake.



## The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Smart Phone Weather Radio App

If you have a smart phone, downloading the NOAA Weather Radio App will allow you to listen to over 200+ NOAA Weather Radio Broadcasts and is available to everyone in Virginia for free. You will also receive all the latest weather-related warnings, watches, advisories, forecasts & other hazards 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, straight from the National Weather Service.

- Alerts you to all major weather emergencies.
- Battery powered and comes with an AC adapter.
- Costs about \$30 and can be purchased at all major department stores & online. (Walmart, Amazon, etc.)

If you don't have a smart phone, purchase a NOAA weather radio and tune in to your local emergency radio channel. Be sure to follow all alerts and warnings about severe weather in your area.





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## Additional Emergency Preparedness Resources

- American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)
- Ready.gov: <https://www.ready.gov/>
- Virginia Department of Health: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-preparedness/>
- Federal Emergency Management Administration: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)
- Food Resource Assistance: <https://vafoodbanks.org/virginia-food-bank-locator/>
- SNAP-EBT Resource Assistance: <https://vfm.leapforlocalfood.org/>
- Crisis Assistance: [commonhelp.virginia.gov](http://commonhelp.virginia.gov)
  - Type of help: Equipment-related assistance and security deposits is available November 1 through March 15. There must be a heating emergency, such as a lack of heat or inoperable/unsafe equipment. Eligibility screening and application can be done through CommonHelp or search Crisis Assistance to find a Department of Social Services office near you.
- CommonHelp: Virginia's convenient way to apply for healthcare coverage, food assistance, child care, heating/cooling assistance, and cash assistance. Visit: [commonhelp.virginia.gov](http://commonhelp.virginia.gov)
- Cover Virginia: The Federal Insurance Marketplace. [www.coverva.org](http://www.coverva.org)
- Virginia Easy Access: [easyaccess.virginia.gov](http://easyaccess.virginia.gov)
- Special Assistance for deaf and hard of hearing: Dial 7-1-1 for Virginia Relay, then 1-800-230-6977. <https://virginiannavigator.org/program/21980/virginia-relay-center-deaf-and-hearing-impaired-dial-7-1-1>
- Call Before You Dig - It's the Law - 811 Link: [https://va811.com/excavators/?utm\\_source=CoxMedia&utm\\_medium=CPC&utm\\_campaign=EA-C-33165%3B%3BHRD\\_OOM\\_V811ProSEM\\_2023%2F03%2F20-2023%2F12%2F17%23%2371457](https://va811.com/excavators/?utm_source=CoxMedia&utm_medium=CPC&utm_campaign=EA-C-33165%3B%3BHRD_OOM_V811ProSEM_2023%2F03%2F20-2023%2F12%2F17%23%2371457)
- Local Emergency Management: <https://www.virginia.gov/agencies/departments-of-emergency-management/>
- Virginia Department of Health Coronavirus Resources: Information from VDH can be found here: [www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus)
- Virginia Easy Access: Special resources for seniors and people with disabilities. VISIT: [easyaccess.virginia.gov](http://easyaccess.virginia.gov)



## Emergency Numbers in Virginia

2-1-1	24/7 service staffed by trained professionals who will listen to your situation and offer resources using a database of health and human services in Virginia. Visit <a href="http://www.211virginia.org">www.211virginia.org</a>
3-1-1	In select localities throughout the Commonwealth, 3-1-1 connects callers to their local government, non-emergency, citizen services including information, services, key contacts and programs.
5-1-1	"Know Before You Go," offers real-time traffic information throughout the Commonwealth. Anytime you need it, anywhere you are. For more information, visit <a href="http://www.511virginia.org">www.511virginia.org</a> .
7-1-1	For more information Special Assistance for deaf and hard of hearing: Dial 7-1-1 for Virginia Relay, then 1-800-230-6977.
8-1-1	"Call Before You Dig - It's the Law" When recovering from a disaster, an individual or business may plan to excavate. Before any digging, call 8-1-1, where participating utilities will locate and mark their underground lines to prevent possible injury or damage.
9-1-1	For emergencies only, including fire, medical, reporting accidents, crimes in progress and suspicious individuals or events. 9-1-1 is not to be used for traffic or weather updates and information request, please keep the lines clear for those seeking emergency support.

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